



**HSC**  
Human Security Centre

# THE TWO PER CENT SOLUTION

## An Alternative Strategic Defence and Security Review

November 2015





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# PREFACE

The 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) will represent the first opportunity in half a decade for the government to put forward its vision of the security challenges facing Britain and how it seeks to address them. Since 2010, the hope that only the war in Afghanistan stood in the way of an end to an era of continuous post-Cold War conflicts encompassing the UK and its interests has turned to dust. Instead, within only two months of the publication of the last SDSR and its accompanying National Security Strategy (NSS), the established order in much of the Middle East and North African region began to collapse. Although some nations in this area have subsequently seen shifts towards democracy, others have become more oppressive or have been engulfed in a level of chaos most clearly embodied by the activities of the Islamic State. This has been accompanied by the further descent of the current government of Russia into an ever deeper pit of authoritarianism, paranoia and needless aggression, which culminated in the 2014 annexation of Crimea and Moscow's intervention in the east of Ukraine. We now face the most serious set of threats to our national interests since 1989, but are currently ill-equipped to face them.

The purpose of this review is not to provide a comprehensive solution to all of the security issues the UK faces, nor does it intend to embarrass the Government with regards to the previous SDSR. Whilst the 2010 document was deeply flawed in its own right, many developments that have occurred since its publication could not have been reasonably predicted. But we now have to take this opportunity to rectify both the foreseeable and unforeseeable mistakes of that review in order to make adequate security provisions to protect the UK and its wider interests.

The pledge by Chancellor George Osborne to sustain defence spending at two per cent of GDP in the July 2015 Budget was a welcome one. However, simple mathematics demonstrates that the pledge to increase the Ministry of Defence budget by 0.5 per cent per year in real terms until 2020 will not come anywhere near accomplishing this without further broadening how defence spending is defined. This will come on top of recent alterations that have already seen expenditure on peacekeeping, cyber security, war pensions and pension payments to retired civil servants added to reported defence spending in order to 'pad out' figures so that they meet the NATO two per cent target.

The need now, therefore, is for a commitment to a *genuine* spend of two per cent of our GDP on defence in the way it has been historically defined, and not one based upon accounting trickery. It is upon this notion – and the protection of the funding that supports our wider security efforts – that the following review is centred.

**The Human Security Centre (HSC) is an independent international affairs think-tank based in London, with interests in foreign, defence and security policy. Our mission is to address current and emerging threats to human security and to promote an international society where individuals and communities can live free from fear, free from want and free from indignity.**

The HSC advances the concept of human security as a necessary supplement to traditional state security and as a central pillar of modern foreign policy in the twenty-first century. It emphasises the importance and universality of human rights and fundamental freedoms, promotes democratic values and the rule of law, and warns against the dangers of isolationism.

To further its aims, the HSC undertakes analytical, policy-relevant and solution-oriented research into critical human insecurities – particularly political repression, religious persecution, human rights violations, mass atrocity crimes, armed conflicts and terrorism – for the public benefit: to educate the public and relevant stakeholders, and to inform foreign and security policy.

The HSC engages with governments, intergovernmental organisations and NGOs, and other partners to advance people-centred, context-specific and prevention-oriented solutions. It produces a wide range of digital publications, submits evidence to Parliamentary inquiries, provides advisory support to policymakers, and offers commentary to most major media outlets.

## RESEARCH DIVISIONS

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**Security and Defence** provides analysis and commentary on foreign and defence policy, national and international security, counter-terrorism and cyber security.

**Global Governance and Human Rights** monitors human rights violations; provides analysis and commentary based on international humanitarian, human rights and criminal law; and addresses developments at intergovernmental organisations, such as the UN and ICC.

**Religion and Politics** builds greater awareness of the freedom of religion and belief, monitors threats to this freedom around the world, explores the relationship between religion and violence, and searches for best practices in inter-religious cooperation.

**Energy and Environment** deals with the causes and consequences of climate change and issues of adaptation, conservation, small island developing states, the Polar Regions and energy politics.

**Policy Unit** provides timely, policy-relevant and solution-oriented analysis on key issues in international affairs. It is responsible for the production of the HSC's regular Policy Briefs and supports the above four divisions.

The HSC has a strong academic and political network in the UK, EU, US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and India. Its work regularly informs Lords and Commons reports in the UK; it serves as the Secretariat for the All Party Parliamentary Group on Yemen; and its Directors and Fellows have undertaken key assignments for the UN, the EU and the Commonwealth.

