

Written evidence from the Human Security Centre

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The Human Security Centre

The Human Security Centre (HSC) is an international, independent, not-for-profit foreign policy think-tank based in London, United Kingdom.

The purpose of the HSC is to address, and to formulate solutions to, current and emerging threats to human security. The HSC aims to promote and help create an international society in which individuals and communities everywhere are able to live free from fear, free from want and free from indignity.

To achieve this, the HSC promotes the concept of human security as a tool to facilitate better understanding of the complexity and interrelatedness of threats and as a central pillar of foreign policy in the twenty-first century. Building on the human security discourse, it advances people-centred, multi-sectoral, comprehensive, context-specific and prevention-oriented solutions, working across many sectors to integrate the agendas of peace and security, development and human rights.

Foreword

The nature of warfare has changed significantly in the last two decades since the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Berlin Wall. Whilst state versus state warfare is not gone, it rarely takes place on open battlefields, against opposing infantry battalions, supported by mechanised brigades, artillery and air supports. It is and will usually be carried out in more covert ways, as the current conflict unfolding between Russia and Ukraine demonstrates. Not only this, but most armed conflicts at present are not between two states at all, but are asymmetric conflicts between states and armed non-state groups.

Equally, what constitutes victory has changed significantly. No longer is the main aim the seizure of opponents' territory. The war is fought over civilians, often attempts to win the hearts and minds of certain populations, again as the Russians are attempting with Russophone rebels in Ukraine. Beyond hearts and minds, many conflicts see one belligerent

doing all it can to kill civilians, and the other side striving to protect them, as shown by the conflicts between NATO and the Taliban in Afghanistan, between the Kurdish Peshmerga and the Islamic State in Iraq, and between the various regional groups of al Qaeda and the states trying to prevent them from carrying out mass atrocities against their civilian populations.

With this in mind the tactics, equipment and organisational structures used to fight wars must shift to adapt, too. Flexibility, a quality long prized by Britain's military, is becoming increasingly valuable to the political establishment as well, in an atmosphere of financial pressures, regional instability and political uncertainty. As such, the Future Force 2020 inquiry is very timely. It is imperative that the British, renowned for having one of the finest armed forces in the world, retains its ability to defend its people, its land and its values.

The Human Security Centre's evidence breaks into three main parts.

1. The general geopolitical context in which the British Armed Forces currently operate and will have to operate up to 2020.
2. A detailed analysis of the three branches of the armed forces (army, navy, air force) and our recommendations for how they can be reconfigured in light of the changing strategic environment and budgetary pressures.
3. An analysis of the Trident programme and Britain's strategic nuclear deterrent.

The Strategic Context

Thematic conditions under which the British military may operate

Defence of sovereign British territory

1. This "core" role of the armed forces is of course of the utmost importance, though in practical terms we see only very few possibilities which would require the use of military force to this end.
2. The most likely condition under which this would occur would be an attack on the Falkland Islands. In recent years Argentina has exhibited some belligerent rhetoric over the status of the islands and demanded their return to Argentinian rule¹. While

this behaviour is unlikely to escalate beyond its rhetorical nature in the currently existing political climate and is more aimed at bolstering internal support for various Argentinian politicians, it is still a situation that a close eye should be kept on for developments.

3. The current military disposition of the islands, with an advanced warning system and sizeable garrison of soldiers, should act as both a deterrent against future aggression and prevent the islands being taken in the event that any such aggressive action occurs². Nevertheless, such a posture would need to be maintained into the foreseeable future, as events in South America may occur rapidly and the distance involved will not allow for forces to be allocated from other areas in response to a changing security situation with any great haste³.
4. Beyond this, and assuming a more expansive understanding of territory, further threats may be aimed at British military bases overseas. Long-standing military bases, such as the British Sovereign Bases in Cyprus, may make tempting targets for states or violent non-state actors who wish to reduce the ability of the British military to undertake force projection – and such attacks may be pre-emptive in nature. The overall risk of such attacks is low, though missile development in several nations warrants keeping a close eye on, especially in the Middle East⁴, and precautions should be taken against possible suicide bombing attacks, especially by vehicle-borne devices.

International treaty obligations and the UN

5. A more likely scenario is that British forces would be deployed as part of a larger NATO deployment, in keeping with British military action over the past two decades.

¹ Recent example, Alexandra Olsen, 26th June 2014, The Independent, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/politics/un-committee-backs-argentina-over-falkland-islands-9566894.html> (accessed 04/09/2014)

² An assessment of the Argentinian military disposition can be found here <http://yalejournal.org/2012/10/03/falklands-assessing-military-preparedness/>

³ In particular, the lack of a British aircraft carrier would severely undermine any efforts to retake the islands

⁴ Examples include Turkey <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/tr/security/01/06/turkey-to-buy-long-range-missile.html>, Iran <http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/foreign/07-Aug-2014/iran-to-unveil-mid-long-range-missile-systems>, and Hezbollah http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/03/world/middleeast/hezbollah-is-said-to-transfer-missiles.html?_r=0, though there are undoubtedly more programs than this currently underway (all accessed 04/09/2014)

In such a scenario, it is likely that Britain would be acting, both politically and militarily alongside one of the major NATO states – namely the United States or potentially France.

6. Such military action would likely be that of a war-like nature – degrading the military ability of a nation-state, either the restoration and maintenance of international peace under security following a Chapter 7 authorisation by the UNSC or assisting states in self-defence in accordance with article 51 UN Charter, or else to prevent the security and military forces of those nations from committing such acts.

Peacekeeping

7. Closely related to the above, we would expect to see British troops taking part in peacekeeping and reconstruction operations, helping provide security in fragmented societies in order to create the political conditions for a sustainable peace. The examples of such operations would be Kosovo and, to a less successful extent, Afghanistan. It is likely that, in the aftermath of any large scale military action carried out by Britain and its allies, as described under the previous section, that British troops would remain in theatre for some years afterwards.

Training

8. Training could form part of a peacekeeping and reconstruction mission for the British armed forces, but should also be considered a category of activity in and of itself. Such training units allow the British military and government to undertake and maintain close ties with friendly nations and help to upgrade the military capability of states in less stable regions of the world, and thus contribute to British foreign policy aims. In particular, the British Army Training Unit Kenya (BATUK⁵) is a good example of the kind of training mission we would expect the armed forces to undertake.

Humanitarian relief

⁵ Overview at <http://www.army.mod.uk/operations-deployments/22724.aspx> (accessed 04/09/2014)

9. The military is frequently called upon to provide help in humanitarian relief situations, especially those relating to natural disasters. Because of the capabilities of the military, as well as its international scope, British forces and in particular the Navy⁶ and RAF⁷ may form a component of any operations to alleviate suffering in the aftermath of mass flooding, storms etc. dependent on the forces available in the area and other nations who may be able to provide aid.

Support of other services in the UK

10. Finally, the military may be called upon to support other arms of the British state in mainland operations. Though this role would be limited⁸, the military may be called upon in situations where civil authorities are overwhelmed, such as widespread flooding, or where the specialised skills available in the armed forces would be of use to civilian authorities, such as bomb disposal units.

Political context

11. It is important to note at this juncture that whilst we have attempted to provide up-to-date analysis on a number of areas, due to the rapidly changing nature of situations on the ground, the analyses represented here may no longer be accurate as of the time of reading.

Syria – Iraq

12. Given that the ongoing crises in Iraq and Syria are interlinked, in fact the Islamic State (IS) claims much of both state's territories to now be the same entity, it is best to consider these together.

