



Strategy, Tactics and Tilts

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A Networked Approach to UK Influence in the Indo-Pacific

Jamie Gaskarth

The 2021 Integrated Review was informed by two assumptions: that leaving the EU would allow a more agile foreign policy based on ad hoc groups; and that a global shift in power towards the Indo-Pacific meant that the UK needed to engage more with the region. Jamie Gaskarth argues that the missing element to this strategy is a networked approach. Using the insights of network theory and social network analysis, policymakers should be aiming to analyse the social dynamics of the region in a more systematic way. This would allow them to better identify opportunities for greater connectedness and the benefits these may bring, as well as the limits to UK engagement, and non-linear effects that network spillovers can produce.

The UK's Integrated Review in 2021 was highly ambitious. It committed the UK to being both 'the greatest single European contributor to the security of the Euro-Atlantic area to 2030' and 'deeply engaged in the Indo-Pacific as the European partner with the broadest, most integrated presence'.¹ The desire to be a leading European security provider in two key regions aimed to counter any impression of a loss of influence after Brexit. Instead, the UK would be a global power once again.

The review is now undergoing a revision following the expansion of the war in Ukraine, withdrawal from Afghanistan, worsening relations with China and an economic crisis. Nevertheless, the rhetoric from government ministers retains these ambitions. Foreign Secretary James Cleverly argued in September 2022 that 'we are well on our way to becoming the European partner with the broadest, most integrated presence in the Indo-Pacific. I am here to make it clear that the Indo-Pacific Tilt is

here to stay. It is permanent'.² Similarly, in his first major foreign policy speech as prime minister, Rishi Sunak set out the tilt to the Indo-Pacific as a key pillar of his foreign policy and advocated 'seizing the huge opportunities on offer in the Indo-Pacific by building deep and long-lasting partnerships'.³ This article argues that to achieve these ambitions, the Integrated Review needs to be combined with a network-centred approach. While the review set out a reasonable set of interests (sovereignty, security and prosperity) and objectives (investing in science and technology, shaping the international order, strengthening defence and security, and building resilience) for the UK's external policymaking, its understanding of the dynamics of power in world politics was fragmented. It talked about the UK's 'convening power', 'regional balances of power',⁴ a world of 'geopolitical and geoeconomic shifts' and 'systemic competition',⁵ but the approach was scattergun. As a result, UK foreign policy risked

1. HM Government, *Global Britain in a Competitive Age: The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy* (London: The Stationery Office, 2021), pp. 60 and 6 respectively.
2. Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), 'Indo-Pacific Tilt', Speech to the Milken Institute Asia Summit, 29 September 2022, <<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/foreign-secretary-james-cleverlys-speech-on-the-indo-pacific-tilt-september-2022>>, accessed 4 December 2022.
3. Prime Minister's Office 10 Downing Street, 'PM's Speech to the Lord Mayor's Banquet: 28 November 2022', <<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-speech-to-the-lord-mayors-banquet-28-november-2022>>, accessed 4 December 2022.
4. HM Government, *Global Britain in a Competitive Age*, p. 14.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 17.



British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak arrives for the G20 leaders' summit in Nusa Dua, Bali, Indonesia, November 2022. Courtesy of Reuters / Kevin Lamarque / Alamy Stock Photo

amounting to a series of ad hoc initiatives based on tactical rather than strategic thinking.

The logical thread that flows through the review document is the importance of networks, which can be provisionally defined as patterns of relationships between actors in a social context. The term is used throughout the text – and much of the effort outlined and employed subsequently involves understanding, fostering and exploiting network dynamics. Yet, at no point does the review explicitly set out a networked approach to external policymaking; nor do related strategies.⁶ There is therefore a disconnect between the overt emphasis on partnerships, minilaterals, clubs, alliances and coalitions within multilateral institutions, and the underlying existence of networks that enable, shape, constrain or prevent these configurations from operating. Importantly, where networks are evoked, they tend to be associated with shared values, which is an overly restrictive understanding of the social dynamics of world politics.⁷

By contrast, if the updated review took networks seriously, this could provide several benefits. In terms of policy analysis, a network-based approach would afford a more accurate and detailed picture of the social and political context to policy formation. An awareness of networks provides an understanding of the social dynamics and structures in place, the potential range of actions UK policymakers could undertake, as well as the practical limits to UK influence. Embracing a networked approach also allows policy to be informed by insights from network theory, including how these structures can be harnessed to serve policy goals, and how actions in one network can have linear and non-linear implications for others.

The article proceeds as follows. First, it draws a link between arguments that were used to justify Brexit, the Integrated Review's strategic framework and subsequent policy initiatives. Next, it identifies some of the relevant insights of network theory and how these could provide a more structured and

6. Ministry of Defence, *Defence in a Competitive Age* (London: The Stationery Office, 2021); HM Government, *The UK Government's Strategy for International Development* (London: The Stationery Office, 2022); HM Government, *National Strategy for Maritime Security* (London: The Stationery Office, 2022). All mention networks, especially the Defence Command paper, which refers to networks of defence attachés and defence innovation hubs (pp. 8 and 14); but none sets out a networked approach or prioritises network analysis as an organising principle of strategy.
7. For instance, the Integrated Review suggests: 'We will sit at the heart of a network of like-minded countries and flexible groupings, committed to protecting human rights and upholding global norms.' HM Government, *Global Britain in a Competitive Age*, p. 6.