HSC Directors and Fellows have also featured in news publications, such as *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *The Telegraph*, *The Spectator*, *The New York Times*, *IB Times* and *Evening Standard*, and on television news outlets, such as the *BBC*, *Channel 4*, *Sky News*, *Al Jazeera* and *CNN*.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Defence and Security Spending

- The budget of the Ministry of Defence will be set at two per cent of UK GDP, with NATO-declared spending rising from £37.4bn in 2014/15 to approximately £46.6bn in 2020/21.
- The current £2bn budgeted for counter-terrorism operations across government will rise with inflation, as will the overall £2bn budgeted for the Single Intelligence Account from which funding is distributed to the Security Services.
- A new Joint Security Fund, to be worth £1.5bn per year by 2020, will be created: funding will be distributed between the Ministry of Defence, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Department for International Development, and the Security Services as requirements dictate.
- The new £1 billion Conflict, Stability and Security Fund will rise with inflation until 2020/21.
- As part of wider security efforts, the pledge to spend 0.7 per cent of UK GDP on international development will be sustained.

## The Strategic Context

- The last five years have encompassed both the most substantial set of strategic developments since the end of the Cold War, as well as the continued manifestation of long-established threats.
- The rise of extremist Islamism has been accelerated by developments linked with the Arab Spring: Al Qaeda has been joined by the Islamic State as a significant international actor.
- The issue of interstate warfare has seen its prominence on the security agenda enhanced as a result of Russia's annexation of Crimea and Moscow's intervention in the east of Ukraine.
- The global situation continues to evolve at an ever-faster pace: notably, key post-war institutions still dominate, but are increasingly seeing their power challenged by illiberal actors. Technological advances pose both threats and opportunities.
- The UK also faces numerous legacy security issues, most notably in Northern Ireland and with concern to the Falkland Islands.

## Risks to Our Security

- The primary security challenge facing the UK and its interests continues to be that of international terrorism: this threat will only be intensified as increasing numbers of UK-born Islamic State fighters return from Syria and Iraq.

- As a result of Russia's action in Ukraine, Britain must now accept that it can no longer take the security of its fellow NATO and EU members for granted. There is also a risk that the UK itself could be subjected to limited conventional attack.
- Mass population movements, cyber-attacks, the threat of nuclear weapons and the risk of lethal pandemics are also challenges that require mitigation.

### **Defence Planning Assumptions**

- The explicit and implicit assumptions of the Strategic Defence and Security Review 2010 (SDSR 2010) and its accompanying National Security Strategy (NSS) have been overtaken by global events. The UK now faces a multi-threat axis that the Armed Forces, as envisaged under Future Force 2020 (FF 2020), are not structured to manage.
- As a result, we will adopt a new posture with regards to overseas operations and homeland defence. Key to this will be granting the Armed Forces the ability to – for a limited period – sustain two substantial operations in separate theatres, whilst at the same time retaining a force in the UK capable of offering a meaningful defence of our islands from direct conventional attack.

### **Naval Forces**

- The future Royal Navy will consist of 33,000 regular and 3,100 reserve personnel, and its core assets will comprise of four ballistic missile submarines, seven attack submarines, two aircraft carriers, two amphibious landing ships, fifteen mine-countermeasures vessels, nine large offshore patrol ships, one Royal Marine Commando brigade, a large multi-role helicopter force and one fighter squadron.
- To facilitate and support this force, we will – amongst other measures – recruit an additional 4,000 personnel, procure four new ballistic missile submarines, bring into service the two aircraft carriers currently under construction, bring an additional landing ship into service, order thirteen new frigates, bring five additional offshore patrol ships into service, upgrade additional helicopters and purchase a pooled (with the RAF) force of seventy F-35B fighters.

### **Land Forces**

- The future British Army will consist of 90,000 regular and 30,000 reserve personnel, and have a combat arm comprising of three armoured infantry brigades, one air assault brigade, one mechanised 'stabilisation' brigade and five infantry brigades.
- To facilitate this force, we will – amongst other measures – recruit an additional 8,000 regular personnel, complete the ongoing expansion of the Army Reserves, enhance the size and deployability of the air assault brigade, form a mechanised brigade, disband two infantry brigades, and embark on a large-scale equipment modernisation programme – which will incorporate the replacement or upgrading of the majority of our armoured vehicle fleet.

## Air Forces

- The future Royal Air Force will consist of 36,000 regular and 1,800 reserve personnel, with major units comprising of ten fighter squadrons, two maritime patrol squadrons, seven transport/tanker squadrons, five transport helicopter squadrons, seven ISTAR squadrons and two surface-to-air missile squadrons.
- To facilitate this, we will recruit an additional 4,500 personnel, form two additional Typhoon squadrons, retain the Tornado in service until 2025, purchase a pooled force (with the Royal Navy) of seventy F-35B aircraft, bring into service twelve maritime patrol aircraft and procure a long-range surface-to-air missile system.

## The Deterrent

- The UK will retain a Continuous At Sea Deterrent (CASD) for the foreseeable future. Each submarine will carry eight missiles and up to forty nuclear warheads. However, we will add a counterforce component to our nuclear strategy.
- To facilitate this, we will move ahead with the procurement of four Successor-class submarines as replacements for the current Vanguard-class. We will also make provisions to increase the alert level at which our submarines operate, and enhance their command and communications systems to improve their responsiveness.