⁶<http://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/news-and-latest-activity/news/2013/december/13/131213-op-patwin-roundup> as an example (accessed 04/09/2014)

⁷BBC News, 9th August 2014, 'UK Aid Deliveries in Iraq 'Imminent'', <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-28722664> (accessed 04/09/2014)

⁸ In accordance with UK policy <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/maintaining-operational-readiness-to-provide-military-support-for-activities-in-the-uk> (accessed 04/09/2014)

13. Without a doubt this is the most pressing security issue currently facing the British Government at this moment in time. However, as things currently stand, the options for military action are limited, due to a number of factors.
14. Since the declaration of the Caliphate and its accompanying military successes in Syria and Iraq, the United States and United Kingdom have reactivated Task Force Black, the joint special forces group which took on al Qaeda in Iraq, following the fall of Saddam⁹. Al Qaeda in Iraq was the precursor group which would go through many incarnations before eventually becoming what is today known as IS. Task Force Black, also known as Task Force 88, Task Force 145 and Other Coalition Forces – Iraq (OCF-I)¹⁰ amongst other designations, is believed to have played a pivotal role in tracking down and killing Abu Musab al Zarqawi, the original leader of al Qaeda in Iraq¹¹. The task force is made up of British Special Air Service (SAS) and Special Boat Service (SBS) and American Delta Force, Navy SEAL Naval Special Warfare Development Group (SEAL Team Six), 75th Ranger regiment, US Air Force 24th Special Tactics Squadron soldiers¹². This force has been tasked with a ‘hunter-killer’ role in Iraq to ‘smash the Islamic State’, much as it did against al Qaeda in Iraq¹³. The most prized high value target (HVT) is of course the self-proclaimed Caliph, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, followed by his Cabinet¹⁴, military commanders, financiers, ideologues and those in possession of technical know-how such as bomb-makers. The main concept behind this operation would be to neutralise functional nodes in the network, which will be difficult to replace, rather than to waste effort taking out operatives (suicide bombers, fighters etc.), who are hardly in short supply.
15. Iraqi Prime Minister of eight years Nuri al-Maliki has resigned, allowing the opportunity for a new government to put an end to many years of aggressively

⁹ Johnlee Varghese, 25th August 2014, International Business Times, <http://www.ibtimes.co.in/task-force-black-us-uk-form-undercover-team-hunt-kill-islamic-state-leaders-607575> (accessed 04/09/2014)

¹⁰ Leigh Neville, 2008, *Special Operations Forces in Iraq*, Osprey Publishing Elite 170, Osprey

¹¹ Brian Ross, June 8th, 2006, ABC News http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/headlines/2006/06/victory_for_tas/ (accessed 04/09/2014)

¹² Sean Naylor, 2006, *Not a Good Day to Die: The Untold Story of Operation Anaconda*, (Berkeley Books, California), pp. 32

¹³ Johnlee Varghese, 25th August 2014, International Business Times, <http://www.ibtimes.co.in/task-force-black-us-uk-form-undercover-team-hunt-kill-islamic-state-leaders-607575> (accessed 04/09/2014)

¹⁴ Hisham al-Hashimi, 9th July 2014, The Telegraph, ‘Revealed: the Islamic State ‘cabinet’, from finance minister to suicide bomb deployer’, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iraq/10956193/Revealed-the-Islamic-State-cabinet-from-finance-minister-to-suicide-bomb-deployer.html> (accessed 04/09/2014)

sectarian misrule. If a new government can address some minority grievances, particularly those of the Sunnis, then it will be much more difficult for Sunni IS to win the hearts and minds of Iraqi people. Moderate Sunnis have already suggested that they are open to joining with the new Iraqi Government to fight IS¹⁵.

16. It is already clear that Maliki's previous policy of disdain for intervention from external powers is not going to be continued, given that new Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi invited American airstrikes on IS targets on the city of Amerli¹⁶. This change of policy may allow NATO powers the opportunity to work with the legitimate government of Iraq to thwart IS. American airstrikes are making significant progress, just today (4th September) killing IS's leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's closest aide Abu Hajar al-Souri¹⁷.

17. However, intervention in Iraq alone would be of questionable strategic merit, given that much of the logistical and financial strength of IS is based in Syrian territory¹⁸. Much like after their December offensive¹⁹, IS would likely retreat to their Syrian strongholds, notably Raqqa, to recruit and regroup before resuming their attacks on the Iraqi state. And because of preceding political events, as well as ongoing public scepticism regarding intervention in the Middle East, securing Parliamentary permission is unlikely to occur within the current timeframe, excluding dramatic events in the region which put the existence of the Iraqi state into question, or war crimes by IS escalate to unbearable levels of suffering and violence. It does, however fall within the Prime Minister's prerogative powers to deploy the armed forces and David Cameron has asserted his right to do this and to inform Parliament thereafter²⁰.

¹⁵ Raheem Salman and Michael Georgy, August 15th 2014, 'Iraqi Sunnis say could join new government, fight Islamic State', Reuters, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/08/15/us-iraq-security-idUSKBN0GF0Z620140815> (accessed 04/09/2014)

¹⁶United States Central Command, 30th August 2014, 'U.S. Military Conducts Airstrikes Against ISIL, Airdrops Humanitarian Aid Near Amirli', <http://www.centcom.mil/en/news/articles/us-military-conducts-airstrikes-against-isil-airdrops-humanitarian-aid-iraq> (accessed 04/09/2014)

¹⁷ Armin Rosen, 4th September 2014, Business Insider, 'Iraqi Military: Top Aide To ISIS Leader Baghdadi Killed In Airstrike In Mosul', <http://www.businessinsider.com/top-aide-to-isis-leader-baghdadi-killed-2014-9> (accessed 04/09/2014)

¹⁸ As this article explains, there are many ways to map the extent of ISIS geographic control <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/08/the-many-ways-to-map-the-islamic-state/379196/> Nevertheless, it is not contested that Raqqa is considered the core of ISIS in Syria

¹⁹<http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/2014/06/12/isis-and-anbar-crisis/hdli> for a description of the ISIS urban guerrilla strategy

²⁰ Peter Dominiczak, 1st September 2014, 'UK could join American air strikes in Iraq and Syria, warns David Cameron', <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iraq/11069129/UK-could-join-American->

This said, with the Syria vote giving many the impression that Parliament ought to be consulted on such deployments, it could be costly if the Government risked a significant armed deployment without Parliamentary approval.

18. Equally, US policy towards the region must be taken into consideration. As things currently stand, the White House is not keen for overt military engagement in Middle Eastern conflicts involving “boots on the ground”²¹. This may change as President Obama steps down, but it is too early at this stage to guess at the policies of his successor, whomever that may be. Despite strong support in some quarters of the US government for a greater role, the position of the White House has been critical in deciding US policy, and thus British policy in the region also.

19. As such, the British military approach to the crisis for the moment is one of background involvement, intelligence gathering, and special forces operations with a preparedness to join an airstrike campaign if necessary. The more the crisis escalates, the greater the role the British armed forces is like to play in the future conflict, though it is unlikely that we would see the deployment of large scale ground forces to the region again, as we did in 2003.

Kurdistan

20. An exception to the above analysis may be considered in the case of Kurdistan. Unlike the Iraqi government, the Kurdish government is far more willing to accept outside help, and the US has made it clear that it intends to back the Kurdish government²² and, to a lesser extent, the Peshmerga in their war against IS.

21. While the situation on the ground is subject to rapid change, at the moment it seems Britain is likely to involve itself in delivering humanitarian aid to refugees in the region, followed by reconnaissance and perhaps limited air strikes in order to support the Peshmerga, in conjunction with Britain’s American allies.

[air-strikes-in-Iraq-and-Syria-warns-David-Cameron.html](#) (accessed 04/09/2014)

²¹David Sanger’s review of Obama’s security policy suggests that the President has a strong preference for covert operations, special forces and air support over more overt and large scale military operations. See <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/06/books/confront-and-conceal-by-david-sanger.html> and this more recent interview of Obama by Thomas Friedman https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nnRNszsza_8 which touches on his concerns regarding intervention post-Libya

²²Zack Beauchamp, 8th August 2014, ‘Why the US is bombing ISIS in Iraq’, <http://www.vox.com/2014/8/7/5980595/iraq-crisis-bombing> (accessed 04/09/2014)

22. Should the situation in Kurdish controlled territory deteriorate, it is likely that British obligations in the region will increase and require the allocation of more British personnel, as well as a more front-line combat role.
23. It is our view at the HSC that as a rights-respecting, democratic community under threat from IS forces, which are already attempting genocide against the Yazidis and Shiah and have cleansed Mosul of one of the oldest Christian communities in the world, that the Kurdish communities in Iraq and Syria should be given all necessary Western support to secure them.

