



House of Commons  
Foreign Affairs Committee

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# **Building Bridges: Reawakening UK-India ties**

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**Eighteenth Report of Session 2017–19**

*Report, together with formal minutes relating  
to the report*

*Ordered by the House of Commons  
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## The Foreign Affairs Committee

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## Summary

The UK is falling behind in the global race to engage with a rising India. Despite strong ties across investment, education and culture—and a shared commitment to democracy and to the rules-based international order—the relationship is not fulfilling its potential. India’s place in the world is changing fast, and UK strategy has not yet adjusted to this new reality. As the UK prepares to leave the EU, it is time to reset this relationship. We cannot afford to be complacent or rely on historical connections to deliver a modern partnership. The Government needs to adapt its strategy to India’s enhanced influence, doing more to recognise and respond to New Delhi’s priorities. Above all, these are to gain influence on the global stage, and to raise living standards at home.

Facilitating the movement of people is fundamental to the goal of an enhanced partnership. UK migration policy has at times undercut our broader strategic objectives for the relationship—while the Global Britain strategy is not being heard clearly in India, the “hostile environment” message is getting through. Movement between the UK and India is what builds the living bridge, and students ensure it will remain strong long into the future.

India’s place in the world is shifting not just in economic weight, but—rightly—in status, ambition and role in global affairs. The UK and India’s convergence of interests in the Indian Ocean region offers an opportunity to develop closer ties on defence and security. Our efforts to build links with China, and partner with Chinese infrastructure projects in the region, should not be pursued at the expense of ties with India. While our relationship with Beijing is undoubtedly important, the depth of shared values between the UK and India make New Delhi a vital strategic partner for the future.

While the UK and India’s international interests are not always aligned, they are based on similar principles. We will often be on the same side in a world in transition. There is a growing mismatch between India’s global importance and its place in the multilateral system. It is in the UK’s interest to help India gain the status it seeks—if China wants to change the rules of the game, India is seeking a seat at the table. In a world threatened by autocratic states with contempt for the rules-based international system, it is more important than ever before that the UK and India support each other—and our mutual allies.

# 1 Introduction

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1. India is an essential partner to the UK and will only become more important. A strong bilateral relationship based on a living bridge of people has developed, with shared interests in the security of trade routes and respect for international law—both of which will hinge increasingly on India’s attitude. The two countries have much in common—a diaspora, trade, investment, education and tourism, security interests—and as democratic nation states share a strong stake in upholding the rule of law. As the balance of economic power shifts back to Asia the UK’s strategic interest will increasingly be drawn to partners beyond Europe.

2. However, this relationship is not meeting its full potential. There is increased global competition to engage with India, and the UK is falling behind other countries in its share of the country’s global trade, international students, tourism, and as a defence partner. The countries’ international interests are not always aligned.<sup>1</sup>

3. The changes underway in an increasingly outward-looking India make this an ideal moment to reassess the bilateral relationship. That is why we launched an inquiry into UK-India relations in July 2018. Our intention was to take stock of the relationship, and to identify how the UK can make the most of it: to ensure that two countries which currently have similar-sized economies can transform a fraught historical relationship into a powerful alliance that benefits both in future. We are grateful to all those who gave evidence to an inquiry that has become all the more relevant following the re-election of Narendra Modi and the prospect that a new Prime Minister will take office here before the end of the summer.<sup>2</sup>

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1 For example, India voted against the UK’s efforts to increase the powers of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) following the Salisbury incident.

[Q30](#) [Rahul Roy-Chaudhury]; FCO ([GBI0015](#)), para 67

2 We received more than 30 pieces of written evidence, and held five oral evidence sessions. In October 2018 we sought an overview of the relationship from Sir James Bevan, former UK High Commissioner to India; and Rahul Roy-Chaudhury, Senior Fellow at the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS). Our second session, in November, took evidence on India’s economy and development issues from Dr Reuben Abraham, CEO and Senior Fellow at the IDFC Institute. This was followed by a session on bilateral trade and investment, with Shishir Bajoria, Chair of the Bajoria Group; Lord Bilimoria, Founder and Chair of Cobra Beer; Dan Mobley, Global Corporate Relations Director at Diageo; and Devie Mohan, co-founder and CEO of Burnmark. Our fourth session considered the broader strategic relationship, with Dr Rudra Chaudhuri, Senior Lecturer at King’s College London and Director of Carnegie India; Ranjan Mathai, former Indian High Commissioner to the UK; and Professor Kate Sullivan de Estrada, Associate Professor in the International Relations of South Asia at the University of Oxford. Finally, in March 2019, we held a session with Rt Hon Mark Field MP, Minister of State for Asia and the Pacific at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO); and Fergus Auld, Head of South Asia Department and India Co-ordinator at the FCO. We were also able to draw on oral and written evidence submitted to our inquiry into China and the International Rules-Based System, and on oral evidence from the Foreign Secretary.

The Committee Chair visited India in November 2018 to take part in commemorations to mark the end of the First World War, hosted by the UK High Commission in New Delhi. Committee Members held a small private roundtable with figures in the UK-India business community in April 2019, hosted by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII). We would like to thank the UK High Commission and the CII for their assistance, as well as those who attended the roundtable. We would particularly like to thank Ian Austin MP and Mike Gapes MP, two former Members of the Committee, who took part in evidence sessions held as part of this inquiry and made an important contribution.

## 2 A special relationship?

4. The UK and India share much in common. A long and sometimes painful history has brought us together through language, culture, and legal systems. These factors, along with close ties in investment and education, and the presence of 1.45 million people of Indian heritage in the UK, mean that the countries have a deep connection.

5. Although Minister of State for Asia and the Pacific Mark Field told us that the UK-India relationship was “now a relationship of equals”,<sup>3</sup> the evidence we received suggests that the Indian government does not necessarily see it the same way. While the last two British Prime Ministers have been quick to visit New Delhi, and the FCO has said that the country is “central” to its aspirations for “Global Britain”,<sup>4</sup> Prime Minister Modi travelled to more than 20 other countries—including Ireland, France, Canada, Japan, Australia, and China—before visiting the UK.<sup>5</sup> He said in 2018 that “the day is not far when [the] Indian economy will overtake Britain’s,” an event now expected this year (see graph, below).<sup>6</sup>

6. The UK has failed to give this relationship the attention it deserves. The Foreign Secretary told us that the relationship had “not got near our full potential” despite the extent of the shared values.<sup>7</sup> The Permanent Under-Secretary of the FCO told us that the UK’s foreign policy priorities are “our neighbourhood, including the Middle East and Russia; the far east, particularly China; and the United States”—a list that does not include India.<sup>8</sup> Minister Field told us that “we do not try to pick winners” in Asia, contrasting the UK’s approach with that of other countries that are “more in the India than the China camp”.<sup>9</sup> We heard evidence that the UK has fallen behind other countries when it comes to India’s global trade ties, international students, tourism, technology entrepreneurs, and defence industry—all fast-growing sectors. Some witnesses told us that, while an older generation in India still see the UK as a natural partner, many young people look first to countries such as the US.<sup>10</sup> British-Indian entrepreneur Lord Bilimoria said that the relationship was at its lowest point in his 15 years of working on bilateral initiatives.<sup>11</sup> The current Foreign Secretary has not yet visited India, though he told us he was hoping to visit in late 2018 or early 2019.<sup>12</sup>

3 [Q186](#) [Minister Field]

4 Memorandum from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, March 2018 in Global Britain, [HC 780](#), Foreign Affairs Committee, 12 March 2018

5 UK India Business Council ([GBI0018](#)), para 8; Bridge India ([GBI0029](#))

6 [India to overtake UK in IMF global economic rankings](#), Financial Times, 19 December 2018; [Economy on track, India set to overtake UK, says PM Narendra Modi](#), The Indian Express, 1 October 2018  
Data from: [World Bank via Google Public Data](#), updated 6 July 2018

7 Oral evidence from the Foreign Secretary, [HC 538](#), 31 October 2018, Q354, Q411

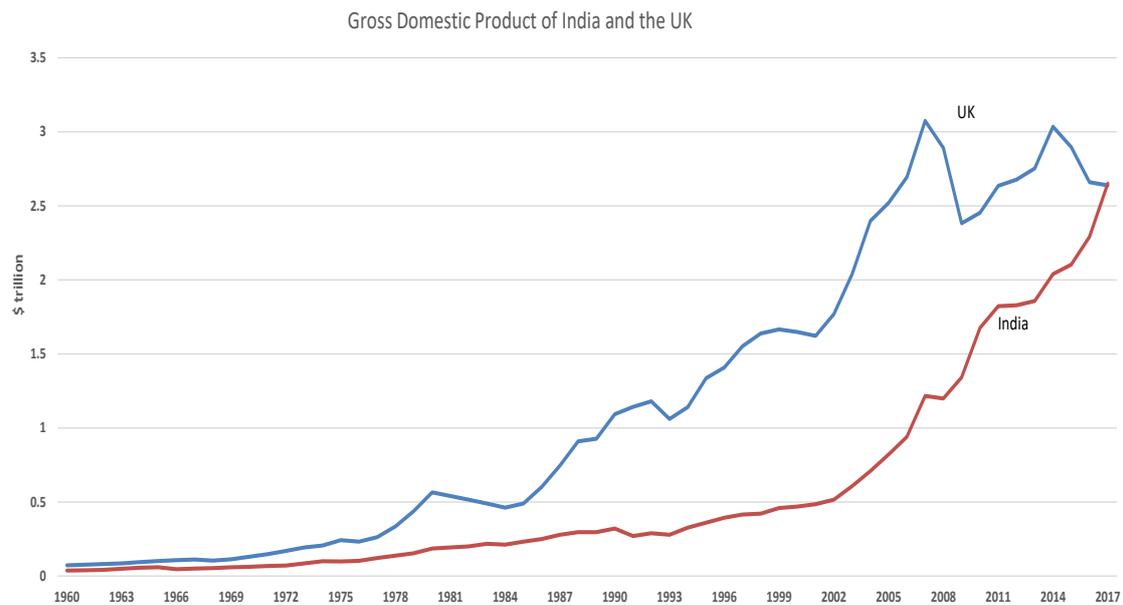
8 Oral evidence: FCO Budget and Capacity and Annual Report 2016–17, [HC 573](#), 15 November 2017, Q16 [Sir Simon McDonald]

9 [Q186](#) [Minister Field]

10 [Qq47–52](#) [Reuben Abraham]; EPG Strategic Communications Ltd ([GBI0023](#)), para 3.7

11 [Qq93–94](#) [Lord Bilimoria]

12 Oral evidence from the Foreign Secretary, [HC 538](#), 31 October 2018, Q411



7. Witnesses identified the shortcomings of the UK’s strategy and suggested ways to address it. Prime Ministers May and Cameron both failed to think “enough about the relationship India wants with us”, according to Sir Simon Fraser, former Permanent Under-Secretary at the FCO.<sup>13</sup> The UK now has an opportunity to improve the relationship by addressing these shortcomings. As Professor Kate Sullivan de Estrada put it: “we have a tendency to think, ‘What will Washington think about this policy decision? [ ... ] I do not think that we are asking yet, ‘What will New Delhi think?’”<sup>14</sup> Former High Commissioner to India Sir James Bevan told us that a key step in improving the relationship would be to “listen as well as talk” and do “practical things with the Indians that matter to them”.<sup>15</sup> India’s foreign policy is being shaped by two priorities: gaining the influence it deserves in global affairs, and raising living standards at home.<sup>16</sup> The following sections will consider how these issues play out in terms of economic ties and movement of people, security and defence, and global governance structures.