## Wider Security

- CONTEST will remain our central counterterrorism strategy, but additional efforts will be made to support collaboration between government bodies. We will increase the number of police firearms officers to enhance our armed response capability.
- The National Security Council will continue to lead our overseas stabilisation strategy.
- The threat of cyber-attack from both state and non-state actors continues to grow. We will increase the resources available in this field and seek to enhance our offensive capabilities.

## Alliances and Partnerships

- NATO will remain the bedrock of the defence of the UK, its allies and interests, and we will play our part in supporting the Readiness Action Plan agreed to in Wales last year.
- Our major bilateral security relationships will continue to be with the United States and France.
- We will continue our membership of a reformed and outward-looking EU: amongst our priorities in the coming years will be the negotiations over the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership and the creation of a European Energy Union.
- We will maintain our efforts to reform the UN, despite the limited progress realistically and currently possible.
- There will be a major push to enhance the security role of the Commonwealth: initiatives will include the creation of a Commonwealth Security Forum and an enhanced role for the Five Powers Defence Agreement.



*Aleem Yousaf (2014)*

# ■ INTRODUCTION ■



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- 1.1 The 2010 National Security Strategy document (NSS 2010)<sup>1</sup> began its outline of the challenges facing Britain by referring to “a world of startling change”. Few reading those words at the time could, however, have predicted exactly how startling the changes of the following five years would be.
- 1.2 The last Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR 2010)<sup>2</sup> came in the wake of a major financial crisis that shook the world. In its aftermath, it was the UK’s budget deficit that was seen by many as the major threat to national security. In retrospect, this belief led to a number of poor decisions being taken, not least in the realm of more conventional security concerns. However, the time has now come to begin rectifying those mistakes in order for Britain to be equipped to face the world as it really is, and not simply as we would wish it to be.
- 1.3 March 2015 saw the House of Commons Defence Committee publish a report describing how the security challenges facing the UK had changed since 2010, how existing defence arrangements were inadequate, and the methods by which these flaws could be rectified.<sup>3</sup> Whilst the report made numerous recommendations, arguably its core component was its stance in relation to the importance of the UK spending two per cent of its GDP on defence.
- 1.4 We wholeheartedly concur with this stance. As a result, everything contained within this review is based upon defence spending being sustained at two per cent of GDP.<sup>4</sup> This will lead to NATO-declared expenditure rising from £37.4bn in 2014/15 to approximately £46.6bn 2020/21.<sup>5</sup>
- 1.5 Additionally:
- The current £2bn budgeted for counter-terrorism operations across government will rise with inflation until 2020/21, as will the overall £2bn budgeted for the Single Intelligence Account from which funding is distributed to the Security Services (MI5, MI6 and GCHQ).
  - A new Joint Security Fund, to be worth £1.5bn per year by 2020, will be created: funding will be shared between the MoD, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Department of International Development and the Security Services.
  - The new £1 billion Conflict, Stability and Security Fund will rise with inflation until 2020/21.
  - The pledge to spend 0.7 per cent of GDP on international development will be sustained.
- 1.6 With this sound financial footing in place, we will now outline the current strategic situation faced by the UK, the threats emanating from the contemporary international scene, and how we intend to address these security challenges.

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<sup>1</sup> *A Strong Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The National Security Strategy* (2010) HM Government. The Stationary Office, London.

<sup>2</sup> *Securing Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: the Strategic Defence and Security Review* (2010) HM Government. The Stationary Office, London.

<sup>3</sup> *Re-thinking defence to meet new threats* (2015) House of Commons Defence Committee. The Stationary Office, London.

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<sup>4</sup> Defence spending is defined as the MoD budget, plus expenditure on the Armed Forces pension scheme and the cost of operations.

<sup>5</sup> Spending projection via: *The Financial Contest for the SDSR 2015: The End of UK Exceptionalism?* (2014) RUSI Briefing Paper, London.



# THE STRATEGIC CONTEXT



2.1 In the formulation of a post-2015 approach to defence and security, it is vital that we understand the context within which we must shape our strategy. The last five years have encompassed both the most substantial set of strategic developments since the end of the Cold War, and the continued manifestation of long-established threats. Here, we set out the principle security challenges we face.

### Islamic Extremism

2.2 The continuation of the rise of Islamic fundamentalism across the world has been a dominant theme since the last SDSR. Its points of origin have been diverse: most recently, in the post-Arab Spring states, extremism has emerged due to a reduction in oppression in some countries, and as a reaction to its intensification in others.

2.3 The Islamic State (see inset) has, in part, displaced Al Qaeda as the standard bearer of the extremist movement in the MENA region. In sub-Saharan Africa, both Boko Haram in the west and Al-Shabaab in the east represent a Salafist-Jihadist reaction to local socio-political issues. In Afghanistan and Pakistan, the Deobandi branch of Islamic revivalist Sunni Islam underpins the campaign of the Taliban. Shia extremists – many of whom are state sponsored – also continue to pose a threat to MENA region actors allied to the UK.