The wider Middle East

24. While instability will likely continue in the wider Middle East for the foreseeable future, it is likely that few of these cases will require the intervention of the British military, as Libya did. However, should states in the region resort to mass human rights violations, as Libya and Syria have done, then the question of military intervention must be considered.
25. Any such operation is unlikely to take place without assistance from British allies, and will likely involve the Navy and RAF. Without extant significant armed opposition to the regime on the ground, a military intervention is likely only to produce a temporary solution to any ongoing humanitarian crisis, and thus is not an ideal policy option. Conversely, if there is significant armed opposition, and this opposition is not considered even less favourable than the existing regime – a constant possibility in the region, particularly following the ‘Jihadification’ of the Arab Spring – then steps to support that opposition, including military training and airstrikes should be considered.
26. Thus far, no regime in the region has undertaken violent suppression of political opposition and/or protests on a level to constitute a dire humanitarian crisis, with the stark and serious exception of Syria.

North and sub-Saharan Africa

27. This region of Africa may be the focus of military operations within the given timespan up to 2020, and beyond. Instability and unrest as a fallout from the Arab Spring and subsequent military operations has empowered a variety of militant groups in the region, pitting them against relatively weak and corrupt governments, who are struggling to retain authority and control over their territory as a result.
28. While the situation in Mali appears to be improving, with talks between the main rebel groups and the government underway, militants in the region are more frequently networking with each other, and with outside movements²³, most notably Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (more commonly known as Al-Qaeda in Yemen).
29. The region is also a major transit route for drugs into Europe²⁴, which means all the associated corrupting influence of drug money (some of which is controlled by the militant groups in the region) will no doubt hinder local responses to these security threats.²⁵
30. Furthermore, with the exception of France, Europe seems very unconcerned by ongoing events in the region. America has attempted to engage various African nations, but only with limited success thus far, possibly due to American security commitments in other theatres. Therefore, it is possible that the situation in North Africa could be allowed to develop to a more critical stage than if it were in the Middle East due to this observational bias and neglect.
31. Because of longstanding British ties to some states in West Africa, it is quite possible that the British Government and its armed forces will be called upon to help, in the case of a dire security threat. As things currently stand, the most likely area for this to occur would be Nigeria, which is suffering from persistent attacks by Boko Haram and associated militant groups. President Goodluck is committed to non-military

²³Zoe Flood, 1st March 2012, 'Top US General warns of coordination between al-Qaeda-linked African terror groups', The Telegraph, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/al-qaeda/9116773/Top-US-General-warns-of-coordination-between-al-Qaeda-linked-African-terror-groups.html> (accessed 04/09/2014)

²⁴Nancy Brune, 'The Brazil-Africa Narco Nexus', Americas Quarterly, Fall 2011
<http://www.americasquarterly.org/brune> (accessed 04/09/2014)

²⁵Jennifer Rubin, May 28th 2013, 'North Africa: Breeding grounds for terror', Washington Post, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/right-turn/wp/2013/05/28/north-africa-breeding-grounds-for-terror/> (accessed 04/09/2014)

solutions to the crisis presented by these militants²⁶, if possible, but if the militants continue their audacious attacks, it is possible he will be forced to act by his government, or else be replaced by someone else more open to doing so.

32. As such, Britain may well be asked to assist the Nigerian state. This would likely be a support and training role, with perhaps some direct engagement by elements of the Army and RAF depending on the specifics of the counterterrorism situation on the ground.

Ukraine

33. The current crisis in Ukraine is, of course, of significant concern to the British government. Not least, the wide rifts in Ukrainian society and politics which allowed this crisis to occur raise the question of the overall stability of the Ukrainian state, and this is of significant concern due to possible Russian reactions to Ukrainian state failure.
34. Furthermore, the ongoing undercover invasion of Ukraine by Russia and assistance to Russophone rebels by the Russian military are already having international implications, as with the recent attack on civilian airliner flight MH17 over the disputed territory.
35. Furthermore, Ukraine as a transit route for Russian gas also has economic and energy implications in addition to its political and security importance. While Britain is not in a position where a disruption to this energy supply would pose a dire threat to the British economy or ability to act on the world stage²⁷, other European states, including NATO members, are not in such a fortunate position.
36. With the Russian annexation of Crimea, it was hoped that the aggression against Ukraine might cease, however, that has not been the case. Russia is supporting the

²⁶IRIN News, 28th November 2012, 'Analysis: Hurdles to Nigerian government-Boko Haram dialogue', <http://www.irinnews.org/report/96915/analysis-hurdles-to-nigerian-government-boko-haram-dialogue> (accessed 04/09/2014)

²⁷ See Sujata Rao, March 17th 2014, 'Who shivers if Russia cuts off the gas?', Reuters, <http://blogs.reuters.com/globalinvesting/2014/03/17/who-shivers-if-russia-cuts-off-the-gas/> (accessed 04/09/2014)

Donetsk and Luhansk-based rebels, and the US mission to NATO has released satellite photos that definitively prove Russian military units inside Ukraine's borders²⁸

37. As such, the British role in the region is likely to be expanded beyond its current role in training the current government's armed forces under Rapid Trident²⁹. This exercise should be used to extend political support and the possibility of future training to the Ukrainian military. Additionally, the British and NATO should be ready to further arm the Ukrainians and, if necessary, send troops either to nearby countries such as Poland or the Baltics or, in more extreme circumstances, to Ukraine itself, to maintain its territory integrity and sovereignty as a state. It should be noted that if the Russian Government perceives that NATO are directly involved in the ongoing conflict, it is likely they will use this to stage an international incident, as well as justify their own ongoing sponsorship and engagement with the rebel groups.

38. With regards to its potential NATO membership, until Ukraine's internal crisis is resolved in a lasting and sustainable fashion, the country will not be eligible for membership, and such an offer should not be extended until those conditions are met, in line with NATO policy³⁰. Should these conditions be met, then the main issue with such membership would be the Russian diplomatic and military reaction. However, this is unlikely to occur within the timeframe this paper is looking at.

Summary Remarks

39. Overall, we should expect the British military and political context of the near future to mostly match the experience of the previous two decades. While it is possible that Britain will militarily engage a modern, sophisticated state such as Iraq or Serbia, it is more likely to be engaged in conflicts with sub-state, transnational and state-supported paramilitary groups.

²⁸ US Mission to NATO, 'NEW SATELLITE IMAGERY EXPOSES RUSSIAN COMBAT TROOPS INSIDE UKRAINE', Official Tumblr Account, <http://usnato.tumblr.com/post/96003086125/new-satellite-imagery-exposes-russian-combat-troops> (accessed 04/09/2014)

²⁹US Army in Europe, 'Exercise Rapid Trident', <http://www.eur.army.mil/RapidTrident/> (accessed 04/09/2014)

³⁰NATO, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_24733.htm

40. In particular, the British government and military should be aware of a move away from direct state-on-state conflict and instead towards what has been termed “special warfare”, where a mix of state support and non-state paramilitary groups are used by states in order to achieve their objectives, though it should be emphasised that state vs state conflict is not an impossibility. As international political norms increasingly move against the use of warfare as a tool of policy, “special warfare” allows for states to covertly arm and train groups who work towards their goals without the stigma that overt warfare would bring upon them. It does, however, also complicate the situation as it may mean these groups have access to more sophisticated and powerful weapons, and they may also have significant funding and safe havens, making degrading their ability to fight significantly more challenging than with pure, independent, sub-state organisations.

Britain’s Conventional Forces

SDSR 2010 and subsequent strategic developments

41. The Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) 2010³¹ was fundamentally a cost cutting exercise masquerading as a defence review. It was also of poor quality in many places as a consequence of the rushed nature in which it was composed (five months as opposed to the 1998 SDR’s³² fourteen months): a fact reflected vividly by both the subsequent need to completely revise the plans for the size and composition of the British Army, as well as the debacle over the variant of the F-35 that was to be purchased for use on the new aircraft carriers. A number of smaller decisions have also been reversed.