**8. The Government is failing to make the most of this country’s extensive ties with India: the bilateral relationship is strong, but falls short of its huge potential. The Government cannot afford to be complacent or rely on historical connections to deliver a modern partnership. The UK needs to adjust its strategy to India’s enhanced influence and power: we should do more to respond to India’s priorities, and should communicate our own objectives more clearly. As the UK leaves the EU, our foreign policy priorities will change. *One change should be enhancing our relationship with India: as a practical and symbolic start to resetting that relationship, we encourage the Foreign Secretary to visit India as soon as possible, and certainly before the end of 2019.***

13 [In Search of a Role: Rethinking British Foreign Policy](#), Sir Simon Fraser, Chatham House, 7 November 2017, page 8

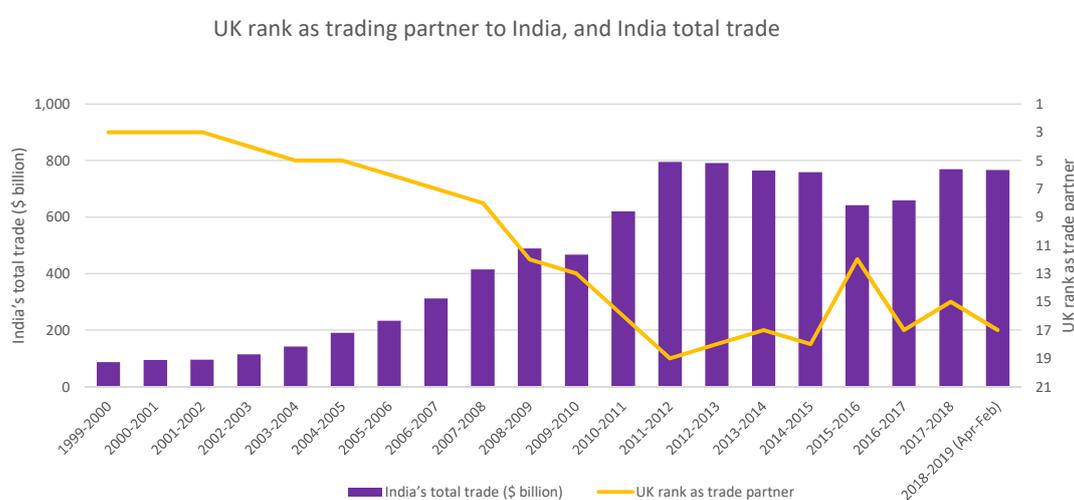
14 Oral evidence: [UK foreign policy in changed world conditions](#), House of Lords, Select Committee on International Relations, 9 May 2018, Q119 [Professor Kate Sullivan de Estrada]

15 [Q17](#) [Sir James Bevan]

16 [Q17](#) [Sir James Bevan]; [Q149](#) [Ranjan Mathai]; Chatham House ([GBI0017](#)), para 1–2; Professor Kate Sullivan de Estrada ([GBI0033](#))

### 3 Trade, investment and movement of people

9. “Prosperity sits at the heart of the UK-India relationship”, according to the FCO.<sup>17</sup> But while India is among the top four investors in the UK, and the third largest creator of jobs,<sup>18</sup> trade is lagging behind its potential.<sup>19</sup> While it is true that UK-India trade has “grown rapidly” in the last two decades,<sup>20</sup> India’s global trade has grown three times faster. As a result the UK has gone from being India’s second-biggest trade partner in 1998–99 to 17th in 2018–19 (see graph, below).<sup>21</sup> We have “a smaller slice of a much bigger cake”, as Minister Field put it.<sup>22</sup> This inquiry highlighted three key factors that hold back trade and investment: trade barriers; challenges in India’s business environment; and UK restrictions on the movement of Indian nationals.



#### Trade barriers

10. There are significant barriers limiting UK exports to India.<sup>23</sup> While leaving the EU may mean that the UK can sign a bilateral trade agreement with India to remove some of

17 FCO (GBI0015), para 18

18 There are more than 840 Indian companies operating in the UK, employing more than 100,000 people, with a total revenue of almost £48 billion. Meanwhile, the UK is the fourth largest investor in India, and the second largest from the G20. Some 600 UK companies operate in the country, employing nearly 800,000 people—one in every 20 jobs in the organised private sector. FCO (GBI0015), para 35–36; [India meets Britain Tracker](#), Grant Thornton and the Confederation of Indian Industry, 26 April 2019, page 3; [Sterling Assets India 3: Britain Meets India](#), Grant Thornton and the Confederation of Indian Industry, 11 December 2018, page 12; [Dr Liam Fox addresses the UK-India JETCO](#), UK Export Finance, 12 January 2018

19 [Q91](#) [Lord Bilimoria]; UK India Business Council (GBI0018), para 1; EPG Strategic Communications Ltd (GBI0023), para 1.3; Confederation of Indian Industry (GBI0031); Ranjan Mathai (GBI0036), para 6; Indian Professionals Forum (GBI0039), para 5

20 [We need to embrace the opportunities provided by being in the Commonwealth family](#), Lord Ahmad, India Inc, 15 January 2019

21 Data from: [Export Import Data Bank](#), Government of India, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Department of Commerce, Total Trade, Top n Countries. 2018–19 data refers to the period April 2018 to February 2019

22 [Q202](#) [Minister Field]

23 [Q98](#) [Dan Mobley]; [Q126](#) [Lord Bilimoria]; EPG Strategic Communications Ltd (GBI0023), para 1.11; Indian Professionals Forum (GBI0039), para 5

these, a comprehensive deal is highly unlikely to be completed in the near future.<sup>24</sup> India, which only has nine bilateral trade agreements—and none with a Western country<sup>25</sup>—has made clear that it is not “in a rush” to make a deal with the UK, and that it would demand concessions on movement of people, which have been a sticking point for the UK in EU-India trade negotiations.<sup>26</sup> The FCO told us that India is “not in the first tranche of countries for an FTA”, and that the Government was prioritising negotiations that would be “relatively simple”.<sup>27</sup> Our evidence called on the Government to focus on other tools to build the trade relationship, including bilateral forums; sector-specific trade initiatives; the removal of non-tariff barriers; and support for India’s pro-business reforms.<sup>28</sup> Although the Government has said that Brexit offers an opportunity to increase ties with India, witnesses said that the UK was not communicating this effectively.<sup>29</sup> Some raised concerns that the UK might in fact become more closed.<sup>30</sup>

**11. As India has boomed over the last two decades, the UK has fallen behind other countries in its share of India’s fast-growing trade with the world. This is an expensive missed opportunity. The Government has said that Brexit will allow for a closer relationship with India, and that the country is central to its aspirations for a more outward-facing Global Britain. However, a full UK-India trade deal is unlikely to be signed in the near term and Indian policy and business communities do not have a clear sense of the UK’s plan to be more open to the world. *The challenges of concluding a full trade deal should not mean that the Government places economic ties with India on the back burner. The Government should prioritise trade talks with India and do more to lay the groundwork for an eventual deal. The FCO should lead a bold, well-resourced cross-government initiative to communicate clearly the approach and goals of Global Britain to Indian decision-makers, including the appointment of a champion for UK-India ties.***

## India’s business environment

12. The complexity of India’s business environment constrains trade and investment. As the FCO told us, “British companies do not always find it easy to operate in India”.<sup>31</sup> The Modi government has taken big steps to improve this but there is much still to be done.<sup>32</sup> Complicated laws on tax, imports, and foreign direct investment, and variations in the business environment between India’s federal states can all hinder doing business.<sup>33</sup> In this context, the Government’s work to help UK firms in India to navigate regulations and

24 Association of British Insurers (GBI0005), para 7; Lord Karan Bilimoria (GBI0009); Indo-British APPG (GBI0016), para 13; Chatham House (GBI0017), para 11; UK India Business Council (GBI0018), para 5

25 Q113 [Lord Bilimoria]; [List of Free Trade Agreements \(FTAs\) / Preferential Trade Agreements \(PTAs\) signed by India](#), Indian Directorate General of Foreign Trade

26 Q13 [Rahul Roy-Chaudhury, Sir James Bevan]; Q113 [Lord Bilimoria]; Dr David Scott (GBI0012), para 6; Chatham House (GBI0017), para 11; Aaditya Dave (GBI0028), para 6; [India in no rush to do a trade deal with post-Brexit Britain](#), Politico, 4 April 2018; [Lack of trust permeates Indo-UK ties, says former British High Commissioner Stagg](#), The Hindu, 4 July 2018

27 Q207 [Fergus Auld]; FCO (GBI0015), para 28

28 Q15 [Sir James Bevan]; Q111 [Dan Mobley]; TheCityUK (GBI0004), para 16; Association of British Insurers (GBI0005), para 7; Indo-British APPG (GBI0016), para 12

29 Qq110–111 [Shishir Bajoria, Devie Mohan, Lord Bilimoria]; Aaditya Dave (GBI0028), para 4

30 Q111 [Lord Bilimoria]; UK India Business Council (GBI0018), paras 33–35; EPG Strategic Communications Ltd (GBI0023), para 3.6; Henry Jackson Society (GBI0040)

31 FCO (GBI0015), para 34

32 Q126 [Shishir Bajoria, Lord Bilimoria]; UK India Business Council (GBI0018), para 21; [Doing Business 2019](#), World Bank Group, 31 October 2018

33 Q55 [Dr Reuben Abraham]; Q111 [Dan Mobley]; Aaditya Dave (GBI0028), para 7; BuffaloGrid (GBI0030)

make the right connections is vital.<sup>34</sup> According to Sir James Bevan, “What you do need, whether or not you have a free trade agreement, is entrepreneurial British businesses to come out and active British diplomats working to try to open the doors for them.”<sup>35</sup> But we received evidence that UK businesses operating in India were not always aware of the UK Government support available to them, and that these efforts were underfunded.<sup>36</sup> In a private roundtable we held with figures in the UK-Indian business community, we were told that small- and medium-sized UK businesses in India struggled to access support. Attendees also drew attention to the absence of a dedicated trade envoy to India—a surprising omission when parliamentarians serve as envoys to more than 50 other markets.<sup>37</sup>

**13. Recent improvements in India’s business environment are impressive, and we hope that they will drive stronger bilateral economic ties. However, there is much still to be done, and UK businesses face a challenging operating environment in India. The Government must improve access to targeted support for UK businesses in India, particularly start-ups and smaller businesses. In its response to this report, the Government should set out what it will do to respond to the criticism that UK businesses were not aware of the support offered by the Government and that accessing such support was a struggle for some. The Government should appoint a high-level and long-term dedicated trade envoy to India, with experience of the country’s business environment.**

## Movement of people

14. Limits on the movement of people are a major constraint on UK-India ties. Many Indian nationals come to the UK, and nine in every 10 Indian visa applications to the UK are granted.<sup>38</sup> However, skilled workers, students, and tourists find the system unwelcoming, expensive, and difficult to navigate.<sup>39</sup> This has hit key UK export sectors such as education and tourism, and Indian export sectors such as IT services. We asked Minister Field how the FCO reconciles the goal of cutting net migration with that of enhancing ties with countries, such as India, that seek greater access to the UK. He told us that “a lot of this is driven by the Home Office”.<sup>40</sup>

15. Businesses in the UK—particularly in the IT and restaurant sectors—face perceived difficulties in bringing skilled workers from India.<sup>41</sup> Combined with the lack of post-study leave, these factors have dented the UK’s ability to attract talented individuals from India.<sup>42</sup> The UK’s December 2018 Immigration White Paper set out proposals to overhaul rules on

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34 [Q119](#) [Dan Mobley]; [TheCityUK \(GBI0004\)](#); [BuffaloGrid \(GBI0030\)](#)

35 [Q15](#) [Sir James Bevan]

36 [Qq118–119](#) [Lord Bilimoria]; [EPG Strategic Communications Ltd \(GBI0023\)](#), para 3.8; [BuffaloGrid \(GBI0030\)](#)

37 [FAC private roundtable, Westminster, 25 April 2019](#); [Trade envoys, Gov.uk](#)

38 [Q17](#) [Sir James Bevan]; [Immigration statistics, year ending December 2018: data tables](#), Home Office, 28 February 2019

39 [Q47](#) [Dr Reuben Abraham]; [Q87](#) [Shishir Bajoria]; [Q143](#) [Lord Bilimoria, Shishir Bajoria]; [UK Council for International Student Affairs \(UKCISA\) \(GBI0002\)](#), para 3; [Indo-British APPG \(GBI0016\)](#), para 11

40 [Q209](#) [Minister Field]

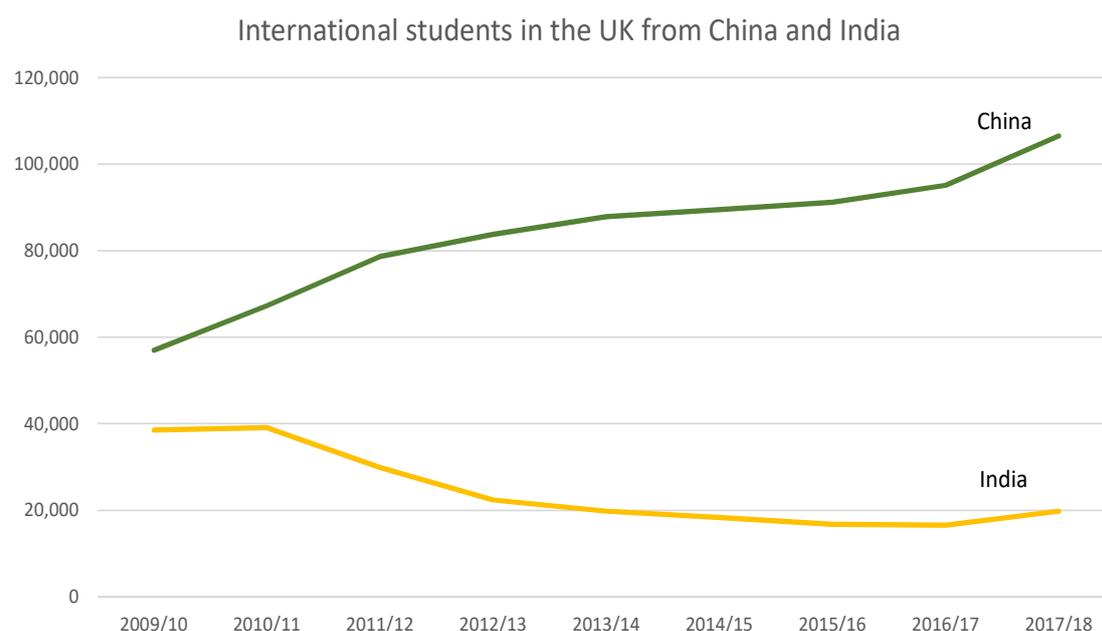
41 [National Association of Software & Services Companies \(NASSCOM\) \(GBI0003\)](#); [Lord Karan Bilimoria \(GBI0009\)](#); [UK India Business Council \(GBI0018\)](#), para 40; [Confederation of Indian Industry \(GBI0031\)](#)