2.4 Experience has shown that it is difficult to quarantine armed Islamic extremist movements, even when their genesis is rooted in local issues. The underlying ideology of such groups, combined with an ever more interconnected world, presents a high risk that any territory in which they find sanctuary will become a base for supporting global terrorism.

2.5 Most notably, the Taliban in Afghanistan were (and remain) principally local actors, but it was the safe haven that they gave to the internationalist Al Qaeda that made the 11 September and other attacks possible.

2.6 In the immediate, Al Qaeda remains the single most potent terrorist threat to the UK. Whilst the Islamic State now exceeds them in terms of raw human and material resources, its current preoccupation with the regional conflicts in which it is embroiled and the relative immaturity of the organisation as a whole means that it has yet to develop Al Qaeda's level of operational sophistication.

2.7 However, whilst the last decade of counter-terrorism experience and successes has led us to a point where the level of threat posed by Al Qaeda has stabilised, it is the Islamic State which now poses the greatest long-term potential security challenge.

### THE ISLAMIC STATE

The territory of the self-proclaimed 'caliphate' of the Salafi-Jihadist extremist militant group, Islamic State, currently stretches across 200,000 square miles from Raqqa and Palmyra in Syria to Fallujah and Mosul in Iraq. This equates to a domain roughly the size of Italy. It has also made limited territorial gains in Libya, and is allied to a number of other extremist groups in the wider MENA region, Sub-Saharan Africa and Central Asia. Estimates of the strength of the group in its primary territories vary drastically, but the number of fighters pledged to the Islamic State can be conservatively said to be in the tens of thousands. Growing numbers of European citizens, male and female, are travelling to Syria and Iraq to fight for or otherwise support the Islamic State. The UK alone has

seen around five hundred of its citizens go to fight with the group.

Countless thousands have been murdered by the Islamic State's fighters and millions driven from their homes, with those under its jurisdiction subject to oppression even greater than that seen under the height of Taliban rule in Afghanistan. Thousands of fighters from Western countries will no doubt seek to return home, in almost every case bringing with them the type of ideological fervour and technical skills required to spread extremism and carry out terrorist attacks in their country of origin. The threat the Islamic State poses to the UK and its wider interests must not be underestimated.

There can be no doubt that the root causes of the conditions which gave rise to the Islamic State will require political solutions. The recent change of leadership in Baghdad and the expediting of a reform programme have begun to undo the damage caused by the government that inherited Iraq from the occupation forces. But there will be no chance of a victory against the Islamic State unless the Assad regime in Syria, which has done so much to ferment the conditions for the organisation's rise, is replaced by a government that is more representative of the Syrian population. Any notion that the current government in Damascus is part of the solution, as opposed to being a very large part of the problem, is a dangerous fantasy. Russia's recent intervention in the country does nothing to alter this fact.

But if politics will provide the ultimate endgame, it is an unavoidable fact that military intervention is required to facilitate it – there is simply no viable path for negotiation between the Islamic State and those allied against it. Britain is currently playing a significant role in combating the extremist group in Iraq: our Tornado aircraft and Reaper unmanned aerial vehicles are conducting regular strikes against militant assets throughout the country, with the latter also carrying out reconnaissance flights in Syria. But the enemy is not dependent on a physical infrastructure that can be smashed with brute force. As a result, progress against them will require a protracted campaign that is intelligence-led: hence our deployment of a fleet of sophisticated surveillance and electronic warfare aircraft. Our efforts to train Iraqi and Kurdish government ground forces in order to allow them to recapture and hold territory from the Islamic State are also ongoing.

But we can, must and will do more. It is vital that we begin to make serious preparations to secure Syria in both the post-Islamic State and post-Assad era. As a result, we will move to enhance our efforts to train moderate Syrian fighters in order to both drive back the Islamic State from the territory it holds in the country and provide the nucleus of a security force that provides an alternative to that wielded by the current government in Damascus.

The fight against the Islamic State and its affiliates will not be confined to Iraq and Syria. In Libya, we will extend our military and technical support to the internationally recognised government in order to allow them to eradicate the extremist enclaves that have emerged there. Our mission to support the Afghan government will incorporate countering the Islamic State in that country, and assistance efforts will also be extended in Nigeria, Somalia and Kenya.

## Interstate Security

- 2.8 The last five years have seen two major interstate wars of note. The first was the NATO-led campaign to protect the civilians of Libya from the forces of Colonel Gaddafi.<sup>6</sup> The second was the unprovoked attack on Ukrainian territory by forces allied to Russia, which has so far resulted in Moscow's annexation of Crimea and an ongoing war in Ukraine's east.
- 2.9 This latter campaign has marked a major sea-change in how the security of Europe is perceived. We can, now, no longer rank concerns regarding the defence of the post-war settlement in Europe as secondary to non-state threats.
- 2.10 Whilst the tragedy of the backsliding of Russia's post-Soviet transition to a normal democratic state that is fully integrated into the global system should be mourned, the international community has faced and overcome similar 'relapses' before. But painful experience has shown that states substituting grievance, paranoia and nationalistic fervour for sustainable foreign and domestic policies can cause tremendous harm to both themselves and others before rationality is restored. The threat posed by Russia today is an order of magnitude smaller than that presented by the Soviet Union. But given the nature of the current Russian political system and the disposition of its leadership, it may be years before the country normalises its behaviour.