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coherent approach to policy analysis. It then offers some thoughts on how these may be applied to the Indo-Pacific tilt. While it is commonplace to see Brexit as an irrational act of self-harm, there were underlying functional logics at play in seeking to loosen the UK's ties to the EU. In the run-up to the referendum in 2016, the EU was seen to have failed to address problems in the Eurozone, migration in the Mediterranean and the 2014 Russian invasion of Ukraine, in a timely and effective manner. Prominent Brexiteers such as Dominic Cummings asserted that institutions such as the EU were poor at error correction and 'extremely centralised and hierarchical therefore information processing is blocked and problems are not solved'.⁸

Rather than trying to corral 27 other states into agreeing a common position, with inevitable compromises and sub-optimal outcomes, the argument went that the UK would be better off forming ad hoc coalitions of states and other actors to address the specifics of each policy dilemma. Post-Brexit, a variety of minilateral and bilateral arrangements were advocated by ministers, officials and prominent foreign policy voices. Then Prime Minister Theresa May, in her 2018 Munich speech, called for more bilateral and 'ad hoc groupings' on security.⁹ Sir John Sawers, the former chief of the UK's Secret Intelligence Service, suggested forging a compact of major powers to respond to global security problems.¹⁰ Meanwhile, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee Tom Tugendhat argued that 'starting with ad hoc cooperative structures, the United Kingdom can make economic and diplomatic systems more responsive'.¹¹

This discourse is apparent in the Integrated Review, which emphasised the 'agility and speed of action' that comes from having left the EU,¹² 'preserving our freedom of action' and working with

'a network of like-minded countries and flexible groupings'.¹³ The international order was portrayed as fragmenting and where multilateralism stalls, 'nations will likely caucus in smaller, regional or likeminded groups'.¹⁴

Since 2016, the UK has forged new or strengthened bilateral partnerships with key states such as India (Roadmap 2030), Germany (Joint Statement and Declaration in 2018), France (Joint Statements in 2020 and 2021, Combined Joint Expeditionary Force), and Japan (Joint Statement 2022). At the minilateral level, the UK created new clubs (for example, AUKUS – the agreement between Australia, the UK and the US on sharing nuclear technology and strengthening defence relations), and PUUK (Poland, Ukraine and the UK) cooperating on defence and security. It has also established new coalitions such as the Joint Expeditionary Force, signed on 28 June 2018 by Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden (with Iceland joining in April 2021).

At times, however, these arrangements appear to have been pursued for their own sake, without reference to wider regional frameworks. For instance, AUKUS was announced following a hasty period of secret shuttle diplomacy in 2021. Although it makes excellent sense on a tactical and perhaps strategic level, the angry reaction from France, with Emmanuel Macron describing it as a 'betrayal', undermined potential Anglo-French cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, Middle East and Europe, impacting on the viability of the E3 as a security grouping and coordination of a common response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.¹⁵ It also attracted challenge from within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), a key forum with which the UK has sought to build relations, via dialogue partnership and diplomatic representation, with Indonesia

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8. Dominic Cummings, 'On the Referendum #21: Branching Histories of the 2016 Referendum and "the Frogs Before the Storm"', blog, 9 January 2017, <<https://dominiccumings.com/2017/01/09/on-the-referendum-21-branching-histories-of-the-2016-referendum-and-the-frogs-before-the-storm-2/>>, accessed 4 December 2022.
 9. Prime Minister's Office 10 Downing Street, 'PM Speech at Munich Security Conference: 17 February 2018', 17 February 2018, <<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-speech-at-munich-security-conference-17-february-2018>>, accessed 4 December 2022.
 10. Erica Moret and Fabrice Pothier, 'Sanctions After Brexit', *Survival* (Vol 60, No. 2, 2018), p. 192.
 11. Tom Tugendhat, 'Britain After Ukraine: A New Foreign Policy for an Age of Great-Power Competition', *Foreign Affairs*, 1 September 2022.
 12. HM Government, *Global Britain in a Competitive Age*, p. 3.
 13. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
 14. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
 15. Katherine Murphy, 'Macron Accuses Australian PM of Lying over Submarine Deal', *The Guardian*, 31 October 2021; M K Bhadrakumar, 'Macron Exacts Geopolitical Revenge for AUKUS Betrayal', *Asia Times*, 8 December 2021; John Keiger, 'Macron's Humiliating Climbdown over Aukus', *The Spectator*, 20 November 2022.

expressing concern about the implications for regional security and nuclear proliferation.¹⁶

Similarly, initiatives such as PUUK designed to amplify support for Ukraine come with risks to other relationships. Meanwhile, the UK's antagonism towards the EU inhibits its ability to galvanise support for firmer action over Ukraine and is too easily dismissed as the UK seeking a post-Brexit role or looking to distract attention from domestic political problems.¹⁷ Outside EU foreign policymaking forums, the UK is less able to shape the Union's debates and influence policy outcomes.

The risk in an ad hoc approach is that foreign policy becomes a matter of continually forming and disbanding groups of partners, incurring high start-up costs, with little follow-through and the threat of defection due to the lack of commitment from members. What was originally meant as a strategy could end up being a continual process of tactical manoeuvring without a wider logic or understanding of how these groups interrelate, support or undermine one another.

Multilateral institutions also continue to be a useful means of coordinating governance activity. The Integrated Review boasted of the UK having a seat in every major multilateral organisation, and argued that: '[t]he UK remains deeply committed to multilateralism' as well as noting how the UK was using its convening power in multilateral forums to promote action on climate change and health security. Contrary to Cummings's framing of international institutions such as the EU as monolithic, in practice they contain a range of

sub-groups and this provides a degree of flexibility to tailor cooperation to national priorities.¹⁸ In an era of increased competition between states, the UK will need to foster bilateral and minilateral partnerships and coalitions in multilateral forums and institutions. Here, the Integrated Review was fuzziest about who the UK would work with, and how, in the pursuit of its policy goals. A networked approach would have provided a stronger sense of how this could be achieved, even with regard to institutions such as the EU, of which the UK is no longer a member.