42 [Q142](#) [Devie Mohan]

skilled worker visas that were broadly welcomed by the Confederation of Indian Industry and by Indian newspapers, though some warned that high minimum salary levels could still damage Indian businesses.<sup>43</sup>

16. The UK has lost ground in its share of India's students and tourists. In 2012 the Government cancelled a post-study work visa that had allowed international students to work for two years after graduation.<sup>44</sup> The number of Indian students dropped by more than half (see graph, below).<sup>45</sup> As one witness warned us: "The perception has now seeped in that the UK is not a good place to go."<sup>46</sup> Of the 750,000 Indian students studying abroad in 2018, fewer than 20,000 were in the UK—two-thirds the number in New Zealand.<sup>47</sup> In March 2019 the Government set out plans to soften its policy, allowing most international students to work for six months after graduation.<sup>48</sup> The UK is also losing ground in its share of India's tourists: France is now a more popular holiday destination than the UK for Indian nationals.<sup>49</sup> Witnesses highlighted the cost and time investment of applying for visitor visas, even for Indian nationals who travel frequently to the UK.<sup>50</sup> One forecast predicted that, while Indian tourist numbers would grow 52% worldwide by 2025, the number of Indians holidaying in the UK would rise just 3%.<sup>51</sup>

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- 43 Confederation of Indian Industry ([GBI0045](#)); [Britain has a good news for Indians who want to migrate to UK](#), Economic Times, 17 January 2019; [UK's new visa strategy to benefit Indian techies, students](#), LiveMint, 20 December 2018; [Indians to benefit as UK plans to remove cap on skilled migrants](#), Times of India, 19 December 2018; [Lord Bilimoria: The Government's immigration plans do not reflect an 'open Britain'](#), The House, 28 January 2019
- 44 UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) ([GBI0002](#)); Observer Research Foundation ([GBI0014](#)); Chatham House ([GBI0017](#)), para 15; UK India Business Council ([GBI0018](#)), para 39; [Major changes to student visa system](#), Home Office, 22 March 2011
- 45 UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) ([GBI0002](#)), para 5; Chatham House ([GBI0017](#)), para 15. There were other factors behind this fall, including a crackdown on bogus schools set up to provide visas. Dr Ruth Kattumuri ([GBI0007](#)), para 7.3  
Data from: [Higher Education Student Statistics: UK, 2017/18](#), Higher Education Statistics Agency, 17 January 2019
- 46 [Q47](#) [Dr Reuben Abraham]
- 47 There were 211,000 in the US, 124,000 in Canada, 87,000 in Australia, and 30,000 in New Zealand. [Indian Students studying in Foreign Countries](#), Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, 18 July 2018; [Higher Education Student Statistics: UK, 2017/18](#), Higher Education Statistics Agency, 17 January 2019
- 48 [Plans to boost international student numbers and income](#), Department for Education, 16 March 2019
- 49 Royal Commonwealth Society ([GBI0011](#))
- 50 [Q47](#) [Dr Reuben Abraham]; [Q87](#) [Shishir Bajoria]
- 51 VisitBritain ([GBI0027](#))



17. Tensions around migration and movement of people have a profound impact on the bilateral relationship.<sup>52</sup> This has undermined crucial opportunities to build ties—for example, the Prime Minister’s 2016 visit to India was widely considered to have been dominated by the issue of migration.<sup>53</sup> Indian students who go to the US or Australia do not develop ties with the UK, changing the way the UK will be seen for generations to come.<sup>54</sup> The damage is increased by a perception that Chinese nationals have easier access to the UK.<sup>55</sup> Under a 2016 pilot scheme, Chinese nationals were given access to a two-year multiple-entry visa that is almost four times cheaper than that for Indian nationals.<sup>56</sup> The Government’s list of “low risk” countries that enjoy relaxed student visa requirements includes China, but excludes India.<sup>57</sup> Sir James Bevan told us that the primary reason for these differences was the perception that Indian nationals were more likely to overstay, whereas the families of Chinese nationals might face “consequences” if the person did not return.<sup>58</sup> One Indian business leader told us that this was problematic: “After all, you are a democracy, like we are.”<sup>59</sup>

52 Minister Field told us that this issue was “overwhelmingly” ranked as the top priority by his Indian counterparts. [Q42](#) (Dr Reuben Abraham); [Qq212–213](#) [Minister Field]

53 [Q112](#) [Lord Bilimoria]; EPG Strategic Communications Ltd ([GBI0023](#)), para 2.2; Henry Jackson Society ([GBI0040](#)) When we questioned the FCO on this point, the Head of the South Asia Department acknowledged “some of the difficulty” around the 2016 visit. [Q214](#) [Fergus Auld]

54 [Q45](#) [Dr Reuben Abraham]; [Q218](#) [Minister Field]

55 [Q112](#) [Lord Bilimoria]; Royal Commonwealth Society ([GBI0011](#)); UK India Business Council ([GBI0018](#)), para 41; Aaditya Dave ([GBI0028](#)), para 6; Bridge India ([GBI0029](#))

56 [Q112](#) [Lord Bilimoria]; Confederation of Indian Industry ([GBI0031](#)); Wipro Limited ([GBI0032](#)) Minister Field noted that: “the China deal was very much regarded as a pilot and the Government are still examining the efficacy of that pilot as to whether it will continue. [...] If it is regarded as being a success, I hope we could try and get that replicated for India.” [Q217](#) [Minister Field]

57 Lord Bilimoria called this “a kick in the teeth” for the Indian government. [Q112](#) [Lord Bilimoria]; Observer Research Foundation ([GBI0014](#)); Frank O’Donnell ([GBI0026](#)), para 7; [Changes to the Immigration Rules](#), Home Office, 7 March 2019

58 [Q21](#) [Sir James Bevan]

59 [Q90](#) [Shishir Bajoria]

18. Several witnesses argued that the short-term movement of people—for Indian nationals on temporary stays in the UK, including students and skilled workers—should be considered separately from long-term migration.<sup>60</sup> This could involve removing students and those on short-term work visas from net migration figures,<sup>61</sup> and giving UK universities a greater role in approving student visas.<sup>62</sup> There have been some positive initiatives: the Government has launched a Migration Dialogue to consult Indian officials on proposals set out in the Immigration White Paper.<sup>63</sup>

19. **There is a tension between the FCO’s promotion of a “Global Britain”, and some wider Government efforts to reduce net migration. While the Global Britain strategy is barely being communicated in India, the “hostile environment” message is being heard loud and clear. It is short-sighted for the Government not to do more to open doors for Indian entrepreneurs, tech workers, tourists and students, who offer clear benefits to the UK and often plan only a short-term stay. Facilitating the movement of these groups is inseparable from the goal of increasing trade with India. We are concerned that Government policy has been driven by the single-minded objective of reducing net migration, championed by the Home Office, and that the FCO has not been able to play enough of a role in formulating Government policy towards India. The Home Secretary has resolutely stuck to the stated Government policy of reducing net migration “to the tens of thousands”. This is completely incompatible with a post-Brexit immigration policy that will allow unlimited numbers of students, workers within certain sectors, seasonal workers, and key workers. This incompatibility must be addressed as a matter of urgency. The Government cannot achieve both goals, and—given that most post-Brexit trade deals will require a relaxation of current immigration policy—the Government must be honest about which it will prioritise, especially in relation to India. This has led to a lack of coherence, with policies on movement of people undercutting the UK’s broader strategic objectives for the relationship. Certain decisions risk needlessly offending our partners: something has gone wrong if it is more difficult for citizens of a strategically important democracy that shares our values, language, and history to visit or study in the UK than those of an autocracy. The Government told us that it was not “picking winners” in Asia, but its policies on movement of people sometimes suggest otherwise.**

20. **Foreign policy goals must be balanced against the need for migration controls, but there is no excuse for the policies that have led the UK to lose ground in attracting Indian students and tourists. These groups are vitally important, not just as consumers of a profitable UK export, but as a means of cementing lasting ties between the countries, and generating invaluable goodwill with India’s future leaders. Failure to reverse this trend would squander cultural capital built up over many decades of familiarity, and the international reputation of the UK’s universities and cultural sites. The Government’s recent steps to offer a six-month post-study work visa, and to set a target for increasing international student numbers, are welcome but do not go far enough.**

60 Indo-British APPG ([GBI0016](#)), para 28

61 [Q114](#) [Lord Bilimoria]; National Association of Software & Services Companies (NASSCOM) ([GBI0003](#)); Wipro Limited ([GBI0032](#))

62 [Q47](#) [Dr Reuben Abraham]; [Qq215–216](#) [Minister Field]

63 [Q223](#) [Fergus Auld]; [UK and Indian governments discuss future migration relationship](#), British High Commission New Delhi, 17 January 2019; [Proposed New UK Immigration System To Benefit Indians: British Officials](#), NDTV, 17 January 2019

21. *The FCO should ensure that the goal of improving the overall relationship with India is woven into the broader Government migration policy. It should push for reforms to make it easier for India's skilled workers, students, and tourists to enter the UK. This should include offering Indian nationals a bespoke multiple-entry visa on at least equivalent terms to those available to Chinese nationals, and steps to facilitate the movement of skilled Indian professionals for short-term projects. In its response to this report, the FCO should set out its assessment of how far proposals in the Immigration White Paper would meet this goal, and the actions it is taking to feed the outcomes of the recent UK-India Migration Dialogue into the policymaking process. The Government should urgently review its policies towards Indian students, particularly the decision to exclude them from the "low risk" list. It should commit to increasing the post-study visa available to international students to cover at least two years, and should review the possibility of involving universities in visa application processes. Having the UK's leading universities able to issue a limited number of visas directly to the best Indian students would increase competition at home and decrease bureaucratic hurdles for those looking to develop their skills in the UK.*

## 4 Security and defence

### The Indian Ocean

22. India’s place in the world is changing fast—not just in economic weight, but in status, ambition and role in global affairs.<sup>64</sup> We received evidence highlighting India’s wish for a broader strategic relationship with the UK—including closer security and defence cooperation—and concern that the UK is more focused on economic ties.<sup>65</sup> The Indian Ocean and wider Indo-Pacific is a key arena for this expanded relationship. The UK and India share strong and growing interests in the stability of the region.<sup>66</sup> As a major route for both countries’ trade,<sup>67</sup> and site of a joint UK-US defence facility in the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT), the region is of growing strategic value.<sup>68</sup> We received evidence calling on the UK to support India’s drive for pre-eminence in the Indian Ocean, as a “stable fellow democracy, with which the UK shares most security interests”.<sup>69</sup>

23. Despite these shared interests, the UK and India have sometimes diverged in their positions towards China’s role in the Indian Ocean.<sup>70</sup> India is concerned about China’s growing influence in the region, including its investments in ports through the Belt and Road infrastructure initiative (BRI).<sup>71</sup> New Delhi has called for connectivity initiatives to maintain standards of transparency, good governance, and respect for sovereignty.<sup>72</sup> It is developing alternative initiatives to meet the region’s infrastructure needs, including a joint proposal with Japan for an Asia-Africa Growth Corridor, and forging a deeper relationship with neighbours.<sup>73</sup> India has joined Japan, Australia, and the US in a revival of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, or “Quad”, an informal grouping that aims to defend a “free and open Indo-Pacific”—widely seen as a response to growing Chinese influence.<sup>74</sup>

64 [Q17](#) [Rahul Roy-Chaudhury]; [Q145](#) [Dr Rudra Chaudhuri, Ranjan Mathai, Professor Kate Sullivan de Estrada]

65 [Q17](#) [Rahul Roy-Chaudhury]; Indo-British APPG ([GBI0016](#)), para 8; Bridge India ([GBI0029](#)); Oral evidence: [UK foreign policy in changed world conditions](#), House of Lords, Select Committee on International Relations, 9 May 2018, Q119 [Rahul Roy-Chaudhury]

66 In a major foreign policy speech in 2018, Prime Minister Modi said that the Ocean “holds the key to our future”, noting that it carries 90% of the country’s trade and energy sources. He emphasised that India works “with partners beyond the Indian Ocean Region to ensure that the global transit routes remain peaceful and free for all.” [Q59](#) [Dr Reuben Abraham]; Dr David Scott ([GBI0012](#)), para 8–10; [Text of Prime Minister’s Keynote Address at Shangri La Dialogue](#), Government of India, Prime Minister’s Office, 1 June 2018

67 [Q166](#) [Dr Rudra Chaudhuri]; [Q172](#) [Professor Kate Sullivan de Estrada]; Dr David Scott ([GBI0012](#)), para 9

68 The FCO highlighted BIOT as a matter on which the two countries “do not agree”. India’s Permanent Representative to the UN said in May 2019 that India supported a resolution demanding UK withdrawal from the territory, in line with its “longstanding support to all peoples striving for decolonisation”, while noting that it “shares, with the international community, security concerns relating to the Indian Ocean”.