<sup>6</sup> It is also possible to define this conflict as an 'internationalised civil war', albeit in a rather different form to other post-2010 examples.

## NATO IN EASTERN EUROPE

The Russian annexation of Crimea and its military operations in the east of Ukraine has highlighted the threat Moscow poses to the independent states of Eastern Europe. Delusional accusations of conspiracies by the West and its allies against the Russian state and talk from the Kremlin of the need to 'protect' ethnic Russians living beyond the nation's borders have brought with them echoes of a dark chapter in Europe's recent history.

Nowhere is the challenge faced by the UK and its NATO allies better encapsulated than in the Baltic nations of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. All exist in relative geographical isolation, with the latter two hosting large populations of ethnic Russians who have in many instances both failed to integrate into the societies of their respective states and been subjected to the same Kremlin propaganda that has allowed the current Russian government to secure its own domestic hegemony. The threat the Baltic States therefore face is of both overwhelming conventional attack made easier by their peripheral position – placing them in a situation not entirely dissimilar from that faced by West Berlin during the Cold War – and 'hybrid' threats which may include artificially generated internal rebellions.

At the Wales NATO Conference in September 2014, the alliance agreed to take a number of measures to address the possibility of a rapidly emerging crisis. Chief

amongst these was the modification of the existing NATO Response Force (NRF) to include a brigade-sized (around 5,000 personnel) Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF). The UK will take its turn in leading the VJTF in 2017. In addition to this, we will periodically commit forces that will support the two follow-on brigades that would reinforce the VJTF under the umbrella of the NRF in a major crisis. In the event of an all-out confrontation, the UK retains the capability and resolve to deploy the primary military assets it has available – including a ground force of up to division strength – in the defence of its allies. Britain’s commitment to supporting NATO’s Baltic Air Policing efforts will also continue, as will our participation in joint training exercises. As part of our policy to promote the integration of Ukraine into Europe, we will also expand our efforts to train and support the reform of that country’s armed forces.

Further confrontation with Russia is not inevitable, and we will support efforts to de-escalate the current crisis. However, we will not compromise on our core principle of seeking the creation of a Europe that is whole, free and at peace.

2.11 The issue of interstate conflict is of course one that is not limited to Russia. A number of nations challenge the UK and its interests, either actively or in their potential to take policy directions that endanger us.

2.12 The recent nuclear deal with Iran is to be broadly welcomed, despite outstanding issues regarding its implementation and its relatively short duration. However, the underlying foreign policy of Iran remains rooted in hostility to the UK and its allies. From its support for sectarian militias in Iraq and its propping up of the Assad regime to its arming of Hezbollah and Hamas, its actions have enabled and emboldened some of the most nefarious actors in the MENA region. Whilst we are willing to engage diplomatically, we are under no illusions that anything other than fundamental change in the way in which Iran is governed will allow for the integration of the country into the global community.

2.13 Although geographically distant, history, globalisation and a basic concern for

human life and freedom means that it is impossible for us to ignore the continued posturing of North Korea and the expansion of its nuclear weapons programme. The UK remains committed to enforcing UN sanctions against North Korea and to supporting the defence of South Korea in the event of hostilities.

2.14 Beyond those states that are already hostile, there is also the issue of nations which are currently allied to the UK, but remain vulnerable to changes in direction that would put us and our interests at risk. We will work to strengthen governments facing internal challenges that threaten to empower extremists.

### **A Changing World**

2.15 As articulated in NSS 2010, the world remains ever changing. Change is, of course, not something to be inherently feared: today, our civilisation is more peaceful and prosperous than at any time in human history because of the progress our global society has made. But the

security challenges we face will evolve alongside this change.