When it comes to the Indo-Pacific tilt, a key initiative in the review, one can see a networked logic at play. The backdrop to the Integrated Review (and a driving logic of Brexit) was a growing recognition among UK foreign policy thinkers of a global shift in power eastwards and the increasing importance of the Indo-Pacific region. As a consequence, it was argued that the UK needed to look beyond Europe for new opportunities as well as potential threats.¹⁹ As the location of most predicted global economic growth, and three rising security actors in China, Japan and India, the Indo-Pacific was posited to be the primary forum for future struggles for global influence.²⁰ China's assertion of control over the South China Sea was seen as threatening the freedom of navigation vital to so much global trade.²¹ In addition, climate change and the opening up of the 'High North' meant that the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific would be increasingly connected by new trading routes.²² Thus, the Indo-Pacific is increasingly connected to vital global networks of security, trade and economic growth.²³ Importantly,

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16. Benjamin Herscovitch and Gatra Priyandita, 'Indonesia-Australia: Deeper Divide Lies Beneath AUKUS Submarine Rift', *The Interpreter*, 8 November 2021.
 17. Emilio Casalicchio and Leonie Kijewski, 'Did Brexit Help Britain Help Ukraine?', *Politico*, 28 April 2022.
 18. Arno Van Der Zwet et al., 'Network Resilience and EU Fisheries Policy Engagement in Third Countries: Lessons for Post-Brexit Governance', *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* (2022), DOI:10.1177/136914812111067146; Ole Elgström et al., 'Coalitions in European Union Negotiations', *Scandinavian Political Studies* (Vol. 24, No. 2, 2001), pp. 111–28.
 19. John Hemmings, 'Global Britain in the Indo-Pacific', Policy Paper No. 2, Henry Jackson Society, 2018; John Hemmings (ed.), 'Infrastructure, Ideas and Strategy in the Indo-Pacific', Henry Jackson Society, March 2019.
 20. In purchasing power parity terms, Asian economies became larger than the rest of the world combined in 2020. See Valentina Romei and John Reed, 'The Asian Century is Set to Begin', *Financial Times*, 26 March 2019. According to the *Financial Times*, in 2023 Asia's GDP is expected to expand in nominal terms from \$33 trillion in 2021 to \$39 trillion in 2023, exceeding the \$34 trillion for the Americas and \$26 trillion for Europe. See Chetan Ahya, 'Asian Economic Growth to Outstrip Americas and Europe', *Financial Times*, 31 January 2022.
 21. Alessio Patalano, 'UK Defence from the "Far East" to the "Indo-Pacific"', Policy Exchange, 2019.
 22. James Rogers, 'Geopolitics and the "Wider North": The United Kingdom as a "Strategic Pivot"', *RUSI Journal* (Vol. 157, No. 6, 2012), pp. 42–53.
 23. James Rogers and Alexander Lanoszka, 'A "Crowe Memorandum" for the Twenty-First Century', Council on Geostrategy, 2 March 2011, <<https://www.geostrategy.org.uk/research/a-crowe-memorandum-for-the-twenty-first-century/>>, accessed 4 December 2022.

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as a recent commentary notes, '[t]he Indo-Pacific is not bound together by terrestrial geographies and relationships but by oceanic ones'.²⁴ These networks have a character of their own, involving more distant and dispersed ties than pertain in the smaller geography of Europe, for example.

Policymakers have acknowledged that to implement the tilt they would need to harness networks.²⁵ In his speech to the Milken Institute Asia Summit in September 2022, the foreign secretary explicitly asserted that 'we are looking to build on ... pre-existing networks, to improve our partnerships. And our relationship with the Indo-Pacific is central'.²⁶ Meanwhile, Rishi Sunak has argued that the UK government is 'seizing the huge opportunities on offer in the Indo-Pacific by building deep and long-lasting partnerships'.²⁷ The UK is engaging with ASEAN and seeking to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership – recognising the value of multilateral institutions, albeit ones with looser ties than the EU; but is primarily emphasising bilateral and minilateral partnerships. As Tugendhat has put it, '[f]or the United Kingdom, partnerships are power'.²⁸

In short, the Integrated Review, and subsequent policy initiatives, promote the benefits of ad hoc relationships, while acknowledging the continuing logic of multilateralism in some areas. What is absent thus far is a wider sense of how these disparate bilaterals, clubs and coalitions link together – in particular, how these groups operate within as well as outside multilateral settings; and how changes in the form or function of the UK's relationships in one policy area may have impacts on others. The strange thing about this gap is that a logical way of pursuing the Integrated Review's strategy – a networked

approach – has been regularly evoked in policy discourse for over a decade.

When William Hague assumed office as foreign secretary in 2010, he set out the idea that 'influence increasingly lies with networks of states with fluid and dynamic patterns of allegiance, alliance and connections, including the informal'.²⁹ In this 'networked world', flexibility would be key to responding to threats and challenges.³⁰ Hague emphasised strengthening bilateral relationships during his tenure and sought to harness the expertise and influence of non-state actors, but subsequent foreign secretaries failed to take up these ideas.³¹ James Cleverly has stated that '[t]he UK is committed to overcoming ... challenges ... by reinforcing those grids, strengthening those networks, building more and deeper partnerships'.³² Tom Tugendhat, in September 2022, suggested the UK 'can address the economic dependence and lack of resilience that have become its key weaknesses by building networks'.³³

Although the Integrated Review does mention networks at various times, it does not explicitly outline a 'networked foreign policy' in this vein. Yet, adopting a network-centred approach arguably offers a more coherent way of understanding how ad hoc groups can be harnessed to promote foreign policy goals.