FCO ([GBI0015](#)), para 60; The Henry Jackson Society ([GBI0021](#)), para 4; [India votes in favour of UNGA resolution demanding UK withdraw from Chagos Archipelago](#), The Hindu, 23 May 2019

69 Dr David Scott ([GBI0012](#)), para 10

70 Observer Research Foundation ([GBI0014](#)); Frank O’Donnell ([GBI0026](#)), para 5

71 [Q176](#) [Ranjan Mathai]; Oral evidence: China and the international rules-based system, [HC 612](#), 23 October 2018, Q31 [Nigel Inkster]

72 In particular, New Delhi objects to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which passes through Pakistan-administered Kashmir, disputed territory claimed by India. [Q176](#) [Ranjan Mathai]; FCO ([GBI0015](#)), para 81; [Official Spokesperson’s response to a query on media reports regarding possible cooperation with China on OBOR/BRI](#), Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, 5 April 2018

73 [Q37](#) [Rahul Roy-Chaudhury]; [Q59](#) [Dr Reuben Abraham]; [Q177](#) [Ranjan Mathai]; Henry Jackson Society ([GBI0040](#))

74 [Macron pledges to counter China power in Pacific](#), Financial Times, 2 May 2018

24. The UK, by contrast, has engaged substantially with Belt and Road.<sup>75</sup> This risks feeding a perception in India that the UK has prioritised its relationship with China, particularly under the Cameron Government.<sup>76</sup> The FCO's priorities for Global Britain put China at the top of its section on the "Indo-Pacific", before saying that India is "also" central to its aspirations.<sup>77</sup> In 2017, the FCO told us that the UK's foreign policy priorities were "our neighbourhood, including the Middle East and Russia; the far east, particularly China; and the United States". India is a glaring omission.<sup>78</sup>

25. Prime Ministers May and Modi moved closer on Belt and Road in an April 2018 joint statement, declaring their commitment to "a secure, free, open, inclusive and prosperous Indo-Pacific".<sup>79</sup> They stated that connectivity initiatives should be based on "good governance, rule of law, openness and transparency"—an acknowledgement of Indian concerns. This statement marked the first time that the two countries had used the term "Indo-Pacific", in a joint statement.<sup>80</sup> We received evidence calling for the Government to co-ordinate with India over its approach to the South China Sea, in terms of statements and maritime activities,<sup>81</sup> and for the UK to work more closely with the Quad.<sup>82</sup>

26. The UK and India share an interest in promoting standards of transparency and sustainability for infrastructure projects in the region.<sup>83</sup> Enhancing connectivity in its neighbourhood is a priority for India,<sup>84</sup> and we received evidence calling for greater UK involvement in Indian infrastructure and connectivity initiatives in the Indian Ocean

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75 China and the Rules-Based International System, [HC 612](#), 4 April 2019, paras 21–35

76 [Q112](#) [Lord Bilimoria]; TheCityUK ([GBI0004](#)), para 12; Royal Commonwealth Society ([GBI0011](#)); Aaditya Dave ([GBI0028](#)), para 8

77 Memorandum from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, March 2018, in Global Britain, [HC 780](#), Foreign Affairs Committee, 12 March 2018

78 Oral evidence: FCO Budget and Capacity and Annual Report 2016–17, [HC 573](#), 15 November 2017, Q16 [Sir Simon McDonald]

Witnesses disagreed over how far this perceived prioritisation of China damages the UK-India relationship. Some argued that it was not a central issue for the Indian government. Others, such as defence analyst Shashank Joshi, told us: "the Indians do watch our relationship with China carefully [...] that impacts on how they see us as a trustworthy partner". [Q174](#) [Dr Rudra Chaudhuri, Ranjan Mathai]; [Q112](#) [Lord Bilimoria]; Henry Jackson Society ([GBI0040](#)); Oral evidence: China and the international rules-based system, [HC 612](#), 23 October 2018, Q32 [Shashank Joshi]

79 [UK-India joint statement: shared values, global capability](#), FCO, 18 April 2018

The UK has said it will play "an active role in maritime security in the Indian Ocean region through military, multilateral and commercial engagement and capacity building". According to Roy-Chaudhury, India is "keen to work with the UK" on the Indian Ocean, "particularly in terms of the UK's own focus on a rules-based international order in the South China sea". [Q27](#) [Rahul Roy-Chaudhury]; [The UK and All of Asia, a modern partnership: Mark Field's speech](#), FCO, 14 August 2018

80 This is a significant step, standing for a view of the region that encompasses the Indian and Pacific Oceans, and emphasises India's importance, rather than focusing on China. [Q149](#) [Professor Kate Sullivan de Estrada]; The Henry Jackson Society ([GBI0021](#)), para 1; Oral evidence: [UK foreign policy in changed world conditions](#), House of Lords, Select Committee on International Relations, 9 May 2018, Q116 [Rahul Roy-Chaudhury]

81 Dr David Scott ([GBI0012](#)), para 18

82 The Henry Jackson Society ([GBI0021](#)), para 5b; Oral evidence: China and the international rules-based system, [HC 612](#), 23 October 2018, Q53 [Shashank Joshi] When we asked about this, Minister Field said that the Government "wants to strengthen relations with all countries, and particularly with the Quad".

Oral evidence: China and the international rules-based system, [HC 612](#), 15 January 2019, Q205 [Minister Field]

83 As Professor Sullivan de Estrada put it: "one can benefit from Chinese growth, but one can also seek to moderate and mediate Chinese power by espousing the same kinds of normative commitments that we have for decades [...] we can partner with India in doing so."

[Q174](#) [Professor Kate Sullivan de Estrada]

84 FCO ([GBI0015](#)), para 78; Oral evidence: [UK foreign policy in changed world conditions](#), House of Lords, Select Committee on International Relations, 9 May 2018, Q123 [Professor Kate Sullivan de Estrada]

region.<sup>85</sup> This could include a role in projects such as India's planned joint initiative with Japan.<sup>86</sup> Witnesses suggested France as a third partner in these efforts.<sup>87</sup> The UK and India carry out joint naval exercises, and we received evidence calling for greater co-operation.<sup>88</sup> The UK Government has announced plans to send the aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth to the Indian Ocean as part of its first deployment.<sup>89</sup>

**27. The UK and India's convergence of interests in the Indian Ocean region offers an important opportunity to increase engagement on defence and security. Though there are tensions over the British Indian Ocean Territory, the two countries share vital interests in the stability of the Ocean and broader Indo-Pacific. As set out in our report on China and the Rules-Based International System, we support the Government's efforts to increase the UK's presence in the Indo-Pacific, in line with its capacity and other commitments. The UK and India's shared interest in promoting rules-based order in the region makes India an important partner in this initiative. The UK cannot have a successful Indo-Pacific strategy without a flourishing strategic relationship with India. Such a relationship has not yet been built. *The Government should make greater efforts to engage with Indian ministers, officials and non-governmental opinion leaders on defence, around UK interests in the Indian Ocean. These efforts may be boosted by greater engagement with third partners such as France and Japan, which have established joint initiatives with India in the region.***

**28. The UK's efforts to build ties with China, and engage with Belt and Road, should not be pursued at the expense of its relationship with India. India has been clear about its commitment to the rules-based order, while China's position is mixed, particularly around the promotion of free societies. While the relationship with Beijing is undoubtedly important, the depth of shared values between the UK and India make New Delhi a vital strategic partner for the future. As we noted in our report on China and the Rules-Based International System, economic considerations around Belt and Road's benefits for the UK should not crowd out questions of our wider strategic interests, values and national security. There is a risk that Chinese investment under Belt and Road could undermine international standards and stability in some recipient countries. India can be a partner in the UK's efforts to uphold these standards. This does not present a binary choice, as the UK can take part in infrastructure projects led by both China and India. *The FCO should take the lead in ensuring that stronger economic ties with China do not harm the political relationship with India. While continuing to engage with Belt and Road projects on a case-by-case basis, the UK should consider supporting connectivity projects in the region backed by India and others, upholding standards of transparency, sustainability and good governance.***

85 [Q177](#) [Ranjan Mathai]; Observer Research Foundation ([GBI0014](#)); The Henry Jackson Society ([GBI0021](#)), para 5b; Aaditya Dave ([GBI0028](#)), para 11

86 Ranjan Mathai, former Indian High Commissioner to the UK, highlighted the need for port development in the region. He said that UK-India cooperation in the Indian Ocean should focus on maintaining the "rules-based maritime order", and ensuring that countries have choices that "are not limited to their dealings with China".

[Q174](#) [Ranjan Mathai]; Aaditya Dave ([GBI0028](#)), para 11; Henry Jackson Society ([GBI0040](#))

87 [Q172](#) [Dr Rudra Chaudhuri]; The Henry Jackson Society ([GBI0021](#)), para 5

88 [Q166](#) [Dr Rudra Chaudhuri]; Dr David Scott ([GBI0012](#)); Observer Research Foundation ([GBI0014](#)); The Henry Jackson Society ([GBI0021](#)), para 5

89 [Q172](#) [Professor Kate Sullivan de Estrada]; [Give Pakistan time and space to act on terror, says U.K. Under Secretary Simon McDonald](#), The Hindu, 11 May 2019

## Defence and security

29. The UK and Indian armed forces have close historic ties.<sup>90</sup> However, the UK has fallen behind other countries in its share of India's defence market. India is the world's second biggest importer of major arms, and is currently undertaking a huge effort to modernise its armed forces.<sup>91</sup> France, Israel, and the US have all seen rises in arms sales to India since its diversification of suppliers away from Russia over the last decade, while UK sales have flatlined.<sup>92</sup>

30. Our evidence pointed to the importance of supporting India's efforts to boost its domestic defence industry—a priority for the Indian government.<sup>93</sup> The UK has said that it is “ready to support the development of India's defence capabilities”,<sup>94</sup> but our evidence suggested that its efforts remain underpowered.<sup>95</sup> Witnesses called on the UK to adopt a less transactional approach to defence cooperation, with a focus on supporting India's domestic defence industry and sharing high-end military technology.<sup>96</sup> Other countries have done more to build trust: India considers France to be a more reliable defence and security partner than the UK,<sup>97</sup> while US defence sales to India are at an “all-time high”,<sup>98</sup>

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90 Lord Karan Bilimoria ([GBI0009](#)); FCO ([GBI0015](#)), para 87

91 [Trends in international arms transfers, 2018](#), Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, March 2019  
The statistics in this report quoted from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) are based on deliveries of major conventional weapons, based on production costs rather than sales prices. They should therefore not be directly compared with gross domestic product (GDP), military expenditure, sales values or the financial value of export licences.

[SIPRI Arms Transfers Database - Methodology](#), Stockholm International Peace Research Institute

92 [Trends in international arms transfers, 2018](#), Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, March 2019; [SIPRI Arms Transfers Database](#); [The rise of India: UK perspectives](#), Dr David Scott, International Affairs  
This is due in part to features of broader UK defence policy. India prefers government-to-government arms sales, to limit the scope for political controversy—a format the UK generally avoids. In addition, Minister Field told us that the UK's “robust” arms licensing system may have “made life a little more difficult”, relative to some other exporting countries.

[Q33](#) [Sir James Bevan, Rahul Roy-Chaudhury]; [Q164](#) [Rudra Chaudhuri]; [Q200](#) [Minister Field]; [Britain changes strategy on selling arms to India](#), Financial Times, 12 April 2017.