- 2.16 Whilst the US will remain the world's preeminent military power for the foreseeable future, and NATO will remain an alliance that is unmatched in relation to its capabilities, it is likely that the degree of superiority will be eroded. A similar level of relative economic decline will also likely be seen in the US and EU.
- 2.17 In many ways, the actual pattern of this shift poses little direct threat to the UK: much of the additional military power that is set to emerge over the coming decades will be based in the Far East as opposed to Europe. Additionally, several of the emerging security actors in this region are democratic states which share similar priorities to Britain. It is also likely that many of the region's autocratic states will face pressure internally to politically liberalise, making them less likely to threaten the peace.
- 2.18 However, it is only sensible to assume that, even if such developments are broadly positive, they will be accompanied by geopolitical 'growing pains' that could threaten the interests and values of the UK. As we have seen in Russia, it is possible for previously promising trends to backslide dramatically and violently, and we must be on guard to ensure that we are prepared for a variety of contingencies.
- 2.19 The wider international system for trans-national cooperation, built upon the post-war structure of the UN, IMF, World Bank, OECD and EU, remains stable, but at times strained.
- 2.20 As has been witnessed in dealings over the Syria conflict in particular, there are serious questions regarding the sustainability of the UN Security Council's legitimacy, given its use by authoritarian states to protect some of the world's worst regimes.
- 2.21 The IMF and World Bank are facing the challenge of the rival New Development Bank and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, although it remains to be seen as to how economically sustainable and immune from political abuse these new actors will prove to be.
- 2.22 The EU is currently emerging from the worst financial crisis in its history. It also faces the ongoing challenge of both refugee seekers from the MENA region as well as a security threat from Russia and the Islamic State.
- 2.23 Climate change and associated issues such as the depletion of natural resources represent the single greatest long-term threat to the future of world stability. We are already seeing the emergence of 'climate refugees'. Both advances in technology and international accords are likely to mitigate many of the challenges we face, but concerted action on a scale that has so far eluded the international community is still required.
- 2.24 Finally, evolving technology itself presents its own challenges. State actors such as Russia and non-state terrorist and criminal groups have shown no qualms in launching cyber-attacks on their adversaries. There will be a requirement to enhance our efforts in this area to protect both the UK's national security and the economy.

### Enduring Challenges

- 2.25 Of course, not all of the threats we face have emerged recently. The UK has long endured challenges stemming from both domestic and international conflict.
- 2.26 Whilst both their capabilities and operational competence remain highly suspect, and they lack significant popular support, dissident Northern Ireland terrorist groups remain a very real threat to both life and the peace process.
- 2.27 The 1998 Good Friday Agreement and the accords which followed have seen all sides to the conflict largely demilitarise, but a residual security challenge remains, which could increase should the political process collapse.
- 2.28 The UK also has long-standing territorial disputes, by far the most prominent being that over the Falkland Islands (see inset). A final settlement will ultimately require a recognition by Argentina of the islanders' right to self-determination. However, until that day comes, vigilance will be required.

## THE FALKLAND ISLANDS

Since the conclusion of the 1982 Falklands War, the ongoing defence of the islands from renewed aggression has been a priority of both successive governments and the UK public at large. Given that 255 British military personnel were killed during the liberation of the islands and thousands of others had their lives irrevocably changed, this is only proper.

Today, the Falkland Islands are garrisoned by a substantial force of around 1,200 personnel. British Forces South Atlantic Islands comprises of an Army roulement infantry company and supporting assets; RAF Typhoon fighters and tanker/transport aircraft (soon to be joined by Chinook helicopters); and a Royal Navy offshore patrol vessel. The Falklands and the adjacent territories are also supported by other Royal Navy assets patrolling the wider South Atlantic: usually a destroyer or frigate and an accompanying tanker ship. In a crisis, it would be possible to airlift reinforcements to the islands in a matter of hours.

Despite these provisions, we foresee no immediate threat to the Falkland Islands or our other South Atlantic Territories. The Argentine Armed Forces are underfunded and in a poor condition – a situation that we do not anticipate changing in the short to medium term. However, we will continue to maintain vigilance, and to ensure our readiness to meet any emergent challenge, we will move to increase the number of training and rapid reinforcement exercises carried out in the territory.



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# RISKS TO OUR SECURITY



3.1 It is the primary duty of all governments to ensure the safety of the country's citizens. Limited resources mean that we must prioritise with regards to the threats we face. However, it is often possible through reasoned analysis to assess the probability of a particular scenario occurring, the measures that would be required to prevent the event from occurring in the first place and – should it not ultimately be preventable – the actions necessary to mitigate that scenario's impact.

3.2 Most of the threats faced by the UK will emanate from the deliberate actions of other state actors, non-state groups and individuals. Often, a threat will encompass elements of all three. However, on other occasions, the challenge will be generated by either natural events, or human actions that have unintended consequences.

3.3 In examining and classifying the threats we face, we have opted to utilise two main criteria: probability of occurrence and severity of impact should they occur. For example, it may be that an incident could have a comparatively low probability of occurring, but a high impact (e.g. a terrorist attack using biological weapons). As an alternative, an incident could have a higher probability of occurring, but have a comparatively limited impact (e.g. a cyber-attack). By combining the probability/risk factors, we have divided the risks into 'Tiers' of priority.

### Highest Priority Threats

3.4 As is to be expected, our focus will be centred upon what we judge to be the highest priority threats. This does not mean that we will discount lower-tier threats. However, with limited resources, it is necessary to identify what, on balance,

we judge to be the most urgent challenges we face.