Network analysis looks at the relationships between actors in a given social context. Specifically, it explores the dynamics of these relationships, including how they emerge and operate. Networks are made up of 'nodes' – individual members whose interactions or 'ties' to one another give form to these social arrangements. By analysing the number, strength, nature and operation of ties between nodes, analysts aim to capture the structure and

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24. Christian Bueger, Timothy Edmunds and Scott Edwards, 'Innovation and New Strategic Choices', *RUSI Journal* (Vol. 166, No. 4, 2021), p. 73.
 25. Tugendhat, 'Britain After Ukraine'.
 26. FCDO, 'Indo-Pacific Tilt'.
 27. Prime Minister's Office 10 Downing Street, 'PM's Speech to the Lord Mayor's Banquet'.
 28. Tugendhat, 'Britain After Ukraine'.
 29. Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'International Law and Justice in a Networked World', Speech by Foreign Secretary William Hague, 9 July 2012, <<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/international-law-and-justice-in-a-networked-world>>, accessed 4 December 2022.
 30. FCDO, 'Britain's Foreign Policy in a Networked World', speech by Foreign Secretary William Hague, 1 July 2010, <<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/britain-s-foreign-policy-in-a-networked-world--2>>, accessed 4 December 2022.
 31. Jamie Gaskarth, 'William Hague's Activist Foreign Policy: The Perils of Merging Practices', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* (21 August 2022), DOI: 10.1080/09557571.2022.2106822.
 32. FCDO, 'Indo-Pacific Tilt'.
 33. Tugendhat, 'Britain After Ukraine'.

dynamics of social networks.³⁴ Ties between nodes may be based on a number of factors, including position (membership of organisations, shared region, international roles), types of interaction (alliances, partnerships, rivalry, competition), the form of connection (such as flows of information, people or ideas), interests at stake (survival, security, prosperity), and issue area (climate, energy, development).³⁵

Network analysis can either be ‘whole of network’, looking at the entirety of its operation, or ‘egocentric’, examining a particular node and how it relates to other nodes; but these can be complementary.³⁶ In practice, ties among nodes are distributed unevenly.³⁷ Some nodes are central and some peripheral, based on how many interactions they have with other members. That pattern forms a hierarchy within the network. Nodes that are more central are better able to act as ‘brokers’, ‘integrators’ or ‘connectors’, enabling or constraining network ties.

Where a node sits within a network is important as it affects freedom of manoeuvre and shapes its interactions with others. Certain types of behaviour are more associated with central versus peripheral members of a network; for example, core nodes are more likely to be aggressive,³⁸ perhaps because, as Reinhold Niebuhr once noted, ‘all social cooperation on a larger scale ... requires a measure of coercion’, and so those doing the work of social cohesion

are more likely to need to use force to bring this about.³⁹

A further point worth noting is that networks may be open or closed. Some will have a natural limit based on factors such as geography or the capabilities of members, and the boundaries of these closed networks may be self-evident. Alternatively, other networks may be open and more diffuse, making it more difficult to establish their limits.⁴⁰ Significantly, most networks will overlap with others, giving rise to non-linear effects. In addition, nodes with ties outside their network, even if they are weak, can garner benefits. Whereas nodes in more closed networks may simply be receiving ‘the same information over and over again’, those who are able to bridge ‘structural holes’ between networks are more likely to receive diverse information and so be in an advantageous position, allowing them to profit from their mediating role.⁴¹

As network analysis is interested in the dynamics of relationships, it offers a more fluid and practical understanding of power than one based on attributes. It also provides a wider range of actors – and potential means of influence – than state-based narratives. For instance, to implement more effective sanctions regimes, analysts have engaged in social network analyses of groups of individuals within target states, allowing more precise ways of pressuring key decision-makers to change policy (or to impose costs for continuing their pursuance).⁴² Technology, including artificial intelligence, can

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34. Naim Kapucu and Qian Hu, *Network Governance* (London: Routledge, 2020); Miles Kahler (ed.), *Networked Politics* (London: Cornell University Press, 2009).
 35. Peter V Marsden, ‘Recent Developments in Network Measurement’, in Peter J Carrington, John Scott and Stanley Wasserman (eds), *Models and Methods in Social Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 9; Stephen P Borgatti et al., ‘Network Analysis in the Social Sciences’, *Science* (Vol. 323, No. 5916, 2009), pp. 892–95; Deborah Avant and Oliver Westerwinter (eds), *The New Power Politics: Networks and Transnational Security Governance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Mark Bevir and David Richards, ‘Decentring Policy Networks: A Theoretical Agenda’, *Public Administration* (Vol. 87, No. 1, 2001), pp. 3–14. Classic studies of alliance formation include: Stephen Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (New York, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987); Robert Jervis, ‘From Balance to Concert: A Study of International Security Cooperation’, *World Politics* (Vol. 38, No. 1, 1985), pp. 58–79; Glenn H Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (New York, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007); Benjamin Fordham and Paul Poast, ‘All Alliances Are Multilateral: Rethinking Alliance Formation’, *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (Vol. 60, No. 5, 2016), pp. 840–65.
 36. Carrington, Scott and Wasserman (eds), *Models and Methods in Social Analysis*, p. 3.
 37. Avant and Westerwinter, *The New Power Politics*, p. 7.
 38. Emilie M Hafner-Burton, Miles Kahler and Alexander H Montgomery, ‘Network Analysis for International Relations’, *International Organization* (Vol. 63, No. 3, Summer 2009), p. 569.
 39. Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (London: Continuum, 2005), p. 6.
 40. Wouter De Nooy, Andrej Mrvar and Vladimir Batagelj, *Exploratory Social Network Analysis with Pajek* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 6.
 41. *Ibid.*, p. 138.
 42. FCDO, ‘UK Sanctions the Shady Network Funding Putin’s Lavish Lifestyle’, press release, 13 May 2022, <<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-sanctions-the-shady-network-funding-putins-lavish-lifestyle>>, accessed 4 December 2022.