93 In 2016, Prime Minister Modi called on UK companies to look “beyond trade in defence equipment” and “build a partnership with the Indian enterprises that focus on manufacturing technology transfer and co-development.”

[Theresa May's India visit: India, UK agree to strengthen defence and cyber security cooperation](#), Economic Times, November 2016

94 FCO ([GBI0015](#)), para 83; [PM statement following bilateral talks with Prime Minister Modi: 7 November 2016](#), Prime Minister's Office

95 Analyst Rahul Roy-Chaudhury has said that: “the UK needs to overcome a perception by the Indian security establishment that British companies are interested in merely selling and not jointly manufacturing in India, hence it is more of a transactional arrangement.”

[Q159](#) [Professor Kate Sullivan de Estrada]; India and the UK: Post-Brexit Security and Defence Cooperation, Rahul Roy-Chaudhury, in “Winning Partnership: India-UK Relations Beyond Brexit”, ed. Manoj Ladwa, 2017

96 The Henry Jackson Society ([GBI0021](#)), para 5d; Aaditya Dave ([GBI0028](#)), para 13; India Dialogue (UEA) ([GBI0035](#)); Henry Jackson Society ([GBI0040](#))

Reports that India is in talks to buy the design of the UK's Queen Elizabeth aircraft carrier offer an example of this type of collaboration.

[BAE offer Queen Elizabeth carrier design to India](#), UK Defence Journal, 4 April 2019

97 Ranjan Mathai, for example, cited France as a long-standing partner that had done more than the UK to support India's space and nuclear programmes over many years. Professor Sullivan de Estrada said that France had gone further than the UK to respond to India's objective of developing its domestic defence industry.

[Q5](#) [Rahul Roy-Chaudhury]; [Q62](#) [Dr Reuben Abraham]; [Q158](#) [Ranjan Mathai]; [Q159](#) [Professor Kate Sullivan de Estrada]

98 [India-US defence sales at all time high: Pentagon](#), Economic Times, 13 February 2019

thanks in part to agreements that facilitate sharing of advanced technologies.<sup>99</sup> Meanwhile, New Delhi will continue to give the relationship with Russia “very high priority”, because “the Russians have been willing to provide us with not only defence equipment but the building of defence capabilities,” according to former Indian High Commissioner Ranjan Mathai.<sup>100</sup>

**31. India’s defence modernisation programme presents an opportunity for the UK to build a closer strategic relationship, and to boost trade and investment. So far, this opportunity has been largely missed and others are doing more to work with India. As a result, the UK has fallen behind countries such as the US and France in its share of India’s large and growing defence imports. France’s development of mutual trust with India on defence and security issues over many years, and the US’s efforts to sign military cooperation agreements, may present lessons for UK diplomacy. *The FCO should ensure that the overarching objective of building a closer relationship with India is front-and-centre in Government efforts to enhance bilateral defence ties. As with other areas of UK-India relations, this will require an effort to address India’s priorities, such as developing Indian domestic defence production, rather than simply presenting UK objectives. In defence industry cooperation with India, the Government should aim to build a partnership, rather than merely pursuing a transactional, buyer-seller relationship. This is likely to include efforts to increase joint manufacturing and technology transfers, within the restrictions set by the UK’s international obligations, and closer cooperation on cyber security. In its response to this report, the FCO should set out the steps the Government is taking to achieve this.***

## Pakistan

32. The UK’s ties with Pakistan complicate the process of building a closer defence and security relationship with India. Some Indian observers view the UK as overly sympathetic to Pakistan.<sup>101</sup> Our evidence highlighted UK actions against terrorist groups in the region as important in building confidence with India on this point.<sup>102</sup> Ranjan Mathai told us: “India has not found as much understanding from the United Kingdom as it would have liked of its position vis-à-vis Pakistan [ ... ] It has been a negative factor in our relationship.”<sup>103</sup> The Foreign Secretary told us that the relationship with Pakistan was “incredibly important” in terms of security and trade.<sup>104</sup> The value of the UK’s ability to talk to both countries was evident in the crisis of February 2019. Lines of communication

99 [Q165](#) [Dr Rudra Chaudhuri]

According to Ranjan Mathai, the relationship is also aided by the US’s Foreign Military Sales programme, which facilitates government-to-government deals.

[Q167](#) [Ranjan Mathai]

100 [Q169](#) [Ranjan Mathai] The Vice Chief of the Indian Air Force has said that: “When it comes to technology transfer, Russia really offers everything they have from the heart without any strings attached.” These ties were evident during President Putin’s October 2018 visit to India, when Prime Minister Modi signed a \$5-billion deal to purchase the S-400 air defence system. India has refrained from strong statements against Russia over the Salisbury incident, and voted against the UK’s efforts to increase the powers of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)—which “disappointed” the UK.

[Q30](#) [Rahul Roy-Chaudhury]; FCO ([GBI0015](#)), para 67; Oral evidence: China and the international rules-based system, [HC 612](#), 23 October 2018, Q28; [US, Chinese unease as Putin seeks India arms deals](#), AFP, 4 October 2018; [Russia offers defence technology to India without any strings attached](#), Economic Times, 14 July 2018

101 Chatham House ([GBI0017](#)), para 9; Aaditya Dave ([GBI0028](#)), para 8

102 [Q179](#) [Dr Rudra Chaudhuri]; The Henry Jackson Society ([GBI0021](#)), para 5c; Aaditya Dave ([GBI0028](#)), para 8

103 [Q179](#) [Ranjan Mathai]

104 Oral evidence from the Foreign Secretary, [HC 538](#), 31 October 2018, Q413

between the countries are limited, increasing the risk of dangerous miscalculation.<sup>105</sup> Minister Field told us that the richness of the UK relationship with both countries had allowed it to play a “unique” role in keeping communications open.<sup>106</sup> According to the FCO, the US is the only other country with a strong enough relationship with Pakistan to get the access needed to calm tensions.<sup>107</sup>

**33. The recent flare-up in tensions between India and Pakistan is deeply regrettable and dangerous. Given limited official lines of communication between the two countries, it is vital that there are countries that are on friendly terms with both, and can work to reduce tensions. The UK’s ability to maintain good relations with both New Delhi and Islamabad, and be perceived as a credible interlocutor, is particularly important following these clashes.**

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105 [Only India and Pakistan can solve current crisis](#), Rahul Roy-Chaudhury, IISS, 27 February 2019

106 [Q186](#) [Minister Field]

107 [Give Pakistan time and space to act on terror, says U.K. Under Secretary Simon McDonald](#), The Hindu, 11 May 2019

## 5 Global governance

34. In 2018, Prime Minister Modi committed India to promoting a “democratic and rules-based international order”.<sup>108</sup> However, UK and Indian stances sometimes diverge. India is sensitive about steps that could be seen as impinging on state sovereignty, and sometimes sceptical about Western interpretations of universal human rights standards.<sup>109</sup> Despite these divergences, the two countries “will very often be on the same side”.<sup>110</sup> As Ranjan Mathai put it: “We have accepted the rules of the game, and we continue to subscribe to them.”<sup>111</sup> However, there is frustration in India that its emergence as a global power is not reflected by the existing multilateral system, which was devised to reflect the global distribution of power after the Second World War.<sup>112</sup> In particular, the country has pushed for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, and a greater voice in the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). It is important for the bilateral relationship that the UK supports India’s efforts to gain appropriate status and powers within multilateral bodies.<sup>113</sup>

### The UN

35. In 2014, Prime Minister Modi told the UN General Assembly that an unreformed Security Council faced “the risk of irrelevance”, arguing that “institutions that reflect the imperatives of the 20th century won’t be effective in the 21st.”<sup>114</sup> The UK is a longstanding supporter of India’s campaign for a permanent seat,<sup>115</sup> though we heard evidence that this is unlikely to be successful in the near-term, and that failed attempts at reform could damage the legitimacy of the UN.<sup>116</sup> Our evidence suggested that, in the absence of reform, the UK could take steps to make the Council more transparent and accessible to India and

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- 108 Indo-British APPG ([GBI0016](#)), para 20; [Text of Prime Minister’s Keynote Address at Shangri La Dialogue](#), Government of India, Prime Minister’s Office, 1 June 2018
- 109 [Q28](#) [Sir James Bevan]; [Q76](#) [Dr Reuben Abraham]; [Q180](#) [Professor Kate Sullivan de Estrada]
- 110 Ranjan Mathai ([GBI0036](#)), para 10
- 111 [Q181](#) [Ranjan Mathai]As one witness put it, India has “a very Western value system”, “much more than the Chinese value system”.[Q57](#) [Dr Reuben Abraham]According to analyst Alyssa Ayres: “India does not seek to overturn the global order; rather, it merely wants such institutions as the UN Security Council, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the World Bank, the IMF, the Nuclear Suppliers Group, and others to expand to accommodate it.”  
[Will India Start Acting Like a Global Power?](#), Alyssa Ayres, Foreign Affairs, November/December 2017
- 112 [Q27](#) [Rahul Roy-Chaudhury]; [Q180](#) [Professor Kate Sullivan de Estrada]; [Q181](#) [Ranjan Mathai]  
Sir James Bevan told us that India’s approach to multilateral organisations was becoming “more interventionist and more activist”, and that this would be good for the UK.  
[Q28](#) [Sir James Bevan]
- 113 Dr Reuben Abraham told us that if the UK could enable India’s rise, it would “mean a lot to the political establishment in India”, while Professor Sullivan de Estrada said that this could offer a “unique space” for an India-UK partnership. In his 2015 address to the UK Parliament, Prime Minister Modi emphasised this point, telling parliamentarians that “your support has made it more possible for India to take her rightful place in global institutions”.  
[Q34](#) [Sir James Bevan]; [Q78](#) [Dr Reuben Abraham]; [Q145](#) [Dr Rudra Chaudhuri]; Professor Kate Sullivan de Estrada ([GBI0033](#)); Ranjan Mathai ([GBI0036](#)), para 3; [Full text of PM Modi’s address to British parliament](#), Times of India, 12 November 2015
- 114 [Statement by H.E. Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India](#), General Debate of the 69th Session of the United Nations General Assembly New York, 27 September 2014
- 115 FCO ([GBI0015](#)), para 59
- 116 Oral evidence: The UK’s Influence in the UN, [HC 675](#), 19 December 2017, Q48 [Lord Hannay]

other states.<sup>117</sup> India's push for reform is taking place in a context where the UK is facing increasing difficulties exerting its influence at the UN.<sup>118</sup> The unexpected 2017 victory of India's candidate to the International Court of Justice over the UK candidate illustrates changes in the two countries' global standing. It was hailed in the Indian media as a sign of the UK's diminished status, and of India stepping up to play a larger global role.<sup>119</sup>

## Economic institutions

36. There is a mismatch between India's importance and its status in multilateral organisations, especially global economic governance bodies. India's economy is expected to overtake those of the UK and France in 2019, and yet it is not a member of the G7, and has pressed for a greater voice at the World Bank and IMF.<sup>120</sup> Sir James Bevan told us that India would be "increasingly unhappy about the inner councils of the G20", and will "rightly want a greater say in the economic governance of the world. That is entirely fair for a country that is going to be third biggest economy by 2030."<sup>121</sup> Witnesses highlighted India's turn towards alternative multilateral economic institutions as a response to the lack of effective reform to the existing bodies.<sup>122</sup> These alternative institutions include the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), founded by China in 2016, and the New Development Bank (NDB), founded by India along with Brazil, Russia, China, and South Africa in 2014. Dr Reuben Abraham told us that the creation of these bodies was a manifestation of the failure of the Bretton Woods system—i.e. the World Bank and the IMF:

"Unless these institutions begin to reform rapidly, a completely different architecture will start to emerge. That should be a cause for worry in the West. In a rules-based system, whose rules do you want to play by?"<sup>123</sup>

**37. India is an important ally for the UK in defending the rules-based international order. At a time when the existing system is facing increasing challenges, India—as a fellow democracy that is explicitly committed to upholding the rules-based order—offers an important source of support. If China wants to change the rules of the game, India is seeking a seat at the table. The UK and India have differences over certain**

117 Professor Kate Sullivan de Estrada ([GBI0033](#)), para 23; Professor Kate Sullivan de Estrada ([GBI0044](#)). See also: Oral evidence: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office's human rights work, [HC 874](#), 6 March 2018, Qq14–15 [Natalie Samarasinghe]

We also heard evidence suggesting that the UK's support for India's bid to join the Nuclear Suppliers Group was more likely to bear fruit than the push for Council reform. [Q181](#) [Dr Rudra Chaudhuri]

118 2017 elections to the International Court of Justice, [HC 860](#), 27 February 2018; Global Britain: Human rights and the rule of law, [HC 874](#), Foreign Affairs Committee, 5 September 2018

119 Professor Kate Sullivan de Estrada ([GBI0033](#)); [Why Britain lost to India in bid to elect judge to the ICJ](#), Hindustan Times, 22 November 2017; [India's changing approach to global governance](#), LiveMint, 24 November 2017

120 [Q78](#) [Dr Reuben Abraham]; India Dialogue (UEA) ([GBI0035](#))

Dr Rakesh Mohan, a former executive director on the IMF board, has written: "The centre of gravity of the global economy is shifting back towards Asia from the North Atlantic. This change however, is not reflected in the framework of global economic governance [...] Regular quota reviews will also ensure that emerging powers get their rightful share in the IMF's governance. [...] The IMF governance structure needs to become more inclusive – the informal agreement that the IMF must be headed by a European national must be revisited to allow other nationalities to be given a fair chance." [Emerging Powers and Global Governance: Whither the IMF?](#), Dr Rakesh Mohan, Brookings India, 2016

121 [Q35](#) [Sir James Bevan]

122 We received evidence citing economist Dr Arvind Virmani as stating that the IMF and World Bank "do not reflect the rising size and importance of India [...] When countries are not given their due share you get things like the New Development Bank". [Q180](#) [Professor Kate Sullivan de Estrada]; India Dialogue (UEA) ([GBI0035](#))

123 [Q70](#) [Dr Reuben Abraham]

global governance issues, including around human rights. These divergences make it still more important for the UK to work closely with India in multilateral forums, to influence the path that it takes as it emerges as a leading power.