### Terrorism

3.5 As was the case in the 2010 assessment contained within the NSS, we believe that the greatest threat facing the UK is that of terrorism – principally of the type rooted in Islamic extremism. Such terrorist attacks are likely to take the following forms:

- 'Traditional' cell-based terrorist attacks conducted by perpetrators trained and/or logistically supported by foreign non-state or state actors.
- Terrorist attacks carried out by autonomous individuals ('lone wolves') or small groups that are inspired by foreign actors but conducted without their material support.

3.6 The threat of the 'lone wolf' terrorist is one which has received significant recent attention. We judge that in terms of probability, this is currently the most likely form for a terrorist attack to take. However, the relatively poor availability of the resources necessary to carry out mass casualty attacks in the UK means that in terms of overall impact, it is the more traditional externally-sponsored attacks that remain the greatest risk to life.

3.7 Broadly, we expect the terrorist threat to centre upon the use of conventional weapons against civilians, and the sabotaging of infrastructure in such a way as it endangers life. However, there also remains a risk of the use of chemical, biological and radiological weapons. Despite the difficulties of obtaining these weapons, terrorists are likely to find their potential for inflicting mass casualties appealing.

## PRIORITY RISKS

**Tier One:** On the basis of both likelihood and their potential impact on the UK, its allies and wider security interests, we judge the following to represent the highest priority threats to Britain:

- terrorist attacks on the UK homeland inspired by and potentially supported and/or conducted by foreign actors utilising conventional weapons
- terrorist attacks on the UK homeland inspired by and potentially supported and/or conducted by foreign actors utilising chemical, biological, or radiological weapons
- conventional attacks on one or more NATO or EU members to which the UK would have to respond
- large-scale population movements triggered by interstate wars, civil war or the collapse of one or more central state authorities
- cyber-attacks on the UK launched by state and non-state actors.

**Tier Two:** On the basis of both likelihood and their potential impact on the UK, its allies and wider security interests, we judge the following to represent secondary threats to Britain:

- conventional attacks on the UK homeland or its overseas territories by another state actor
- nuclear, chemical or biological attacks on the UK homeland or its overseas territories by another state actor
- nuclear, chemical or biological attacks on one or more NATO or EU members to which the UK would have to respond
- the spread within the UK of potentially lethal highly infectious diseases for which existing medical treatments are only partially effective
- terrorist attacks within the UK by dissident groups from Northern Ireland
- a major conflict outside of the NATO/EU regions which threatens UK allies and/or interests
- large-scale economic disruption as a result of actions by state and non-state actors beyond British territory.

**Tier Three:** On the basis of both likelihood and their potential impact on the UK, its allies and wider security interests, we judge the following to represent tertiary threats to Britain:

- large-scale security disruption resulting from the actions of disaffected social groups within the UK
- terrorist attacks on the UK homeland inspired by and potentially supported and/or conducted by foreign actors utilising nuclear weapons
- serious environmental damage and economic disruption resulting from a catastrophic industrial accident: for example a major release of radioactive material from a nuclear facility
- a major natural environmental incident: for example catastrophic flooding due to freak weather or severe disruption to electrical and communications systems caused by a solar flare.

- 3.8 The risks presented by radicalised individuals returning from fighting for groups such as the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria has added a new dimension to the challenge we face. It is estimated that approximately 500 citizens from the UK alone have travelled to these countries.
- 3.9 Within the UK, the Security Services, the police and other supporting agencies will continue to lead the campaign to disrupt terrorist attacks. Their efforts are supported by softer, community-based initiatives to prevent and detect radicalisation.
- 3.10 Should these measures fail, we will retain contingency plans to respond to any potential terrorist attack(s) in a manner which minimises loss of life and disruption to the nation.
- 3.11 However, our response to the terrorist threat must continue to be multi-faceted and outward facing – we cannot pretend that domestic countermeasures alone are sufficient to manage the challenges we face:
- The Afghanistan campaign was ultimately rooted in preventing a then extremist-controlled failed state from acting as a safe-haven for international terrorism, and it is possible that further such efforts will be required.
  - State actors have a key role in fostering terrorism, be it through direct sponsorship, passive tolerance, or the creation of the conditions of hopelessness in which such ideology can flourish: we must retain the ability to influence – and if necessary coerce – states away from such actions.

### Interstate Warfare

- 3.12 The most significant difference between this risk assessment and the one contained within the NSS 2010 is the move of the threat of an attack by another state on a NATO or EU member to which the UK would have to respond from ‘Tier Three’ to ‘Tier One’.
- 3.13 This change is primarily the result of Russia’s actions in Ukraine, which have seen the current government in Moscow violate the peace of Europe without provocation. We are now forced to assume that Russia’s leadership does not feel constrained by established norms.
- 3.14 It is logical to believe that, as during the Cold War, the most likely flashpoint for any conflict with Russia will be where NATO is at its most vulnerable. As already highlighted, the Baltic States are a highly exposed region to which the UK has already made substantial defence commitments.
- 3.15 Russia retains the capability to launch a conventional attack on NATO’s north-eastern flank with little notice. However, given its limited resources in comparison to NATO and its government’s need to retain at least marginal popular support both internationally and amongst its own population, Russia is more likely to adopt a ‘hybrid-warfare’ approach to such an endeavour. This would likely incorporate conventional, unconventional, information and cyberwarfare, together with economic pressure.
- 3.16 The bedrock of our strategy to manage this or any other threat would be the demonstration of our commitment to collective defence in partnership with our NATO allies.