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enhance this analysis.⁴³ Tracking social connections between individuals and groups allows for mapping the depth and quality of their relationships, potentially revealing underlying and non-obvious networks that shape outcomes.⁴⁴ Social network analyses have long employed sociometrics and graph theory to provide visualisations of network structures.⁴⁵ In short, network theory provides a useful vocabulary for understanding social dynamics in world politics. Network analysis offers the means to identify how the UK could contribute to, and benefit from, its network ties.

Recent work on networks offers important insights about the UK's scope for developing future partnerships and groups in the Indo-Pacific. For example, Yasuhiro Izumikawa has argued that the emergence of East Asia's hub-and-spokes system of alliances (whereby key poles of power such as the US draw other states into their orbit via trade and defence partnerships as well as formal alliances) is best captured by the social exchange network approach.⁴⁶ In essence, this posits that networks are forums for social exchange. Members will choose partners who 'can offer the largest net benefits – the sum of benefits gained from the partner minus the resources that it may offer in return' and will do so at the expense of 'less rewarding exchange opportunities with other partners'.⁴⁷ As a result, networks tend to have 'denser exchanges among resource-rich actors'.⁴⁸

In that light, any attempt to strengthen UK ties with networks in the Indo-Pacific would have to be aware of the existing patterns of exchange and how UK involvement could enhance or disrupt them. The Integrated Review shows a good understanding of this in its assertion that 'the future success of Global Britain requires us to understand the precise nature and extent of British strengths and the integrated offer we bring in other parts of the world'.⁴⁹ Yet, it

says little about the complexity of this calculation. Moreover, if, as noted earlier, core nodes tend to be more aggressive, this may need to be borne in mind when considering who the UK should align with in Indo-Pacific networks.⁵⁰

In essence, a networked approach, aware of the importance of social exchange, would involve policymakers having a deep understanding of the social dynamics of the Indo-Pacific region. They would need to consider what states want the UK to offer them, where this ranks the UK in terms of network contributors, how any change in contribution would affect patterns of social relations (within and beyond the region), what capacity the UK has to meet or go beyond the demands of network partners, and how far these arrangements would bring net benefits or costs to the UK as a collective entity.

This analysis would go beyond the excellent but peripatetic political reporting currently undertaken – or fragmented and issue-led spasms of coordinated analysis – to offer regular, systematic analysis of the networks of influence in the region. Furthermore, UK policymakers are not starting from scratch and so network analysis requires historical awareness of how these relationships have formed and functioned over time. The UK's past relations with the region impact on how others perceive them. Efforts to provide leadership may be seen in colonial terms. Previous decisions, such as over arms sales and patterns of cooperation during the Cold War, still affect the dynamics of relations and network formations today.⁵¹ Therefore, even if groups look possible based on inductive reasoning, they may be impractical. As such, it is important to consider social dynamics across a longer span of time than the immediate present. Past enmity is not an insurmountable barrier to cooperation (consider how US policymakers were willing to accept Japanese

43. David Lazer and Stefan Wojcik, 'Political Networks and Computational Science', in Jennifer Nicoll Victor, Alexander H Montgomery and Mark Lubell (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Networks* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); John Scott, *Social Network Analysis: A Handbook* (London: Sage, 2002).

44. Avant and Westerwinter, *The New Power Politics*, p. 6.

45. Scott, *Social Network Analysis*, p. 16.

46. Yasuhiro Izumikawa, 'Network Connections and the Emergence of the Hub-and-Spokes Alliance System in East Asia', *International Security* (Vol. 45, No. 2, Fall 2020), pp. 8–9.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

49. HM Government, *Global Britain in a Competitive Age*, p. 14.

50. Hafner-Burton, Kahler and Montgomery, 'Network Analysis for International Relations', p. 569.

51. For instance, the UK was reluctant to share submarine technology with India in the 1960s, increasing its reliance on Soviet equipment, which continues to shape its relations with Russia and the US/UK in the present. See the testimony of Sir Walter Leonard Allinson, 'British Diplomatic Oral History Programme', p. 11, <<https://archives.chu.cam.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/01/Allinson.pdf>>, accessed 4 December 2022.

and German remilitarisation during the Cold War); but an awareness of how barriers emerged is useful to considering how likely they are to be overcome.

The UK continues to be a member of security networks in the Indo-Pacific that date back to the immediate post-war period. It is a member of the 'Five Eyes' intelligence sharing group, which links it closely to Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the US, and a signatory to the Five Power Defence Agreement along with Malaysia, Singapore, Australia and New Zealand. It has also been looking to bolster its bilateral relationships in the region via a number of strategic dialogues, such as that between the UK and Malaysia, first initiated in February 2022;⁵² between the UK and South Korea, held in July 2022;⁵³ between the UK and Thailand (currently on its fourth iteration);⁵⁴ the 'enhanced partnership' between the UK and the Philippines; as well as arguably the most significant bilateral development between the UK and Japan, involving deep cooperation on R&D and procurement.