38. India is rightly anxious for its rise to be reflected through reform to international institutions. It is in the UK's interest to support these reforms. Helping India to gain a permanent seat on the UN Security Council would bolster the democratic voices on the body, and contribute to building a stronger relationship between the UK and India. However, this is unlikely to be successful in the near term. Without progress, the UK's commitment to Security Council reform risks ringing hollow to Indian policymakers. *In its response to this report, the Government should set out its assessment of the likelihood and timescale of a permanent Security Council seat for India, and the steps it is taking to achieve this. In the meantime, the UK should seek alternative ways to support India's efforts to gain status and recognition at the UN. The FCO should work with Indian government officials to identify and implement concrete actions to make the Council more transparent and accessible to India. In its response to this report, the Government should also set out what it is doing to ensure that India's rise is better reflected in global economic governance bodies.*

## The Commonwealth

39. The Government has said that the Commonwealth provides a “huge opportunity for a Global Britain”.<sup>124</sup> India now makes up more than half the population of the Commonwealth, and is a “key pillar” in the organisation's success.<sup>125</sup> New Delhi has signalled an interest in deepening its engagement with the Commonwealth.<sup>126</sup> Prime Minister Modi's attendance at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in London in 2018 was the first time in nearly a decade that an Indian leader had taken part.<sup>127</sup>

40. Any deep re-engagement from India may require changes to the structure of the Commonwealth.<sup>128</sup> Ranjan Mathai said that India was interested in how the organisation could be “revived as a new body” with a “very much bigger role” for India.<sup>129</sup> This could include decentralisation and sharing of leadership.<sup>130</sup> A greater Indian role may also mean changes in the Commonwealth's priorities. The Indian government has spoken of its wish to move the organisation away from a focus on human rights, and towards

124 Memorandum from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, March 2018 in Global Britain, [HC 780](#), Foreign Affairs Committee, 12 March 2018; [Commonwealth has key role to play in the bright future for Britain: article by Boris Johnson](#), FCO, 12 March 2018

125 FCO ([GBI0015](#)), para 61

126 [Modi and CHOGM 2018: Reimagining the Commonwealth](#), Professor Harsh V Pant and Akshay Ranade, Observer Research Foundation, 18 April 2018

127 Modi's visit was a “clear sign” that India wants to be engaged in addressing shared global challenges, according to the FCO. Ranjan Mathai said that the visit showed India's willingness to take a “fresh look” at the institution. [Q184–185](#) [Ranjan Mathai]; [We need to embrace the opportunities provided by being in the Commonwealth family](#), Lord Ahmad, India Inc, 15 January 2019

Our evidence highlighted several attractions of the Commonwealth for India: it does not include China, it allows India to interact with smaller states, and many of its members have substantial Indian diasporas. [Q36](#) [Rahul Roy-Chaudhury]; [Q184](#) [Ranjan Mathai]

128 [Q36](#) [Sir James Bevan]

129 [Q184](#) [Ranjan Mathai]

130 [Q184](#) [Ranjan Mathai]; [Q187](#) [Minister Field]; Royal Commonwealth Society ([GBI0011](#)); Ranjan Mathai ([GBI0036](#)); [India Set to Take on More Commonwealth Responsibilities](#), The Wire, 16 April 2018; [Modi and CHOGM 2018: Reimagining the Commonwealth](#), Professor Harsh V Pant and Akshay Ranade, Observer Research Foundation, 18 April 2018

a greater emphasis on economic development.<sup>131</sup> The Commonwealth could be used to address areas where the countries' interests align, for example the promotion of trade and investment; maritime issues; and joint development initiatives in Asia and Africa.<sup>132</sup> India's perception of the UK's commitment to the Commonwealth may be a factor in its decisions around engaging with the institution.<sup>133</sup>

**41. If the Commonwealth is to remain relevant India needs to be involved in setting its direction. Prime Minister Modi's attendance at the 2018 summit signals India's interest in engaging with the organisation. The UK should act fast to capitalise on this interest, opening a dialogue with India about its goals and what it wants from the Commonwealth. However, it is important to acknowledge that there may be challenges around diverging goals and ideas for the organisation's future between the UK and India, particularly on the topic of human rights. *The FCO should work to ensure that India is more engaged with the Commonwealth, and design measures to involve it more closely in the leadership of the organisation. This could involve decentralising Commonwealth bodies so that more of its operations are run from India. Supporting the candidacies of Indian nationals to senior positions within the Secretariat may also help to encourage Indian engagement. Proposals for India's future role in the Commonwealth should be framed in terms of Indian priorities, including its deepening interest in infrastructure initiatives in Asia, development initiatives in Africa, and the ability to engage with a wide range of states. It will be essential for the UK to make a serious commitment to its role in a rejuvenated Commonwealth if it expects India to do the same. In its response to this report, the FCO should set out the tangible steps it will take—with timelines—to enhance India's engagement with the Commonwealth. Specifically, it should give an update on the progress of reforms to the Secretariat, and its assessment of their implications for India's role.***

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131 Oral evidence: [UK foreign policy in changed world conditions](#), House of Lords, Select Committee on International Relations, 9 May 2018, Q120 [Rahul Roy-Chaudhury]; [Indian High Commissioner: My country 'stands ready' to re-energise the Commonwealth for the common good](#), The House, 13 April 2018

As one Indian analyst put it, the Commonwealth should "avoid pushing democracy and human rights down the throats of other states". [India's Commonwealth](#), C. Raja Mohan, Carnegie India, 18 April 2018

132 [Q184](#) [Ranjan Mathai]; Chatham House ([GBI0017](#)), para 14

133 [Q185](#) [Ranjan Mathai]

In a 2018 report, we argued that it would be difficult for the UK to convince its Commonwealth partners that it is serious about the rejuvenation of the organisation, beyond simply increasing trade with its most attractive economies, without additional resources being dedicated to the institution and to UK relations with its members. The FCO told us that reform of the Commonwealth Secretariat was an essential part of rejuvenating the body.

Global Britain and the 2018 Commonwealth Summit, [HC 831](#), Foreign Affairs Committee, 5 April 2018

## 6 Delivering on UK-India ties

### Shared history

42. The UK’s history with India has a double-edged role in the modern relationship. It is both at the root of the countries’ deep ties, and a source of tension.<sup>134</sup> Addressing the UK Parliament in 2015, Prime Minister Modi referenced the “debts and dues of history”, along with “the comfort of familiarity” in the relationship.<sup>135</sup> One of the darkest chapters in the countries’ shared history was the April 1919 Jallianwala Bagh massacre, when UK forces killed hundreds of unarmed civilians in northern India. We asked the Foreign Secretary in October 2018 whether the Government would offer an apology to mark the 100th anniversary of this atrocity. He said that he would “reflect” on this.<sup>136</sup> In March we put the same question to Minister Field, who told us that the Government was “trying to find a way in which we can express our very deep regret”.<sup>137</sup> However, on the anniversary of the massacre, the Government stopped short of a full apology, citing possible “financial implications” as one of its reasons.<sup>138</sup> Instead, the Prime Minister said that she “deeply regret[s] what happened”.<sup>139</sup> A former Indian High Commissioner to the UK wrote that this formulation was “not good enough”.<sup>140</sup> FCO Permanent Under-Secretary Sir Simon McDonald told the Indian media that a stronger statement could still be made later in the year.<sup>141</sup> We also received evidence calling for greater acknowledgement of Indian soldiers’ role in the First and Second World Wars.<sup>142</sup> A recent Indian project, supported by the UK High Commission, to commemorate the role of Indian soldiers in the First World War is an example of an initiative that builds understanding of the countries’ shared history and can help to heal wounds.<sup>143</sup>

**43. The Government should do everything it can to ensure that the past does not act unduly as a constraint on the present-day relationship. We welcome recent efforts to acknowledge publicly and commemorate Indians’ role in the First World War and hope that this will inspire further similar initiatives. There is little excuse for failing to issue an apology for atrocities such as the Jallianwala Bagh massacre. The lack of clarity around the decision is particularly unhelpful. *The Government missed an important symbolic opportunity by failing to issue a full apology on the 100th anniversary of***

134 [Q1](#) [Sir James Bevan]

135 [Full text of PM Modi’s address to British parliament](#), Times of India, 12 November 2015; Minister Field said that the UK’s “neo-colonial approach” had in the past been a frustration for New Delhi. Similarly, India’s then-High Commissioner to the UK criticised the dated understanding that many people in the UK have of his country, based on “nostalgia” and “the Raj”. We received evidence recommending a greater emphasis on UK-Indian history in schools, to promote understanding of and interest in the country. [Q186](#) [Minister Field]; BuffaloGrid ([GBI0030](#)); The Delicate Mind / نازک ذہن ([GBI0038](#)), para 9; [India in no rush to do a trade deal with post-Brexit Britain](#), Politico, 4 April 2018

136 Oral evidence from the Foreign Secretary, [HC 538](#), 31 October 2018, Q414

137 [Q225](#) [Minister Field]

138 HC Deb, 9 April 2019, [Volume 658, Column 38WH](#)

139 HC Deb, 10 April 2019, [Volume 658, Column 309](#)

140 [Jallianwala Bagh massacre: ‘Deep regret’ is simply not good enough](#), Navtej Sarna, The Hindu, 12 April 2019

141 [Give Pakistan time and space to act on terror, says U.K. Under Secretary Simon McDonald](#), The Hindu, 11 May 2019

142 Abhijit Mukhopadhyay ([GBI0043](#)), para 8

143 [India and UK commemorate fallen soldiers in World War 1](#), British High Commission New Delhi, 9 November 2018

*the crime, and should rectify this without delay. The FCO should work with other departments—and with the Indian authorities—to find further ways to explore and commemorate UK-Indian history.*

## The diaspora

44. The UK is home to 1.45 million people of Indian heritage, making up 2.3% of the population.<sup>144</sup> The two governments have described this group as a “living bridge” of personal and professional ties.<sup>145</sup> The diaspora is a factor attracting Indian businesses to the UK, and is a potent diplomatic resource.<sup>146</sup> Sir James Bevan told the Committee that it was a “secret weapon” for its ability “to understand, to influence and to access networks that the official British machinery would not otherwise have”.<sup>147</sup> However, the UK has not done enough to draw upon the Indian diaspora.<sup>148</sup> In 2013, David Cameron created the role of UK-Indian Diaspora Champion, charged with increasing links between the Government and the diaspora, but this position was not renewed under Theresa May.<sup>149</sup> We received evidence calling on the UK to set up a council of people of Indian origin to advise the British High Commission; to increase diaspora involvement with royal and ministerial visits to India; and to engage diaspora communities outside London in a “national conversation” about UK-India ties.<sup>150</sup>

45. **The diaspora is a hugely important resource in developing the UK’s relationship with India. Movement of people plays a crucial part in these ties—without easy movement between the UK and India, there can be no living bridge. Improvements to the UK’s visa processes, as set out above, would help build and make best use of diaspora links. There is a limit to how far the UK Government can intervene in organic people-to-people ties, but symbolic gestures can be important in building trust and signalling the UK’s commitment to building a closer relationship. *The FCO should do more to work with the diaspora, promoting talent from the community into bespoke roles aimed at engaging with the Indian business and policy communities. This could include reprising the role of Indian diaspora champion, and appointing an advisory council made up of members of the diaspora and others with relevant expertise. The FCO should set out the steps it will take in its response to this report.***