42. The conventional element of Future Force 2020, therefore, is currently envisaged to be the force outlined in SDSR 2010 that will be ready for deployment in 2020, with the revisions that have subsequently been made to account for cost constraints and changing operational priorities.

³¹ HM Government, 2010, *Securing Britain in an age of Uncertainty: The Strategic Defence and Security Review*, https://www.direct.gov.uk/prod_consum_dg/groups/dg_digitalassets/@dg/@en/documents/digitalasset/dg_191634.pdf (accessed 04/09/2014)

³² MoD, 1998, *Strategic Defence Review*, http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20121026065214/www.mod.uk/NR/rdonlyres/65F3D7AC-4340-4119-93A2-20825848E50E/0/sdr1998_complete.pdf (accessed 04/09/2014)

43. It is fair to say that the defence planning assumptions contained within SDSR 2010 were an attempt to reconcile what was strategically desirable with what was financially possible. The results reached, described a British Armed Forces that could, in addition to standing tasks such as the defence of the Falkland Islands, conduct,:

- an enduring stabilisation operation at around brigade level (up to 6,500 personnel) with maritime and air support as required, while also conducting:
- one non-enduring (up to six months) complex intervention (up to 2,000 personnel), and
- one non-enduring (up to six months) simple intervention (up to 1,000 personnel)

or alternatively:

- three non-enduring operations if not already engaged in an enduring operation

or:

- for a limited time, and with sufficient warning, committing all effort to a one-off intervention of up to three brigades (one division), with maritime and air support (around 30,000 personnel)

44. These planning assumptions did have some merit, in that they provided the UK with a reduced but still substantial ability to project power in a variety of settings. However, they were dependent upon a highly benign strategic environment between 2010 and 2020 and a moderately benign one following the full realisation of Future Force 2020. Specifically, we believe that the viability of the defence planning assumptions laid out in SDSR 2010 were contingent upon:

- a) an extended period of strategic warning prior to the emergence of any sustained threat to the UK or European NATO members - the National Security Strategy document³³ that accompanied SDSR 2010 judged that a conventional attack on the UK or a NATO or EU state to be a low probability 'Tier 3' threat
- b) the region adjacent to the NATO area (the Middle East and North Africa) remaining, if perpetually troubled, strategically stable

³³ HM Government, 2010, *A Strong Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The National Security Strategy*, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/61936/national-security-strategy.pdf (accessed 04/09/2014)

45. In our judgement, it was not envisaged that the British military would embark upon any new operations larger than a non-enduring complex intervention (as in Sierra Leone and Libya) prior to 2020, in order to allow time for post-Afghanistan force restructuring and regeneration. Following the full implementation of Future Force 2020, the maximum effort the planning assumptions envisaged would see the UK engaged, with substantial notice, in a short-duration high-intensity war as part of a US-led coalition against a mid-ranking power (as in the 1991 Gulf War).
46. It is now clear that the explicit and implicit strategic assumptions of SDSR 2010 planning regarding the NATO region have, in large part, collapsed. The Russian annexation of Crimea and support of the rebellion in east Ukraine are an indication that Russia no longer respects the existing order in Eastern Europe. It may even be the case that Russia is currently being led by individuals who can no longer - for a variety of reasons - be relied upon to make rational decisions. The need to change the position of Russia from a 'Tier 3' to a 'Tier 1' threat to the UK was recently articulated by the chairman of your committee.
47. SDSR 2010 mandates a withdrawal of British forces based in Germany to the UK mainland. This marks the final act of a process that has been ongoing since the end of the Cold War. Although the location of British Forces in Germany is not the optimal one for dealing with a threat to its allies in Eastern Europe, the fact that Britain is now relocating Army units to bases in the UK when at least some of them arguably need to be moving in the opposite direction is strategically less than ideal.
48. The UK's ability to contribute to the response to this challenge is complicated by the fact that Russia retains a limited ability to strike directly at the UK and interfere with shipping movements in waters surrounding the British Isles. Future Force 2020 emphatically does not provide for Britain to make a significant sustained contribution to the defence of Eastern Europe - in either a garrisoning or active combat role - whilst simultaneously providing for homeland defence.
49. Assumptions regarding the region adjacent to the NATO area have also been overtaken by events. The post-Arab Spring situation in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region presents a less linear but more unpredictable threat. An ark of

instability now runs almost uninterrupted between Algeria and Iraq. The failure of the West to follow up the 2011 intervention in Libya with a stabilisation force or intercede in the Syrian Revolution in time to stop it being hijacked by Islamic fundamentalists, has made a substantial contribution to this situation. It is clear that if we wish to preserve the nation state system in the MENA region to endure beyond the era of dictators and authoritarians, more, not less, engagement in the region is required.

50. Abandoning the MENA region to its own fate is not an option. Even leaving aside the humanitarian and economic imperative it is inevitable that, as in Afghanistan in the 1990s and early 2000s, Islamic extremists intending to target the West would utilise the ungoverned space as a staging area for attacks. The scale of the region in question and its proximity to Europe means that it is highly unlikely that this threat would be containable through stand-off means such as surveillance and small-scale air strikes.
51. The Future Force 2020 structure has allowed the UK to retain a military of sufficient capability to project meaningful influence into the MENA region and beyond. However, across the board shrinkage in Britain's ability to project power has been unavoidable. Whereas prior to Future Force 2020 the UK had an ability to mount a one-off intervention involving around 45,000 personnel (as seen in the Iraq War), peak capability is being reduced to 30,000. The size of the enduring stabilisation mission UK is able to mount has also shrunk, from 10,000 (as seen in Bosnia and Afghanistan) to around 6,500.
52. Furthermore, developments with regards to the West's relationship with Russia have constrained the ability of the UK and its allies to respond to challenges in the MENA region and other areas around the world. We are now facing a situation where Libyan-style operations remain possible, but enduring stabilisation or large-scale interventions may be prevented due to the need to retain forces in reserve to respond to a threat to the NATO area.
53. In sum, it is our belief that SDSR 2010 was flawed from the start, and that this problem has been made even more acute given that the strategic assumptions the defence planning requirements contained within SDSR 2010 are no longer valid. Both

of these issues have fed into the problems that are now being faced by all of the branches of Britain's Armed Forces covered by Future Force 2020.

British Army

54. The two³⁴ principle aims of the British Army in the context of Future Force 2020 are to - aside from its peacetime standing commitments - generate a force capable of either:
- a) conducting a division-level (three brigade) operation lasting no more than six months
 - b) conducting a brigade-level stabilisation operation for an indefinite period, whilst also undertaking two smaller (one complex and one non-complex) non-enduring operations
55. We judge that in broad terms, the projected size and structure of the Army will meet SDSR 2010 defence planning assumptions. However, it would be unable to meet anything exceeding them without significant additional resources.
56. SDSR 2010 originally envisaged that the combat element of the Army's core capabilities would be primarily sourced from five Multi-Role Brigades (MRB), supported where necessary by a single Air Assault Brigade and a Royal Marine Commando Brigade. These forces would be derived from a regular Army around 94,000 strong, supported by reservists. However, as you will be aware, such a force was subsequently deemed to be unaffordable. Instead, it was decided that a regular Army that was around 82,000 strong, supported by roughly 30,000 Army Reserves, would form the core of the UK's ground forces.³⁵ As a result, the combat element of Future Army 2020 will now comprise of the three 'heavy' Armoured Infantry Brigades and one Air Assault Brigade of the Reaction Force, and the seven Infantry Brigades (two of which would be deployable with notice) of the Adaptable Force. Again, a Royal Marine Commando Brigade will also be available for support.