Many of these arrangements are able to build on historical ties but more recent history may limit the scope for cooperation. Since the UK downsized its commitment to the region in the 1960s, and with the passing of the generation who had experienced British Imperial rule, the UK's social connections within defence communities have lessened.⁵⁵ Elites from the region continue to experience military training at Sandhurst and the UK has participated alongside a number of Indo-Pacific states in naval exercises.⁵⁶ Yet, the sense of abandonment among some communities (particularly in Australia) continues to fester.⁵⁷

As a result, any discussion of UK involvement in networks in the Indo-Pacific has to demonstrate an awareness of the social dynamics and relationships that have emerged in the interim. The UK cannot simply announce a tilt to the region and expect previous allies to fall into line. Rather, it needs to

accept it is engaging with regional networks from a peripheral position. This is not to deny its potential influence, but to accept its limits and understand how it can realistically be exercised.

The UK's security presence has been enhanced with upgraded facilities in Singapore, Bahrain and proposed submarine berthing in Australia

For instance, the UK's security 'offer' – bearing in mind social exchange theory noted above – is modest. There are a small number of partners with whom the UK would be willing to share advanced technology (currently Japan, South Korea and Australia). AUKUS means the UK could play a leading role in a potentially transformative technology-sharing network, but this is built on longstanding historical intelligence and defence ties. The scope for new networks on that level is limited. India is looking to divest itself of Russian military technology due to supply issues and so may be a partner for the future – although there remain concerns over its reliability. China is defined in the Integrated Review as a 'systemic competitor', which precludes cooperation on sensitive security matters.

The UK's security presence has been enhanced with upgraded facilities in Singapore, Bahrain and proposed submarine berthing in Australia. Yet, for the most part, patrolling will be undertaken by two LPV craft and submarines; Carrier Strike Group visits will be rare. Thus, the UK will not be a major contributor to the security of the region. A better model and metaphor for UK participation in Indo-Pacific networks might be its relations with ASEAN. Having

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52. FCDO, 'Malaysia–United Kingdom Strategic Dialogue, February 2022', Policy Paper, February 2022, <<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-malaysia-strategic-dialogue-2022/malaysia-united-kingdom-strategic-dialogue-february-2022>>, accessed 7 December 2022.
 53. Jo Da-gyum, 'South Korea, UK Hold 1st Defense Strategic Dialogue to Promote Multifaceted Security Cooperation', *Korea Herald*, 20 July 2022, <<https://asianews.network/south-korea-uk-hold-1st-defense-strategic-dialogue-to-promote-multifaceted-security-cooperation/>>, accessed 7 December 2022.
 54. FCDO, 'Fourth Session of the United Kingdom–Thailand Strategic Dialogue: Joint Statement', Policy Paper, July 2022, <<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fourth-uk-thailand-strategic-dialogue-2022/fourth-session-of-the-united-kingdom-thailand-strategic-dialogue-joint-statement>>, accessed 7 December 2022.
 55. Anit Mukherjee, *The Absent Dialogue: Politicians, Bureaucrats and the Military in India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).
 56. Euan Graham, 'Reflections on the Royal Navy's Indo-Pacific Engagement', IISS blog, 19 October 2021, <<https://www.iiss.org/blogs/analysis/2021/10/reflections-on-the-royal-navys-indo-pacific-engagement>>, accessed 4 December 2022.
 57. See Ian Hall, 'AUKUS and Australia–UK Strategic Reconvergence: Return to Oz?' in this issue.

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secured dialogue partner status, and appointed a dedicated ambassador to ASEAN in 2019, the UK is now able to contribute to its discussions on security in Southeast Asia, but does so from the sidelines.

A networked approach also opens up new possibilities for social exchange, below and beyond the senior government level

Following the logic of network theory, the UK is peripheral to the Indo-Pacific region in security terms. Recognising that is important in appreciating the limits of UK influence; however, that does not mean the UK cannot be a useful interlocutor to security nodes in the region. As an important actor in European security, the UK is a useful alternative node for Indo-Pacific partners seeking knowledge, expertise and technology outside their denser network frameworks. The ability to connect with nodes outside one's immediate network affords opportunities for diversity of thought and creativity, providing advantages over more introspective network nodes. Moreover, the oceanic nature of the Indo-Pacific means many of its networks are necessarily more open than those in other regions that are based on territorial proximity – allowing more scope for extra-regional states such as the UK to participate.

A networked approach also opens up new possibilities for social exchange, below and beyond the senior government level. People-to-people networks, based on diaspora communities, could be important motors for deepening ties between the UK and key partners in the Indo-Pacific, most obviously India and Australia.⁵⁸ Anglo-Indians make up the largest diaspora in the UK, while the British diaspora is the largest in Australia. The election of Rishi Sunak as UK prime minister was welcomed in India on the basis of his Indian ancestry and Hindu faith,⁵⁹ but it was also evidence of the social mobility of immigrant populations from the region – enhancing

the UK's reputation as an open and dynamic society. The UK government sought to harness diaspora ties in 2015, with David Cameron introducing Prime Minister Narendra Modi to a crowd of Anglo-Indians at Wembley Stadium; but these efforts have been fitful in the interim.⁶⁰

Building foreign policy sectorally does carry risks. Some network relations will disproportionately benefit certain sectors of British society, potentially to the detriment of others.⁶¹ Communities with electoral significance, or material or social power, may have an undue influence, distorting UK priorities. They also increase the complexity of policy frameworks, bringing forth attendant non-linear effects. Importantly, networked perspectives capture these kinds of dynamics well. Indeed, one of their key insights is to highlight the interconnections among actors, both official and unofficial, charting the network effects that interventions in one sector may have in other areas. A networked approach therefore offers more potential insights into the impact of policymaking on domestic prosperity in different sectors and regions than a simple state-based model. In addition, it can highlight the global implications of network spillovers. On the one hand, constructive relations in one policy area may build trust that feeds into cooperation in others. On the other hand, allies may resent new relations being formed with rivals, either because they strengthen states with whom they are in competition; or because they might appear to loosen existing commitments. A network-informed approach would be sensitive to these delicate balances and look to calculate the likely pattern of effects, based either on formal modelling or qualitative political assessments.