## Diplomatic networks

46. The UK has more diplomatic posts in India than any other government, with eight missions, compared to five each for the next-highest countries.<sup>151</sup> Despite this network, our evidence cited failures in communication around UK policies towards India.<sup>152</sup> Attendees at a private roundtable of business representatives told us that the stream of UK

144 FCO (GBI0015), para 101

145 [UK-India Joint Statement during the visit of Prime Minister to UK \(April 18, 2018\)](#), Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs

146 Chatham House (GBI0017), para 6

147 [Q16](#) [Sir James Bevan]

148 [Q81](#) [Dr Reuben Abraham], [Qq134–135](#) [Lord Bilimoria], [Q150](#) [Ranjan Mathai]; Bridge India (GBI0029)

149 *The Delicate Mind / نازک ذہن* (GBI0038); [PM in India: boosting business and community ties](#), Prime Minister’s Office, 14 November 2013

150 [Q140](#) [Lord Bilimoria]; *The British Asian Trust* (GBI0034); *The Delicate Mind / نازک ذہن* (GBI0038)

151 FCO (GBI0015), para 8; EPG Strategic Communications Ltd (GBI0023), para 3.2; [Global Diplomacy Index 2017](#), Lowy Institute

152 [Q182](#) [Ranjan Mathai]; Henry Jackson Society (GBI0040)

ministerial and business delegations visiting India lacked strategy and coherence,<sup>153</sup> while some witnesses suggested that the UK lacked sufficient presence in India's smaller cities.<sup>154</sup> On a recent visit to India, Sir Simon McDonald said that after Brexit the UK would devote more resources to "key relationships" with countries such as India.<sup>155</sup>

**47. India's vast size, diversity, and federal structure, with powerful state governments and regional divergences in the business environment, makes the spread of the UK's diplomatic network especially important. We welcome the UK Government's expansion of its presence in India over the last decade. However, it will not be sufficient in isolation. Miscommunications play a part in undermining the relationship, pointing to the need for a more strategic use of UK diplomatic resources in India. The Government has said that it plans to invest greater resources in the relationship after Brexit. *In its response to this report, the FCO should set out its plans for these resources, in terms of priorities, personnel, location, and funding. As part of this, the FCO should consider ways to enhance UK presence in India's smaller cities.***

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153 FAC private roundtable, Westminster, 25 April 2019

154 [Q121](#) [Devie Mohan]

155 [Give Pakistan time and space to act on terror, says U.K. Under Secretary Simon McDonald](#), The Hindu, 11 May 2019

The FCO has announced plans to add Gujarati to the languages taught to its personnel. [An Invisible Chain: speech by the Foreign Secretary](#), 31 October 2018

## 7 Conclusion

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48. The story of the UK's recent relationship with India is primarily one of missed opportunities. In all fundamental respects, the UK is well placed to capitalise on a mutually beneficial relationship with India—so it is a disappointing reflection on recent UK governments that we have been losing out in term of influence and trade. There are certain practical steps the government must take to reset its relationship with India, in particular making it easier for Indians to visit the UK and to work or study here. But it is also vital that the government sets the right tone and sends strong messages. The UK is ready to do business with India, and to work together bilaterally and in multilateral forums as a partnership of equals. In an increasingly unstable world threatened by autocratic states with contempt for the rules-based international system, it is more important than ever before that the UK and India support each other—and our mutual allies. These messages are not complex but they are essential. The Government now needs to communicate them clearly and make sure that their words are backed by actions.

## Conclusions and recommendations

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### A special relationship?

1. The Government is failing to make the most of this country's extensive ties with India: the bilateral relationship is strong, but falls short of its huge potential. The Government cannot afford to be complacent or rely on historical connections to deliver a modern partnership. The UK needs to adjust its strategy to India's enhanced influence and power: we should do more to respond to India's priorities, and should communicate our own objectives more clearly. As the UK leaves the EU, our foreign policy priorities will change. *One change should be enhancing our relationship with India: as a practical and symbolic start to resetting that relationship, we encourage the Foreign Secretary to visit India as soon as possible, and certainly before the end of 2019.* (Paragraph 8)

### Trade, investment and movement of people

2. As India has boomed over the last two decades, the UK has fallen behind other countries in its share of India's fast-growing trade with the world. This is an expensive missed opportunity. The Government has said that Brexit will allow for a closer relationship with India, and that the country is central to its aspirations for a more outward-facing Global Britain. However, a full UK-India trade deal is unlikely to be signed in the near term and Indian policy and business communities do not have a clear sense of the UK's plan to be more open to the world. *The challenges of concluding a full trade deal should not mean that the Government places economic ties with India on the back burner. The Government should prioritise trade talks with India and do more to lay the groundwork for an eventual deal. The FCO should lead a bold, well-resourced cross-government initiative to communicate clearly the approach and goals of Global Britain to Indian decision-makers, including the appointment of a champion for UK-India ties.* (Paragraph 11)
3. Recent improvements in India's business environment are impressive, and we hope that they will drive stronger bilateral economic ties. However, there is much still to be done, and UK businesses face a challenging operating environment in India. *The Government must improve access to targeted support for UK businesses in India, particularly start-ups and smaller businesses. In its response to this report, the Government should set out what it will do to respond to the criticism that UK businesses were not aware of the support offered by the Government and that accessing such support was a struggle for some. The Government should appoint a high-level and long-term dedicated trade envoy to India, with experience of the country's business environment.* (Paragraph 13)
4. There is a tension between the FCO's promotion of a "Global Britain", and some wider Government efforts to reduce net migration. While the Global Britain strategy is barely being communicated in India, the "hostile environment" message is being heard loud and clear. It is short-sighted for the Government not to do more to open doors for Indian entrepreneurs, tech workers, tourists and students, who offer clear benefits to the UK and often plan only a short-term stay. Facilitating

the movement of these groups is inseparable from the goal of increasing trade with India. We are concerned that Government policy has been driven by the single-minded objective of reducing net migration, championed by the Home Office, and that the FCO has not been able to play enough of a role in formulating Government policy towards India. The Home Secretary has resolutely stuck to the stated Government policy of reducing net migration “to the tens of thousands”. This is completely incompatible with a post-Brexit immigration policy that will allow unlimited numbers of students, workers within certain sectors, seasonal workers, and key workers. This incompatibility must be addressed as a matter of urgency. The Government cannot achieve both goals, and—given that most post-Brexit trade deals will require a relaxation of current immigration policy—the Government must be honest about which it will prioritise, especially in relation to India. This has led to a lack of coherence, with policies on movement of people undercutting the UK’s broader strategic objectives for the relationship. Certain decisions risk needlessly offending our partners: something has gone wrong if it is more difficult for citizens of a strategically important democracy that shares our values, language, and history to visit or study in the UK than those of an autocracy. The Government told us that it was not “picking winners” in Asia, but its policies on movement of people sometimes suggest otherwise. (Paragraph 19)

5. Foreign policy goals must be balanced against the need for migration controls, but there is no excuse for the policies that have led the UK to lose ground in attracting Indian students and tourists. These groups are vitally important, not just as consumers of a profitable UK export, but as a means of cementing lasting ties between the countries, and generating invaluable goodwill with India’s future leaders. Failure to reverse this trend would squander cultural capital built up over many decades of familiarity, and the international reputation of the UK’s universities and cultural sites. The Government’s recent steps to offer a six-month post-study work visa, and to set a target for increasing international student numbers, are welcome but do not go far enough. (Paragraph 20)
6. *The FCO should ensure that the goal of improving the overall relationship with India is woven into the broader Government migration policy. It should push for reforms to make it easier for India’s skilled workers, students, and tourists to enter the UK. This should include offering Indian nationals a bespoke multiple-entry visa on at least equivalent terms to those available to Chinese nationals, and steps to facilitate the movement of skilled Indian professionals for short-term projects. In its response to this report, the FCO should set out its assessment of how far proposals in the Immigration White Paper would meet this goal, and the actions it is taking to feed the outcomes of the recent UK-India Migration Dialogue into the policymaking process. The Government should urgently review its policies towards Indian students, particularly the decision to exclude them from the “low risk” list. It should commit to increasing the post-study visa available to international students to cover at least two years, and should review the possibility of involving universities in visa application processes. Having the UK’s leading universities able to issue a limited number of visas directly to the best Indian students would increase competition at home and decrease bureaucratic hurdles for those looking to develop their skills in the UK. (Paragraph 21)*

## Security and defence

7. The UK and India's convergence of interests in the Indian Ocean region offers an important opportunity to increase engagement on defence and security. Though there are tensions over the British Indian Ocean Territory, the two countries share vital interests in the stability of the Ocean and broader Indo-Pacific. As set out in our report on China and the Rules-Based International System, we support the Government's efforts to increase the UK's presence in the Indo-Pacific, in line with its capacity and other commitments. The UK and India's shared interest in promoting rules-based order in the region makes India an important partner in this initiative. The UK cannot have a successful Indo-Pacific strategy without a flourishing strategic relationship with India. Such a relationship has not yet been built. *The Government should make greater efforts to engage with Indian ministers, officials and non-governmental opinion leaders on defence, around UK interests in the Indian Ocean. These efforts may be boosted by greater engagement with third partners such as France and Japan, which have established joint initiatives with India in the region.* (Paragraph 27)
  
8. The UK's efforts to build ties with China, and engage with Belt and Road, should not be pursued at the expense of its relationship with India. India has been clear about its commitment to the rules-based order, while China's position is mixed, particularly around the promotion of free societies. While the relationship with Beijing is undoubtedly important, the depth of shared values between the UK and India make New Delhi a vital strategic partner for the future. As we noted in our report on China and the Rules-Based International System, economic considerations around Belt and Road's benefits for the UK should not crowd out questions of our wider strategic interests, values and national security. There is a risk that Chinese investment under Belt and Road could undermine international standards and stability in some recipient countries. India can be a partner in the UK's efforts to uphold these standards. This does not present a binary choice, as the UK can take part in infrastructure projects led by both China and India. *The FCO should take the lead in ensuring that stronger economic ties with China do not harm the political relationship with India. While continuing to engage with Belt and Road projects on a case-by-case basis, the UK should consider supporting connectivity projects in the region backed by India and others, upholding standards of transparency, sustainability and good governance.* (Paragraph 28)
  
9. India's defence modernisation programme presents an opportunity for the UK to build a closer strategic relationship, and to boost trade and investment. So far, this opportunity has been largely missed and others are doing more to work with India. As a result, the UK has fallen behind countries such as the US and France in its share of India's large and growing defence imports. France's development of mutual trust with India on defence and security issues over many years, and the US's efforts to sign military cooperation agreements, may present lessons for UK diplomacy. *The FCO should ensure that the overarching objective of building a closer relationship with India is front-and-centre in Government efforts to enhance bilateral defence ties. As with other areas of UK-India relations, this will require an effort to address India's priorities, such as developing Indian domestic defence production, rather than simply presenting UK objectives. In defence industry cooperation with India, the Government*

*should aim to build a partnership, rather than merely pursuing a transactional, buyer-seller relationship. This is likely to include efforts to increase joint manufacturing and technology transfers, within the restrictions set by the UK's international obligations, and closer cooperation on cyber security. In its response to this report, the FCO should set out the steps the Government is taking to achieve this. (Paragraph 31)*

10. The recent flare-up in tensions between India and Pakistan is deeply regrettable and dangerous. Given limited official lines of communication between the two countries, it is vital that there are countries that are on friendly terms with both, and can work to reduce tensions. The UK's ability to maintain good relations with both New Delhi and Islamabad, and be perceived as a credible interlocutor, is particularly important following these clashes. (Paragraph 33)

### Global governance

11. India is an important ally for the UK in defending the rules-based international order. At a time when the existing system is facing increasing challenges, India—as a fellow democracy that is explicitly committed to upholding the rules-based order—offers an important source of support. If China wants to change the rules of the game, India is seeking a seat at the table. The UK and India have differences over certain global governance issues, including around human rights. These divergences make it still more important for the UK to work closely with India in multilateral forums, to influence the path that it takes as it emerges as a leading power. (Paragraph 37)
12. India is rightly anxious for its rise to be reflected through reform to international institutions. It is in the UK's interest to support these reforms. Helping India to gain a permanent seat on the UN Security Council would bolster the democratic voices on the body, and contribute to building a stronger relationship between the UK and India. However, this is unlikely to be successful in the near term. Without progress, the UK's commitment to Security Council reform risks ringing hollow to Indian policymakers. *In its response to this report, the Government should set out its assessment of the likelihood and timescale of a permanent Security Council seat for India, and the steps it is taking to achieve this. In the meantime, the UK should seek alternative ways to support India's efforts to gain status and recognition at the UN. The FCO should work with Indian government officials to identify and implement concrete actions to make the Council more transparent and accessible to India. In its response to this report, the Government should also set out what it is doing to ensure that India's rise is better reflected in global economic governance bodies. (Paragraph 38)*
13. If the Commonwealth is to remain relevant India needs to be involved in setting its direction. Prime Minister Modi's attendance at the 2018 summit signals India's interest in engaging with the organisation. The UK should act fast to capitalise on this interest, opening a dialogue with India about its goals and what it wants from the Commonwealth. However, it is important to acknowledge that there may be challenges around diverging goals and ideas for the organisation's future between the UK and India, particularly on the topic of human rights. *The FCO should work to ensure that India is more engaged with the Commonwealth, and design measures*