³⁴ For the sake of simplification, we will put aside the requirement to be able to carry out three non-enduring interventions if not already engaged in an enduring operation

³⁵ HM Government, 2012, *Transforming the British Army, July 2012*

https://www.army.mod.uk/documents/general/Army2020_brochure.pdf (accessed 04/09/2014)

57. We recognise that the Army was given a difficult job to do in designing a force structure that was able to meet the defence planning assumptions whilst staying in budget. We also agree that the decision to place a greater level of reliance on Army Reservists was reasonable. The 70/30 per cent regular/reserve mix envisaged is not particularly adventurous given the force structure of many NATO allies. As you determined in your *Future Army 2020* report³⁶, a significant number of the problems that have limited the success of Army Reserve recruitment, so far, can be traced back to outsourcing issues. However, the force structure settled upon will result in a number of limitations that would not have been present under the original plan.
58. With regards to the division-level intervention capability, it has been openly stated that the Army is not routinely resourced for such a task, and preparations could require up to a year. This is obviously unacceptable. Furthermore, it is far from transparent what three brigades/division level actually means in practice. It is not realistic to expect all three of the Armoured Infantry Brigades to deploy simultaneously, if only because one brigade would have to be stripped of many of its units to make the other two suitable for high-intensity combat. So would the third brigade be the now (as we shall highlight shortly) critically under-strength 16 Air Assault Brigade? Or worse, could it be that the Army is also dependent on the Royal Marines to provide one of the three brigades, meaning that it never intends to deploy more than one Armoured Infantry Brigade? The situation is, for the moment, open to question.
59. With regards to the Army's ability to mount a brigade-level stabilisation operation for an indefinite period, we recognise the great ingenuity the Army has shown in its decision to use Army Reservist-heavy Infantry Brigades of the Adaptable Force in order to fill the fourth and fifth roulement gaps that the Reaction Force would be unable to do. We also understand that there would be a certain level of 'mix and match' between the Reaction and Adaptable Forces in order to provide a suitable force package. However, we are concerned that even with such improvisation, the Adaptable Force units will be insufficiently sized or equipped to deal with more demanding stabilisation operations.

³⁶ House of Commons Defence Committee, 2014, *Future Army 2020*, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmdfence/576/576.pdf> (accessed 04/09/2014)

60. A further limitation will be the difficulty in transitioning from division-level intervention to brigade-level stabilisation operations. As outlined above, in the event of the need to deploy two Armoured Infantry Brigades as part of a division-level operation, it is highly likely that the third, undeployed Armoured Infantry Brigade would find itself being ‘cannibalised’ to enhance the combat power of the two units being sent to the front. This would leave few or none of the ‘heavy’ elements of the Reaction Force available to provide the first (and likely most problematic) roulement of the subsequent stabilisation operation, leaving the task to the Infantry Brigades of the Adaptable Force. Even if it proved possible to get the Army Reserve component of these formations ready in time, they would still lack many of the capabilities of the Reaction Force units. No doubt in extremis it would be possible to ‘bolt-on’ a small number of heavier formations to the Adaptable Force brigades to increase their resilience, but it would be a less than ideal situation.

61. It is also notable that there is no meaningful provision in Future Force 2020 for the Army to undertake any new garrisoning tasks. For all the talk of interventions and stabilisations, no thought has apparently been given to the potential need to deploy a defensive force for an extended period of time. For example, although the UK might be able to deploy a single battlegroup to Poland or the Baltic region as part of its NATO obligations, any larger prolonged effort would risk crippling the Army’s wider capabilities.

62. Our additional concerns centre upon the fate of 16 Air Assault Brigade. From a formation capable of deploying (with sufficient notice) up to four battlegroups, it has now been stripped back to two, and has also had its light armoured support removed. Although we recognise that this does, in the strictest sense, still enable it to support the 1,600 strong single-battlegroup Air Assault Task Force, it seems utterly nonsensical that so much high speed mobile capability has been sacrificed for minimal financial savings.

63. The ability of the Army to regenerate to face an enhanced threat is the greatest of any of the three services due to both the skill set requirements of its personnel and the relative ease with which additional equipment can be procured from abroad and brought into service. The ‘skeleton’ of a larger Army exists in the structure of the

Adaptable Force: given sufficient time and resources, it would be possible to expand and enhance some or all of its seven Infantry Brigades to the point that they would become suitable for tasks more challenging than those currently envisaged for them. However, even a relatively basic enhancement - such as transforming two of the Adaptable Force Infantry Brigades into readily deployable Armoured Infantry Brigades - could easily take at least two years and a great deal of money and additional personnel. Force Troop would also require expanding and enhancing. Whilst we recognise that Army and Army Reserve planners have enough real-world challenges to deal with without the pressure of gaming hypothetical scenarios, we believe that there is an urgent requirement for the Army to contingency plan for further strategic shocks from Eastern Europe or the MENA region.

Royal Navy

64. The core Future Force 2020 requirements that need to be met by the Royal Navy - beyond standing commitments - can be identified as being able to provide either:
 - a) a force sufficient to directly and indirectly support a division-sized non-enduring land operation lasting no more than six months
 - b) a force sufficient to directly and indirectly support a brigade-level operation, whilst undertaking two smaller (one complex and one non-complex) non-enduring operations

65. We judge that, with certain caveats, the projected size and structure of the Royal Navy will allow it to meet SDSR 2010 defence planning assumptions. However, it would be unable to meet anything exceeding them without significant additional resources.

66. Unlike the Army, where the assets needed to meet the defence planning requirements are relatively straight forward (a need for a brigade-sized force requires the deployment of a brigade, etc.), exactly what capabilities the Royal Navy needs to be able to field in order to meet its obligations is dependent on the nature of the conflict. An operation against a nation with a broad spectrum of military capabilities (submarines, modern fighter aircraft, etc.) might require a large naval operation in order to support a relatively small ground force. In contrast, an operation against an opponent without such resources might only require a small-scale naval presence to support a relatively large ground force. The 2010 National Security Strategy only

ranked the type of state-led attack on the UK or a NATO or EU member that might generate the former scenario as a 'Tier 3' threat, thus providing a de-facto justification for further reductions to the Royal Navy.

67. The most urgent issue facing the Royal Navy is manpower. Reduced to only 30,000 individuals under SDSR 2010 - a figure that includes around 7,000 Royal Marines - they are the embodiment of the Chief of the Defence Staff's concerns that while *"exquisite technology has been projected as the key to operational superiority, manpower has been seen more as an overhead and activity levels have been squeezed"*³⁷ (as noted in your inquiry announcement). The Royal Navy probably has the greatest claim of any of the three services to being a technological world leader, possessing in some areas equipment of a quality that even the US cannot match. However, its ability to use these resources is increasingly being undermined by a lack of personnel.
68. Uniquely amongst the services, almost the entire Royal Navy is dedicated to standing commitments in peacetime. Whilst an RAF squadron or an Army battalion may only deploy off-base for training or combat operations, Royal Navy assets are locked into continuous deployment cycles regardless of wider circumstances. As a result, whilst it might be possible to 'surge' deploy Army and RAF assets for an operation, the Royal Navy is limited in the number of assets it can bring to bear at any one time and place due to its operational model. However, the flip side of this is that the Royal Navy's 'forward presence' model means that it is often better able to respond quickly than its sister services, and is less stressed by small and medium scale enduring commitments.
69. The Royal Marines form a critical component of the Royal Navy's contribution to fulfilling the defence planning assumptions. For non-enduring small-scale interventions, their core 3 Commando Brigade formation maintains the ability to rapidly deploy a 1,800 strong Lead Commando battlegroup by sea or air. With sufficient notice, all three battlegroups of the brigade could be deployed either as part of a large scale intervention or an enduring stabilisation operation. However, cuts to Royal Navy amphibious shipping that took place under SDSR 2010 - one Landing Platform Dock (LPD) was put into mothballs and a Royal Fleet Auxiliary landing ship was sold - have stripped the Royal Marines of the ability to perform brigade-level

³⁷ UK Parliament, 'Future Force 2020 - Defence Committee announce inquiry', <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/defence-committee/news/future-force-2020-inquiry-announcement/> (accessed 04/09/14)

amphibious landings. 3 Commando Brigade itself is also under-strength with regards to its engineers, logisticians and gunners.