Existing network scholarship will also offer insights that can be used to bolster this analysis. For instance, network scholars have suggested that states are very self-interested when it comes to judging another state's performance of its network obligations. Traditional alliance theory assumed that states would value loyalty and expect their allies to uphold their commitments. In reality, Iain Henry notes that allies favour reliability, in terms of continuing to act in a way that promotes their mutual

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58. Grant Thornton, 'India in the UK: The Diaspora Effect 2.0', March 2022, <<https://www.grantthornton.co.uk/globalassets/1.-member-firms/united-kingdom/pdf/publication/2022/india-in-the-uk-the-diaspora-effect-2.0.pdf>>, accessed 4 December 2022.
 59. Sheikh Saaliq, 'Indians Embrace Next UK Prime Minister, Sunak, as Their Own', *AP News*, 25 October 2022, <<https://apnews.com/article/rishi-sunak-europe-india-new-delhi-government-and-politics-7b970e2e8fecd0840b2cc312743181a>>, accessed 4 December 2022.
 60. *BBC*, 'Modi Visit: UK and India's "Special Relationship" Hailed', 13 November 2015.
 61. Jamie Gaskarth, 'Communitarian Foreign Policy: Ethics and Public Opinion', Foreign Policy Centre, 8 September 2020, <<https://fpc.org.uk/communitarian-foreign-policy-ethics-and-public-opinion/>>, accessed 4 December 2022.

interests. Thus, one ally will not automatically be concerned if another is abandoned; rather it will weigh up whether upholding the commitment would have been more damaging to it personally than defection.⁶²

This indicates that making commitments, and possibly breaking them, in the Indo-Pacific would not by itself risk the UK's reputation across the board, provided the UK continued to put the interests of existing allies first. Nevertheless, taking on substantial obligations in another region would likely involve either greater overall cost; or redistribution of effort and resources away from the Euro-Atlantic area – a move that would involve careful negotiation with allies.

There also exists the possibility of blowback. Should the UK involve itself more closely in matters such as Taiwan or the South China Sea, that may tempt China to increase its presence in the High North, engaging in patrolling in the Arctic and Atlantic Oceans and threatening to intercede in the UK's immediate neighbourhood. NATO's new strategic concept makes scant mention of the Indo-Pacific; but if that were to change in the future, it may provoke rivals in the Indo-Pacific region to formulate their own collective security arrangements.⁶³ A networked approach is useful as it allows us to appreciate the linear and non-linear effects of merging the security dynamics of different regions.

In another example, Poland's recent substantial order for tanks, artillery and aircraft from South Korea means that the nascent PUUK grouping will be linked to the Indo-Pacific via defence supply arrangements.⁶⁴ South Korea has sought to downplay how far this means it is embroiled in the war in Ukraine, out of concern Russia may respond by stirring up trouble with its neighbour

North Korea.⁶⁵ Yet, it still creates connections that could have future impacts on the region. Japan's involvement in the Future Combat Air System links it with the existing memorandum of understanding network between the UK, Italy and Sweden.⁶⁶ If Japan joined the Five Eyes network, and perhaps, in time, AUKUS, ties between the European and East Asian security complexes could become denser.⁶⁷

A further, obvious but at times under-acknowledged, aspect of engaging in partners from other regions is that their concerns, and their motivations for engaging with networks, will differ. For example, in a study on alliances between governments and non-state actors in central Africa, it was noted that a key motivator for alliance formation was regime security.⁶⁸ Governments in that region allied with actors who could help to undermine opposition movements. Conversely, they would avoid alliances with partners who might be expected to amplify the voices of domestic opponents.

Extrapolating these insights to the Indo-Pacific, this suggests that autocratic (or even semi-autocratic) governments in the region may be wary of aligning themselves with the UK if they felt that doing so would create avenues for domestic dissent to be aired, via human rights discourses. Rhetoric emphasising 'networks of liberty' or a 'league of democracies' would thereby close off potential partnerships.⁶⁹ In turn, efforts to imply shared values, despite obvious differences in attitudes to human rights, will attract domestic criticism in the UK itself.⁷⁰ As such, it may be more appropriate to emphasise order, security and stability, features that autocratic governments profess to support in the international system, so as to foster cooperation while minimising domestic political criticism.

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62. Iain D Henry, 'What Allies Want: Reconsidering Loyalty, Reliability, and Alliance Interdependence', *International Security* (Vol. 44, No. 4, Spring 2020), pp. 45–83.
63. NATO, 'NATO 2022 Strategic Concept', <<https://www.nato.int/strategic-concept/>>, accessed 4 December 2022.
64. Andrew Salmon, 'Korea's Biggest-ever Arms Deal to Fortify NATO's Poland', *Asia Times*, 28 July 2022.
65. Josh Smith, 'Analysis: With Massive Polish Arms Deal S. Korea Steps Closer to Ukraine War', *Reuters*, 29 July 2022.
66. Kana Inagaki et al., 'The Fighter Jet That Could Create a New Alliance Between the UK and Japan', *Financial Times*, 27 November 2022.
67. On security complexes, see Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
68. Henning Tamm, 'The Origins of Transnational Alliances Rulers, Rebels, and Political Survival in the Congo Wars', *International Security* (Vol. 41, No. 1, Summer 2016), pp. 147–81.
69. FCDO, 'Building the Network of Liberty', Speech by the Foreign Secretary at Chatham House, 8 December 2021, <<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/foreign-secretary-liz-truss-building-the-network-of-liberty>>, accessed 4 December 2022.
70. See, for instance, Amnesty International UK, 'Liam Fox's Talk of Shared Values with Brutal Philippines President Duterte "Beggars Belief"', press release, 5 April 2017.