*to involve it more closely in the leadership of the organisation. This could involve decentralising Commonwealth bodies so that more of its operations are run from India. Supporting the candidacies of Indian nationals to senior positions within the Secretariat may also help to encourage Indian engagement. Proposals for India's future role in the Commonwealth should be framed in terms of Indian priorities, including its deepening interest in infrastructure initiatives in Asia, development initiatives in Africa, and the ability to engage with a wide range of states. It will be essential for the UK to make a serious commitment to its role in a rejuvenated Commonwealth if it expects India to do the same. In its response to this report, the FCO should set out the tangible steps it will take—with timelines—to enhance India's engagement with the Commonwealth. Specifically, it should give an update on the progress of reforms to the Secretariat, and its assessment of their implications for India's role. (Paragraph 41)*

### Delivering on UK-India ties

14. The Government should do everything it can to ensure that the past does not act unduly as a constraint on the present-day relationship. We welcome recent efforts to acknowledge publicly and commemorate Indians' role in the First World War and hope that this will inspire further similar initiatives. There is little excuse for failing to issue an apology for atrocities such as the Jallianwala Bagh massacre. The lack of clarity around the decision is particularly unhelpful. There is little excuse for failing to issue an apology for atrocities such as the Jallianwala Bagh massacre. The lack of clarity around the decision is particularly unhelpful. *The Government missed an important symbolic opportunity by failing to issue a full apology on the 100th anniversary of the crime, and should rectify this without delay. The FCO should work with other departments—and with the Indian authorities—to find further ways to explore and commemorate UK-Indian history. (Paragraph 43)*
15. The diaspora is a hugely important resource in developing the UK's relationship with India. Movement of people plays a crucial part in these ties—without easy movement between the UK and India, there can be no living bridge. Improvements to the UK's visa processes, as set out above, would help build and make best use of diaspora links. There is a limit to how far the UK Government can intervene in organic people-to-people ties, but symbolic gestures can be important in building trust and signalling the UK's commitment to building a closer relationship. *The FCO should do more to work with the diaspora, promoting talent from the community into bespoke roles aimed at engaging with the Indian business and policy communities. This could include reprising the role of Indian diaspora champion, and appointing an advisory council made up of members of the diaspora and others with relevant expertise. The FCO should set out the steps it will take in its response to this report. (Paragraph 45)*
16. India's vast size, diversity, and federal structure, with powerful state governments and regional divergences in the business environment, makes the spread of the UK's diplomatic network especially important. We welcome the UK Government's expansion of its presence in India over the last decade. However, it will not be sufficient in isolation. Miscommunications play a part in undermining the relationship, pointing to the need for a more strategic use of UK diplomatic resources in India. The Government has said that it plans to invest greater resources in the

relationship after Brexit. *In its response to this report, the FCO should set out its plans for these resources, in terms of priorities, personnel, location, and funding. As part of this, the FCO should consider ways to enhance UK presence in India's smaller cities.* (Paragraph 47)

17. The story of the UK's recent relationship with India is primarily one of missed opportunities. In all fundamental respects, the UK is well placed to capitalise on a mutually beneficial relationship with India—so it is a disappointing reflection on recent UK governments that we have been losing out in term of influence and trade. There are certain practical steps the Government must take to reset its relationship with India, in particular making it easier for Indians to visit the UK and to work or study here. But it is also vital that the Government sets the right tone and sends strong messages. The UK is ready to do business with India, and to work together bilaterally and in multilateral forums as a partnership of equals. In an increasingly unstable world threatened by autocratic states with contempt for the rules-based international system, it is more important than ever before that the UK and India support each other—and our mutual allies. These messages are not complex but they are essential. The Government now needs to communicate them clearly and make sure that their words are backed by actions. (Paragraph 48)

## Formal minutes

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**Tuesday 11 June 2019**

Members present:

Tom Tugendhat, in the Chair

Chris Bryant	Mr Bob Seely
Stephen Gethins	Royston Smith
Ian Murray	Catherine West
Andrew Rosindell	

Draft Report (*Building Bridges: Reawakening UK-India ties*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

*Ordered*, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 48 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

*Resolved*, That the Report be the Eighteenth Report of the Committee to the House.

*Ordered*, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

*Ordered*, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

[Adjourned till Tuesday 18 June at 2.15pm]

## Witnesses

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The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

### Tuesday 9 October 2018

**Sir James Bevan**, Former High Commissioner to India, **Rahul Roy-Chaudhury**, Senior Fellow for South Asia, International Institute for Strategic Studies

[Q1–41](#)

### Tuesday 20 November 2018

**Dr Reuben Abraham**, CEO and Senior Fellow, IDFC Institute

[Q42–86](#)

### Tuesday 20 November 2018

**Shishir Bajoria**, Chairman, Bajoria Group, **Lord Bilimoria CBE DL**, Founder and Chairman, Cobra Beer, **Dan Mobley**, Global Corporate Relations Director, Diageo, **Devie Mohan**, Co-founder and CEO, Burnmark

[Q87–143](#)

### Tuesday 27 November 2018

**Dr Rudra Chaudhuri**, Senior Lecturer, King's College London and Director, Carnegie India, **Ranjan Mathai**, former Indian High Commissioner to the UK, **Professor Kate Sullivan de Estrada**, Associate Professor in the International Relations of South Asia, University of Oxford

[Q144–185](#)

### Tuesday 19 March 2019

**Rt Hon Mark Field MP**, Minister of State for Asia and the Pacific, **Fergus Auld**, Head of South Asia Department and India Co-ordinator, Foreign and Commonwealth Office

[Q186–225](#)

## Published written evidence

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The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

GBI numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

- 1 Association of British Insurers ([GBI0005](#))
- 2 Bilimoria, Lord Karan ([GBI0009](#))
- 3 Booker, Nicholas ([GBI0020](#))
- 4 Bridge India ([GBI0029](#))
- 5 The British Asian Trust ([GBI0034](#))
- 6 The British Library ([GBI0025](#))
- 7 BuffaloGrid ([GBI0030](#))
- 8 Burnmark ([GBI0037](#))
- 9 Chatham House ([GBI0017](#))
- 10 City of London Corporation ([GBI0022](#))
- 11 Confederation of Indian Industry ([GBI0031](#))
- 12 Confederation of Indian Industry ([GBI0045](#))
- 13 Dave, Aaditya ([GBI0028](#))
- 14 The Delicate Mind / نازک ذہن ([GBI0038](#))
- 15 EPG Strategic Communications Ltd ([GBI0023](#))
- 16 FCO ([GBI0015](#))
- 17 Filmer, Mrs Antonia ([GBI0013](#))
- 18 Foreign and Commonwealth Office ([GBI0042](#))
- 19 The Henry Jackson Society ([GBI0021](#))
- 20 Henry Jackson Society ([GBI0040](#))
- 21 India Dialogue (UEA) ([GBI0035](#))
- 22 Indian Professionals Forum ([GBI0039](#))
- 23 Indo-British APPG ([GBI0016](#))
- 24 Kattumuri, Dr Ruth ([GBI0007](#))
- 25 Mathai, Ranjan ([GBI0036](#))
- 26 Mehan, Mr Aditya ([GBI0010](#))
- 27 Mukhopadhyay, Abhijit ([GBI0043](#))
- 28 National Association of Software & Services Companies (NASSCOM) ([GBI0003](#))
- 29 O'Donnell, Frank ([GBI0026](#))
- 30 Observer Research Foundation ([GBI0014](#))
- 31 Royal Commonwealth Society ([GBI0011](#))
- 32 Scott, Dr David ([GBI0012](#))
- 33 Sullivan de Estrada, Professor Kate ([GBI0033](#))

- 34 Sullivan de Estrada, Professor Kate ([GBI0044](#))
- 35 TheCityUK ([GBI0004](#))
- 36 UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) ([GBI0002](#))
- 37 UK India Business Council ([GBI0018](#))
- 38 VisitBritain ([GBI0027](#))
- 39 Wipro Limited ([GBI0032](#))

## List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

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All publications from the Committee are available on the [publications page](#) of the Committee's website. The reference number of the Government's response to each Report is printed in brackets after the HC printing number.

### Session 2017–19

First Report	Violence in Rakhine State and the UK's response	HC 435
Second Report	The future of UK diplomacy in Europe	HC 514
Third Report	Kurdish aspirations and the interests of the UK	HC 518
Fourth Report	2017 elections to the International Court of Justice	HC 860
Fifth Report	The UK's response to hurricanes in its Overseas Territories	HC 722
Sixth Report	Global Britain	HC 780
Seventh Report	Global Britain and the 2018 Commonwealth Summit	HC 831
Eighth Report	Moscow's Gold: Russian Corruption in the UK	HC 932
Ninth Report	The FCO's preparations for the 2018 World Cup	HC 1011
Tenth Report	Global Britain and the Western Balkans	HC 1013
Eleventh Report	UK arms exports during 2016	HC 666
Twelfth Report	Global Britain: The Responsibility to Protect and Humanitarian Intervention	HC 1005
Thirteenth Report	Global Britain: Human rights and the rule of law	HC 874
Fourteenth Report	Global Britain: FCO Skills	HC 1254
Fifteenth Report	Global Britain and the British Overseas Territories: Resetting the relationship	HC 1464
Sixteenth Report	China and the Rules-Based International System	HC 612
Seventeenth Report	Fragmented and incoherent: the UK's sanctions policy	HC 1703
First Special Report	The United Kingdom's relations with Russia: Government Response to the Committee's Seventh Report of Session 2016–17	HC 322

Second Special Report	The UK's relations with Turkey: Government Response to the Committee's Tenth Report of Session 2016–17	HC 333
Third Special Report	'Political Islam', and the Muslim Brotherhood Review: Government Response to the Committee's Eighth Report of Session 2016–17	HC 334
Fourth Special Report	Violence in Rakhine State and the UK's response: Government Response to the Committee's First Report	HC 868
Fifth Special Report	The future of UK diplomacy in Europe: Government response to the Committee's Second Report	HC 918
Sixth Special Report	Kurdish aspirations and the interests of the UK: Government response to the Committee's Third Report	HC 983
Seventh Special Report	2017 elections to the International Court of Justice: Government response to the Committee's Fourth Report	HC 1012
Eighth Special Report	Article 50 negotiations: Implications of "No Deal": Government response to the Committee's Ninth Report	HC 1053
Ninth Special Report	The UK's response to hurricanes in its Overseas Territories: Government response to the Committee's 5th Report	HC 1052
Tenth Special Report	Global Britain: Government response to the Committee's 6th Report	HC 1236
Eleventh Special Report	Global Britain and the 2018 Commonwealth Summit: Government response to the Committee's 7th Report	HC 1427
Twelfth Special Report	Moscow's Gold: Russian Corruption in the UK: Government response to the Committee's 8th Report	HC 1488
Thirteenth Special Report	The FCO's preparations for the 2018 World Cup in Russia: Government response to the Committee's 9th Report	HC 1507
Fourteenth Special Report	Global Britain and the Western Balkans: Government Response to the Committee's Tenth Report	HC 1572
Fifteenth Special Report	Global Britain: The Responsibility to Protect and Humanitarian Intervention: Government response to the Committee's Twelfth Report	HC 1719
Sixteenth Special Report	Global Britain: Human rights and the rule of law: Government response to the Committee's Thirteenth Report	HC 1759
Seventeenth Special Report	Global Britain and the Western Balkans: Supplementary Government response to the Committee's Tenth Report	HC 1760
Eighteenth Special Report	UK arms exports during 2016: Government Response to the Committees' First Joint Report	HC 1789

Nineteenth Special Report	Delivering Global Britain: FCO Skills: Government Response to the Committee's Fourteenth Report	HC 1937
Twentieth Special Report	Global Britain and the British Overseas Territories: Resetting the relationship: Government response to the Committee's Fifteenth Report	HC 2174
Twenty-First Special Report	China and the Rules-Based International System: Government Response to the Committee's Sixteenth Report	HC 2362