

BARONESS GOLDIE DL
MINISTER OF STATE IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS

4.2.6.8

8th August 2023

Dear David,

During the debate on Defence Policy (International Relations and Defence Committee Report) on 30th June 2023, I agreed to inquire across Government on a number of issues which you raised in relation to China. I will address these in the order in which they arose.

With regard to the experiences of Mr Peter Humphrey, a British national and former Reuters foreign correspondent, and his wife who were previously incarcerated in a Chinese prison, I wish to reassure you that we continue to take all active consular cases in China very seriously and do all we can to offer support to both detainees and their families.

As for the Government response to the Intelligence and Security Committee's China report, I understand that since this debate, the Intelligence and Security Committee's China report was published on 13 July 2023. The Government welcomes the Committee's scrutiny; we recognise the importance of constantly adapting and strengthening our approach to respond to changing threats. The Government will consider the ISC's recommendations carefully to assess where further action should be taken, and will publish our conclusions and a full response to the report in due course. Per the Memorandum of Understanding, HMG will aim to respond substantively to any report by the ISC within 60 days.

With regard to an economic impact analysis of a potential blockade or invasion of Taiwan, the UK has a clear interest in peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait. We consider the Taiwan issue one to be settled peacefully by the people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait through constructive dialogue, without the threat or use of force or coercion.

There would be significant consequences for the global economy should peace and stability fail in the Taiwan Strait. As is our practice across many global issues, HMG is undertaking analysis of the implications of a range of potential scenarios in the region.

With regard to encouraging Taiwanese and or Chinese accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, the UK has welcomed CPTPP members' willingness to expand the group. Membership is open to economies willing to meet the high standards and comprehensive market access commitments of the agreement.

The UK is committed to working with the other CPTPP members to protect and develop the agreement's high standards. HMG will not comment on the specifics of any other economies' interest in the agreement.

With regard to Taiwanese accession to the World Health Organisation and or the World Health Assembly, the UK believes that the people of Taiwan have a valuable contribution to

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make on issues of global concern. We therefore support Taiwanese meaningful participation in international organisations, as a member where statehood is not a prerequisite, and as an observer or guest where it is. This includes support for Taiwan as an observer at the World Health Assembly and participation in relevant WHO technical meetings, as stated in the UK national statement at the 2023 WHA.

With regard to industrial espionage and diversification of supply chains, the Integrated Review 2021 established the UK's robust stance towards China, recognising its increasing international assertiveness and identified it as the biggest state-based threat to the UK's economic security. The Integrated Review Refresh 2023 built on this, responding to the evolving strategic environment. It also recognised China's size and significance on almost every global issue, and set out the UK's preference for better cooperation, understanding, predictability and stability with China. The Foreign Secretary set out how the UK will approach this challenge in his Mansion House speech in April 2023: protecting our national security, aligning with our allies and partners, and engaging with China where it is in UK interests to do so.

Specifically on trade, HMG will continue to pursue a positive trade and investment relationship with China, whilst ensuring our national security and values are protected. We have taken steps to mitigate national security risks stemming from UK-China trade and investment to enable us to engage with confidence. China is our fourth biggest trading partner, with total bilateral trade worth £104 billion in the four quarters to Q3 2022. This supports UK jobs and livelihoods. The UK government believes a positive trade and investment relationship is beneficial for both the UK and China, where it is consistent with our values and national security.

To reassure you on supply chains, we will continue to strengthen our national security infrastructure and supply chain resilience to protect our economy, critical national infrastructure, supply chains and our ability to generate strategic advantage through science and technology. Further detail on how HMG is delivering this will be set out in its response to the Intelligence and Security Committee's China Report as referred to above.

The UK takes its national security extremely seriously, including the security of its critical infrastructure. We are committed to increasing resilience within the UK to ensure we can protect UK security, prosperity and rights. As announced in November, Chinese surveillance equipment is now being removed from sensitive sites across the Government estate and disconnected from core departmental networks. In addition, the Government is committing to publish a timeline for the removal of surveillance equipment produced by companies subject to China's National Intelligence Law from sensitive central government sites.

I hope this explains the position. I am placing a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

*Yours sincerely,
Annabel Su Hoggie*

BARONESS GOLDIE DL