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Finally, an important feature of a network-based strategy is that it cuts across bilateral, minilateral and multilateral divides and shows how they interrelate. Multilateral forums host multiple sub-groupings of states, which can have a bearing on outcomes, as with the covert diplomacy of China, India, Brazil and South Africa at the 2009 Copenhagen summit.⁷¹ Even a tightly regulated setting of closely aligned members such as the EU is subject to considerable fragmentation of interests and values. Rather than the monolithic portrayal of pro-Brexit commentary, the EU thereby contains networks within its structures, as well as between member and non-member states.⁷²

As a consequence, a future networked strategy should be looking to foster groups that can operate in multilateral settings, even if the UK itself is not a full member and cannot participate from a position of equality. Outside the EU, the UK still engages with security networks in the region, from NATO to the sub-groups of JEF, PUUK, UK–Baltic cooperation and the European Political Community.⁷³ The tilt to the Indo-Pacific offers the chance to engage in similar ad hoc groupings in that region. There is also the strong potential for engagement with other regions, such as the Middle East and North Africa, South America, or Sub-Saharan Africa, on a networked basis. Importantly, the more fluid concept of networks allows a greater appreciation of how these social groups interact and impact on one another – in that sense, it may enable a more global strategy, befitting Global Britain.

Conclusion

The Integrated Review was informed by two key assumptions: that outside the EU, the UK would deploy a more agile form of foreign policy based on ad hoc groups; and that the UK needed to engage more closely with the Indo-Pacific, given its growing importance. A networked approach is the missing element to this strategy. The tilt to the Indo-Pacific needs to be undertaken with a deep understanding

of the social dynamics – the networks – at play in the region if it is to be successful. The looser forms of association implied by networks aligns well with regional expectations. The Indo-Pacific is not home to a multilateral collective security alliance such as NATO and there has been longstanding resistance to such an arrangement among states in the region. Rather, they have tended to favour bilateral agreements with the US or looser forums for dialogue. Nor does it host a dense regional institution such as the EU. As such, network theory provides a stronger framework for identifying how the UK can increase its influence in the context of the Indo-Pacific.

A future networked strategy should be looking to foster groups that can operate in multilateral settings, even if the UK itself is not a full member and cannot participate from a position of equality

To harness the benefits of a network-centric approach, the UK government needs to conduct fine-grained analysis of the social dynamics of the region. A full-fledged network analysis would combine sociometric and graph mapping of individual, group and state connections to map the region as a whole. This would then be refined with sectoral network analysis in key areas such as trade, security, science and technology cooperation, and diaspora ties. As the UK seeks to develop partnerships in the region, an egocentric network analysis of each ‘node’, or state actor, would offer a more systematic way of evaluating the precise nature of UK ties with central and peripheral nodes and the scope for change. Importantly, these metrics cannot only be captured quantitatively and would need to be informed by qualitative biographical, historical and political analysis.

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71. *First Post*, ‘How Obama, Clinton Crashed a “Secret” Meet Between China, India’, 11 June 2014, <<https://www.firstpost.com/world/how-obama-clinton-crashed-a-secret-meet-between-china-india-1565611.html>>, accessed 8 December 2022.
 72. Tanja A Börzel and Karen Heard-Lauréote, ‘Networks in EU Multi-Level Governance: Concepts and Contributions’, *Journal of Public Policy* (Vol. 29, No. 2, 2009), pp. 135–51; Miles Kahler, ‘Complex Governance and the New Interdependence Approach (NIA)’, *Review of International Political Economy* (Vol. 23, No. 5, 2016), pp. 825–39; Alice Billon-Galland and Richard G Whitman, ‘Towards a Strategic Agenda for the E3: Opportunities and Risks for France, Germany and the UK’, Chatham House research paper, April 2021.
 73. FCDO, ‘Foreign Secretary Agrees Joint UK Statement with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania (11 October 2021)’, press release, <<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-agrees-joint-uk-statement-with-estonia-latvia-and-lithuania-11-october-2021>>, accessed 7 December 2022.

Furthermore, a networked approach to foreign policy could be applied to other regions to provide a more holistic understanding of the UK's connections around the world. In the case of future relations with the EU, a network-centred approach would draw greater attention to the way the Union is made up of various sub-groups and coalitions, giving a broader sense of how the UK could seek to influence debates despite no longer being a member. It might also be applied to relatively neglected regions in the UK foreign policy imagination, such as South America and Sub-Saharan Africa, which contain important nodes in resource networks as well as areas of significant economic growth.

In short, policymakers have regularly hinted that networks are vital to UK national strategy, something recognised by the Integrated Review and by key partners such as the US.⁷⁴ The Integrated Review's refresh is an excellent opportunity to embrace a networked approach and thereby provide a more systematic strategy for maximising UK influence in the world. ■

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74. For example, in 2019 the US Department of Defense set out a networked strategy for the Indo-Pacific. See Department of Defense, 'Indo-Pacific Strategy Report: Preparedness, Partnerships, And Promoting a Networked Region', June 2019, <<https://media.defense.gov/2019/Jul/01/2002152311/-1/-1/1/DEPARTMENT-OF-DEFENSE-INDO-PACIFIC-STRATEGY-REPORT-2019.PDF>>, accessed 4 December 2022.