70. With regards to supporting division-level operations (or indeed any intervention demanding a substantial naval component), the probability of the Future Force 2020 Royal Navy (complete with restored aircraft carrier capability) being able to fulfil the tasks asked of it would be highly dependent on the nature of the military resources available to an opponent and the degree of allied support. If the Royal Navy was operating alongside a fully committed US military, no state or alliance of states on Earth could provide realistic opposition. In contrast, were the US either only marginally involved or completely absent, the outcome would be less certain, although other key allies such as France would potentially be able to offer support. As Argentina proved in 1982, even states that are a generation behind in equipment and spending far less on defence overall can inflict considerable damage on a more powerful opponent. The modern Royal Navy, whilst it has a significant technological edge against almost any opponent, lacks the resources to absorb anything but minimal losses. Its ability to endure a prolonged solo exchange with a medium-level opponent that has access to key equipment such as advanced anti-ship missiles and modern submarines is marginal. It is also the case that any medium or large-scale operation would require the Royal Navy to abandon its standing commitments in order to assemble a sufficient number of ships.

71. In contrast, we are confident that the Royal Navy is well-placed to meet the demands of less intensive operations. Although its ship numbers have been reduced to the point that even the commitment of a single vessel can result in the forced abandonment of another task, it is unlikely that the Royal Navy would have any significant difficulty in supporting a 'navy-medium/light' short-term intervention or an enduring stabilisation operation, particularly as the latter is only likely to take place after naval and air threats have been largely eliminated.

72. Of all the services, the Royal Navy would face the greatest challenge were it to be required to expand to meet a major new threat. British industry's ability to build military surface ships and submarines is calibrated to sustain the fleet at its current size: any expansion would require substantial multi-year investment in shipbuilding facilities and workforce training before construction of new vessels could even begin.

Few other nations possess a significant level of spare capacity to build sophisticated warships, so procurement from abroad would prove difficult. In parallel to this is the personnel challenge: the Royal Navy's manpower pool is currently too small to even crew the ships it has in service and on order, a shortfall that would have to be made good before any expansion could be considered. In sum, we judge that it would take at least seven years for the Royal Navy to expand in any meaningful way.

Royal Air Force

73. The size and structure of the RAF under Future Force 2020 is considerably less well-defined than is currently the case with the Army and Royal Navy. However, as with the RAF's sister services, the two core requirements that need to be met - beyond standing commitments such as the air defence of the UK and Falkland Islands - can be identified as being able to provide either:

- c) a force sufficient to directly and indirectly support a division-sized non-enduring land operation lasting no more than six months
- d) a force sufficient to directly and indirectly support a brigade-level operation, whilst undertaking two smaller (one complex and one non-complex) non-enduring operations

74. We judge that the projected size and structure of the RAF will be at high risk of being unable to meet SDSR 2010 defence planning assumptions. The principle source of this risk is that the total projected size of the RAF fighter force in 2020 is just six squadrons - five with Typhoon and one with F-35Bs³⁸. If it is assumed that two are required to provide air defence for the UK and the Falkland Islands in peacetime; this only leaves four to cover all remaining tasks. In our view, there is a significant risk that such a force would be unable to accomplish what SDSR 2010 demands. Rectifying this - let alone improving capabilities to match current threat levels - will require significant additional resources.

75. As with the Royal Navy, the assets the RAF would need to field in order to meet needs, would be dependent on the nature of the conflict. An operation against a nation

³⁸ The Royal Navy will also be allocated an F-35B squadron

with a broad spectrum of military capabilities (modern fighter aircraft, advanced surface-to-air missiles etc.) might require a large air campaign in order to support a relatively small ground force (or potentially no ground force at all). In contrast, an operation against an opponent without such resources might only require the small-scale presence of combat aircraft to support a large ground force, although no doubt RAF transport and surveillance assets would be heavily called upon. As with the Royal Navy, the 2010 National Security Strategy only ranked the type of state-led attack on the UK or a NATO or EU member that might generate the former scenario as a 'Tier 3' threat, thus providing a de-facto justification for further reductions to the RAF.

76. With regards to supporting division-level operations (or indeed any large scale air campaign), the probability of the Future Force 2020 RAF being able to fulfil the tasks asked of it would, again as with the Royal Navy, be highly dependent on the nature of the military resources available to an opponent and the degree of allied support. Allied with significant US air assets, little could realistically stop the RAF from fulfilling its mission. However, scenarios with little or no US involvement would prove challenging. The RAF fighter force as projected would have zero spare capacity if it were to become engaged in a large-scale offensive air campaign, as all four available combat squadrons would have to be committed. Any significant losses would have to be made good by sending training units to the front, as the Royal Navy was forced to do as a result of a lack of Sea Harriers during the Falklands War. It is difficult to see how even the relatively small-scale losses experienced during the Gulf War, which saw five³⁹ RAF Tornados shot down by a dense but relatively basic air defence system, could be operationally tolerable in anything but extreme circumstances. It must be kept in mind that the RAF has no experience of encountering a modern missile-based air defence system: the almost casualty-free air campaigns of the last twenty years have in large part only been due to the weakness of the RAF's opponents, not the invulnerability of its aircraft.

77. We are also unconvinced that the RAF will be able to meet the less intense stabilisation and short-term intervention requirements in all but the most benign circumstances. Whilst the RAF would be capable of providing the likely transport and

³⁹ A sixth aircraft was judged to have been brought down by a bomb that exploded prematurely.

surveillance needs of deployed forces, the four available combat squadrons currently projected would only allow for three to take turns in supporting the enduring stabilisation operation and one to engage in a non-enduring intervention. This is below what would be the minimum level required in many scenarios.

78. Looking at the newly threatening posture of Russia, the state of the RAF's future fighter force is even more perilous. It is well below the size sufficient to provide meaningful support to British Forces in Eastern Europe and provide wartime UK air defence.

79. A further concern regarding the RAF is its lack of a maritime patrol aircraft. We are aware that this is an issue that your committee has engaged with before on multiple occasions. However, the recent resurgence of the Russian threat has highlighted the importance of this gap. The only realistic way Russia could attack the UK directly with conventional weapons is via cruise missiles, many of which would be submarine-launched. Interdiction of shipping by Russian submarines in and around UK waters is also a potential threat. In either scenario, airborne anti-submarine warfare systems would prove vital as a defensive measure.

80. In addition to these fundamental weaknesses, a number of other deficiencies in current RAF capabilities are present. The RAF lacks any organic surface to air missile capability, seriously limiting its ability to defend its bases from any aircraft or cruise missiles that get past its fighters. It is also unable to attack enemy radar systems with specialised anti-radiation missiles due to last year's retirement of the ALARM weapon. Two of its key aircraft - the C-17 and RC-135 - cannot be refuelled in flight by RAF tankers because it was decided not to fit the latter aircraft with US-style refuelling booms. It is also questionable as to whether the RAF has sufficient stockpiles of key munitions - notably the Paveway IV precision guided bomb and Brimstone missile - to support sustained high-intensity operations.

81. Much of the RAF is actually in a relatively positive state. Investments in new transport aircraft, support helicopters and surveillance assets in light of shortages in Iraq and Afghanistan have left the non-fighter/maritime patrol component of the force in good condition to face the future. However, the caveat to that is that in our judgement, the RAF's ability to expand to meet a major threat is considerably less

robust than is desirable. The RAF is the most technological and skill-intensive of the three services. Although it might prove possible to procure certain types of aircraft and equipment at relatively short notice, bringing them into operational service would be a challenge given personnel and support requirements. Our judgement is that unless a truly ‘money is no object’ approach were to be taken to rearmament, it would be a minimum of five years for strategically meaningful enhancements of the RAF to be fully implemented.

Recommendations

82. We recognise that there is no ‘magic money tree’. However, the starting point for SDSR 2015 must be that the UK maintains a defence spending level of at least 2 per cent of GDP. Any further cuts to the resources available to the MoD will result in the problems we have outlined in this submission not only remaining unresolved, but expanding exponentially. We accept that the budget deficit itself is a national security issue, but the comparatively trivial amount of money spent on defence does not make this a compelling argument for further cuts.
83. The SDSR 2015 must recognise that picking one threat to address over another is not a realistic option: no viable National Security Strategy can opt to ignore certain issues out of convenience. Whilst the challenges we face in Eastern Europe and the MENA region are very different, we must accept the need to develop a capability to address threats in both environments - if necessary simultaneously.
84. With this in mind, we believe that a substantial revision to the defence planning assumption is desirable. Whilst the exact details would be dependent on resource allocation, we believe that, in addition to standing tasks, Future Force 2020 should be reconfigured to be able to conduct:
- an enduring stabilisation operation at around brigade level (up to 6,500 personnel) with maritime and air support as required, whilst also conducting:
 - one non-enduring complex intervention at around brigade level (up to 6,500 personnel) with maritime and air support as required, and
 - one non-enduring simple intervention (up to 1,000 personnel)
- or alternatively:

- with sufficient notice (3-6 months) one large-scale intervention of up to three brigades (one division), with maritime and air support (around 30,000 personnel), whilst also sustaining
- one enduring stabilisation operation at ‘small brigade level’ (up to two battle groups, a brigade HQ plus support elements - around 3,500 personnel)

85. The core strategic reasoning behind this is that such an arrangement would give the UK a sufficient level of capability to engage, albeit almost always in a coalition, with security challenges emerging from both Eastern Europe and the MENA region simultaneously. A period of heightened tension or even limited conflict between NATO and Russia would not necessarily force us to abandon a commitment or ignore a crisis in the MENA region; and a crisis or stabilisation operation in the MENA region would not force us to fatally undermine the United Kingdom’s NATO commitments.

86. We recognise that the defence planning assumptions we have outlined would represent an increase in the demands that would be potentially placed on the Armed Forces. However, we believe that such alterations are possible with only a modest increase in defence spending.

87. It is not the purpose of this submission to provide the details for alterations that need to be made to the currently projected force structure. However, given this opportunity, we would like to put forward the following ideas to stimulate debate.

88. *British Army*

- a) Restore the Army’s ability to deploy a division-sized (up to three Reaction Force brigades) force in a strategically meaningful (three to six month) time frame
- b) Restore 16 Air Assault Brigade to its previous establishment of four battlegroups
- c) Enhance the armoured combat and support resources available to the Adaptable Force
- d) Disband two of the Adaptable Forces’ Infantry Brigades and then consolidate their units into the remaining five Infantry Brigades, with the view that the latter could, with sufficient warning (six months) and for a limited time (up to twenty-four months), take sole responsibility for sustaining a ‘small brigade level’ (up to two

battlegroups plus a brigade HQ and support elements) enduring stabilisation operation with no support from an otherwise engaged Reaction Force

- e) Make the required enhancements to Force Troop to sustain the above force structure

89. Royal Navy

- a) Immediately begin to recruit an additional 2,500 personnel to alleviate manpower shortages, enable the second LPD to return to service, allow for the retention of the existing River class patrol boats after their replacements have entered service, and provide the option to run both new aircraft carriers concurrently or near-concurrently
- b) End the standing deployments of Royal Navy escorts to the South Atlantic and Caribbean and replace them with smaller patrol ships and chartered civilian shipping - neither area faces a security threat requiring a frigate or destroyer that could be put to better use elsewhere
- c) Upgrade the remaining eight Merlin HM1 aircraft in store to HM2 standard to increase fleet flexibility

90. RAF

- a) Utilise the Typhoon Tranche 1 aircraft currently scheduled to be retired to form two additional fighter squadrons dedicated to UK and Falkland air defence - freeing up the remaining five squadrons of upgraded Tranche 2 and 3 aircraft for more demanding expeditionary operations
- b) Purchase sixty-five instead of the planned forty-eight F35B, a number sufficient for three RAF and one Royal Navy squadron, each of twelve aircraft, plus a small operational conversion unit
- c) Purchase five P-8 Poseidon aircraft, which would return a basic level of maritime patrol capability to the RAF and provide the core of a larger force should one be judged necessary
- d) Retain seven of the current force of C-130J aircraft for special forces support, freeing up the limited number of A-400M being purchased for general transport tasks

- e) Disband the Red Arrows when their current aircraft reach the end of their service lives in 2019: it is simply not possible to justify the circa £300m price (plus operating costs) of replacement aircraft in light of other demands

Trident: Britain's Nuclear Deterrent

Background

91. Britain's Trident nuclear missile platform would cost, reportedly, around £15-20 billion,⁴⁰ and though it has already been voted on by MPs,⁴¹ the final decision on more specific details has been delayed until after the 2015 general election.⁴² The current system will require replacing in around 15 years, but development of replacement missiles and warheads can take as long to complete, hence the need for a decision to be made well in advance.
92. One of the main arguments made against Trident, either being replaced with a like-for-like alternative or even simply being replaced at all, is the associated financial costs. Critics argue that £15-20 billion can, quite simply be spent in more effective and useful ways. Additionally, the MoD confirmed that the annual operating cost will be 5-6% of the Department's Budget, or £2-2.4 billion⁴³.
93. On the other hand, proponents of replacing Trident, whether that be like-for-like or not, argue that the rise of rogue states such as North Korea and Iran makes the case for a nuclear deterrence system more pertinent than it has been before. Now, more than ever, Britain should be looking to maintain its nuclear deterrent. The global strategic geography is reshaping and certain regions are becoming increasingly unstable, with the potential for incredibly hostile regimes to set their sights on Britain, making a nuclear deterrent a powerful tool to maintain national security.

The Case for Trident

94. The SDSR concluded that the UK's strategic nuclear deterrent was to be retained as a crucial element of the Future Force 2020, with CASD posture maintained⁴⁴. However,

⁴⁰ BBC News, 16th July 2013, 'Q&A: Trident Replacement', <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-13442735> (accessed 04/09/2014)

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴² Ibid

⁴³ HC Deb 20 December 2012 Vol 555 Col 908

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmhansrd/cm121220/text/121220w0002.htm#12122061000114>

the SDSR concluded some savings could be made within the Trident programme, the key ones being:

- Reducing the number of operational launch tubes on each Vanguard class submarine from twelve to eight and reducing the number of warheads on each submarine from 48 to 40.
- Reducing the operational nuclear stockpile from <160 warheads to <120 warheads, reducing the overall stockpile from <225 to <180 within ten years of this writing.

95. There is a large industry associated with Britain's possession of nuclear weapons. Proponents of Trident argue that, should she scrap Trident, the UK would severely damage her nuclear industry and lose expertise and skills that can be transferred to other uses of nuclear technology such as energy or research. Some 15000 jobs, as of 2007, depended on Trident according to some estimates reported by the BBC.⁴⁵ Couple this with the fact that nuclear technology and expertise is not limited to weapons but extends into power and medical research, for example, and there is a wider case to be made for maintaining a nuclear deterrent beyond geopolitical considerations. Whilst the nuclear industry does not depend entirely on Trident, it would shrink if Britain were to disarm.

96. Furthermore, as the world becomes increasingly unstable, it is essential that the UK maintains the strongest possible deterrents against attacks and there is no stronger deterrent than nuclear weapons. Indeed, nuclear weapons are the only possible deterrent against other nuclear states, such as North Korea or, potentially in a few years, Iran.

97. Scrapping Trident would put the UK in a vulnerable position – in a world with nuclear weapons it is preferable to be a nation with them, rather than one without. Without a nuclear deterrent, Britain must accept that its fate can ultimately be decided by hostile states that do possess such weapons. The main utility of nuclear weapons is not in actually using them – no state has since Hiroshima and Nagasaki – but in the coercive diplomatic clout associated with them. This is often called nuclear

⁴⁴ SDSR, pp. 19

⁴⁵BBC News 22nd September 2010 'Q&A: Trident Replacement', <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/4805768.stm> (accessed 04/09/2014)

compellence, a neologism created as an antonym of ‘deterrence’. Britain is not subject to compellence, because it has Trident. No state can make the threat: ‘make this action or face nuclear annihilation’, for Britain can mount an annihilatory response.

98. With the prospect of terrorists also coming into possession of nuclear weapons, now is not the time for nuclear disarmament but rather maintaining our nuclear arsenal to ensure we are in the strongest possible position to counter the threat that they pose. Whilst non-state terrorist groups generally lack a fixed point of geography and sovereign territory which is necessary for a nuclear response, many groups receive state funding, shelter or other sponsorship. These states are obviously still subject to nuclear deterrence to a degree, providing that NATO’s nuclear forensics technology is impressive enough to convince states that if they proliferate to non-state groups they will be traced.
99. Britain’s very possession of Trident is enough to act as a deterrent. Its purpose is not to be fired, but to remind other nations that Britain can use it, and to force them to factor that into their strategic calculations. As during the Cold War, forcing this change in strategic calculations on the side of those who might seek to harm the United Kingdom ensures that peace is kept on both sides.
100. Another argument against the replacement of Trident is that it is not cost effective or that the money spent on renewing it could be better spent on other public services with cheaper weapons systems being invested in for use as a deterrent. Proponents of Trident argue two things in response to this: firstly, as has been analysed, a nuclear deterrent is, simply put, the best deterrent both in general and specifically when dealing with other nuclear states; secondly, it is impossible to put a price on protecting civilians. In other words, since Trident is the most effective deterrent, it is worth the cost in order to protect British civilians. Even if it could be shown that there are cheaper alternatives, it does not follow that these should be pursued because they do not offer the same sort of deterrent as a nuclear weapons system, such as Trident, does. As such, for the security of the British state and protection of British civilians, it is essential that we maintain Trident.
101. Another consideration is the UK’s permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council. As Britain has continued to decline as a world power, it will be

increasingly difficult to justify the UK being one of only five nations to have a permanent seat. Without a nuclear arsenal this could well be impossible to justify. It is clearly in Britain's interests to maintain this seat and the associated veto on the Security Council and should not be jeopardised.

102. Given earlier analysis on Russia's current posture toward Ukraine now, of all particular moments in time, would be a particularly inopportune one to consider relinquishing Britain's nuclear deterrent. Russia is the nation with which Britain has come closest to having a nuclear exchange and still maintains a significant nuclear stockpile.

103. There has been significant debate on whether it would be possible for Britain to maintain a strategic nuclear capability at a lower cost, perhaps by examining the possibility of using an alternative platform (a land-based silo, aircraft-borne, boat-borne etc.), or by cutting the number of submarines used in the Trident programme. However, the 'Trident Alternatives Review' noted that a new platform would need to be designed and built from scratch, which would not save any money⁴⁶. The savings made from renewing the overall Trident programme, but cutting the number of submarines from four to three would be very negligible and may not be able to maintain the continuous-at-sea deterrent (CASD) posture, as at present it is held that four submarines are required to guarantee this. A decision on whether three hulls could still maintain CASD is due at Main Gate in 2016. This would mean that there were times when Britain did not functionally have a nuclear deterrent at all, which poses all the threats to nuclear security of disarming, with none of the financial benefits⁴⁷.

The case against Trident

104. The strongest argument made against Trident is that it is simply not a deterrent. It is not a deterrent for two reasons, contrary to what proponents of the system argue. Firstly, it is not a deterrent because HM Government would never use it. Even if Iran were to strike London, the UK would not be pushed to respond with nuclear weapons and sanction the deaths of hundreds of thousands of innocent

⁴⁶ UK Parliament, 'Trident Alternatives Review', https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/212745/20130716_Trident_Alternatives_Study.pdf (accessed 04/09/2014)

⁴⁷ *ibid*

civilians, many of whom are likely to have been hugely opposed to the Iranian regime that trampled on their rights, albeit in silence. The UK would no doubt respond, but it would do so with targeted strikes, discriminate action that would ensure that civilian casualties are minimised as far as possible. To suggest that David Cameron or any potential successor would sanction the killing of hundreds of thousands as an eye-for-an-eye response to a nuclear attack in the UK is simply, it is argued, incorrect – and with good reason. The UK maintains principles of morality that would prevent her from simply killing civilians for the sake of revenge. As such, Trident cannot be described as a deterrent.

105. The response that it only needs to be the case that world leaders believe Britain would use it for it to work as a deterrent may be true, but it also misses the point. Leaders, for example in Iran and North Korea, are fully aware that the UK would never use nuclear weapons in retaliation. However, even if critics grant the point that maintaining Trident gives the illusion that HMG would use it in response to nuclear attack, the Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) thesis does not hold. The MAD doctrine hinges on the idea that all leaders of all hostile nation-states are rational actors, who make policy based on logical reasoning and will opt for the most policy that best achieves their aims given the options available. There is then a secondary debate to be had, wherein even if you accept a hostile nation is rational, do the values and priorities of a given nation necessarily preclude it from nuclear proliferation and from making nuclear threats and even nuclear attacks against Britain⁴⁸ ? It is likely that not only do countries like Iran suspect that Britain would never use a nuclear weapon, they also are willing to take the risk that they would. In fact, the very nations that currently pose the biggest threat to national security are the very nations for whom the threat of destruction is much less of a concern than it is to the UK. The desire to protect civilians in the UK is not matched in some hostile states in a way that ensures MAD holds. As such, Trident is argued to be not a deterrent in two ways. Firstly, it is not a deterrent because the UK would not use it nor has she convinced any hostile state that she would use it. Secondly, it is not a deterrent because those nations that Britain might wish to deter are the sorts of nations that are not deterred by weapons, nuclear or otherwise.

⁴⁸ Michael Singh, February 23rd 2012, 'Is the Iranian regime rational?', Foreign Policy, http://shadow.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/02/23/is_the_iranian_regime_rational (accessed 04/09/2014)

106. A more nuanced point against the renewal of Trident, however, is that it is not other nations that pose the biggest threat to security but stateless terrorists. Critics point out that the biggest nuclear threat to the UK is likely to come from a terrorist organisation that manages to come into possession of nuclear weapons. Whilst states could be deterred by the prospect of retaliation, terrorists are not. Often these are individuals willing to die for their cause and so the prospect of being killed in response to their attack does not work as a deterrent. However, more crucially, it is entirely unclear as to against whom the UK would be retaliating should terrorists hit London, especially as can be the case, if the terrorists were British citizens. In the event that a state sponsor could not be identified conclusively, it is unlikely in the extreme that the UK would respond to any nuclear terrorist attack with a nuclear attack in kind, and this makes it virtually unthinkable to even suggest that the Prime Minister would condemn to death hundreds of thousands of civilians from a country that a terrorist just happened to originate from. When there is no obvious target to respond against, Trident becomes an even more ineffective deterrent. In other words, even if it can be shown that Trident deters other nations, the biggest threat to the UK comes from stateless individuals and it is impossible to identify a proper target to respond against. With no conceivable target to strike in response, Trident will have no effectiveness in deterring strikes from stateless terrorists.

107. With these three arguments in mind, Trident is dismissed as simply not being a deterrent and, as such, not fit for purpose. Trident should, it is argued, be scaled down or scrapped and replaced with cheaper weapons systems that can be used in more discriminate and targeted ways. Firstly, these sorts of weapons systems are much more likely to be used and thus work more as a deterrent and secondly they are cheaper.

Recommendations

108. The case for Trident depends on its role as an effective deterrent against nuclear attack from other nations (and stateless terrorists). If it is possible to show that a nuclear weapons system is an effective deterrent against nuclear attack and, indeed, is the only effective deterrent then it must be conceded that the cost is probably one worth paying. However, critics of Trident could respond in two ways. Firstly, that it is not a deterrent, for reasons outlined above. Secondly, that nuclear capabilities could

be shared between NATO allies, which would cut costs whilst maintaining nuclear coverage.

109. Notwithstanding the legitimate case to be made against the renewal of Trident, the HSC recommends that, whilst the cuts to operational and strategic warhead stockpiles can be made to contribute to the Government's wider savings programme, the rest of the British strategic nuclear deterrent remains intact. The Successor programme should go ahead as planned, with four submarines, to best maintain CASD posture.

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