- 3.17 However, should deterrence fail, we retain the capability to make a major contribution to collective defensive efforts.
- 3.18 A direct attack against Britain would not be an inevitable consequence of our contribution to a collective defensive effort (hence its designation as a 'Tier Two' threat). However, as Russia maintains the means to conduct such strikes, it must be seen as possible, given the UK's crucial wartime role in NATO.
- 3.22 As with our counter-terrorism strategy, our response to dealing with mass migration will operate on multiple levels. Our first priority will be dealing with the problem at source: civil war, state oppression and economic breakdown are just three of the major causes of the current crisis that require international action to manage.
- 3.23 Our second priority will be to interdict those responsible for facilitating people trafficking. As the mass drownings in the Mediterranean have demonstrated, such criminals have no regard for the safety of those whose desperation they exploit.

### **Large-scale Population Movements**

- 3.19 As witnessed in the Mediterranean, Central Europe and in Calais, recent months have outlined the reality of the impact of large-scale population movements on international security and stability.
- 3.24 Thirdly, we will manage those who do arrive in Britain in a way that accounts for the circumstances from which they are fleeing, whilst at the same time preserving the physical, social and economic security of the UK.

- 3.20 Britain is a welcoming and tolerant country. For many, it is this very fact that causes them to seek refuge in our nation. Most new arrivals have no desire other than to make a better life for themselves and their families whilst living in peace. We must also never lose sight of the fact that ultimately, we are all immigrants or the descendants of immigrants.

- 3.21 However, it is unavoidable that issues will arise with any large-scale population influx. Areas of concern could potentially be:

- terrorists utilising migrant routes to enter the UK
- wider disruption to social cohesion
- the additional burden placed on national infrastructure
- the rise of domestic extremism as a reaction to the arrival of migrants.

### **Cyber-attack**

- 3.25 Whilst only occasionally seen in the news headlines, the UK is under almost constant cyber-attack. Britain is the single most targeted country in the Europe and Middle East (EMEA) region for cyber-attacks on governments, businesses and private individuals. Seventeen per cent of all attacks in the EMEA region were directed against the UK. The average cost of a large-scale cyber-attack on a major business has doubled between 2014 and 2015 to £1.46m.

- 3.26 Our response to the cyber threat will build upon actions taken in the aftermath of SDSR 2010, and include enhancements to both the defensive and offensive capabilities of civilian and military agencies

## Other Priority Threats

3.27 Although the ‘Tier One’ threats represent our highest priority, there are other lower-tier threats that are of particular importance, given the potential impact they would have on the UK should they ever manifest.

### The Use of Nuclear Weapons

3.28 The first is the use of nuclear weapons against Britain. Such a strike would be vastly more destructive than a conventional, chemical, radiological, or – in all probability – biological attack. A single nuclear weapon could result in hundreds of thousands of casualties, as well as disruption that would take years to remedy. The use of multiple weapons could end the UK as a functioning state.

3.29 At present, Russia and China are the only potentially hostile powers that are capable of directly attacking Britain with nuclear weapons. We remain confident that even in a crisis, both nations will continue to abide by the traditional concept of deterrence. However, beyond our current nuclear adversaries, three additional forms of nuclear threat to the UK exist:

- the development of nuclear weapons and their associated delivery systems by currently non-nuclear states which are hostile to the UK and its interests
- the replacement of currently friendly governments with hostile ones in states that either possess or are able to rapidly acquire nuclear weapons
- the passing of nuclear weapons from hostile state to hostile non-state actors.

3.30 In all three of these scenarios, deterrence will still have a major role to play. However, we cannot entrust our security to the idea that nuclear weapons will forever be under the exclusive control of rational actors. As a result, we will adopt an additional three-fold approach to managing the nuclear challenge.

3.31 Counter-proliferation efforts will be our first line of defence. We envisage that for the vast majority of such situations, these initiatives will be through the mutual consent of partner nations. However, there will be times when we have to resort to more robust measures such as economic sanctions. As a last resort, it may be necessary to utilise force to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons.

3.32 Our second line of defence will be to renew our existing deterrent to ensure that any adversary is left in no doubt as to our willingness to defend ourselves.

3.33 Finally, as a last line of defence, we will further develop the capability to utilise our nuclear force to disrupt any attempt by an adversary to deploy nuclear weapons against ourselves or our allies.

3.34 It is our judgement that it would be difficult in the extreme for a terrorist group to acquire and deploy nuclear weapons without traceable state support. If a hostile nation were discovered acting in such a manner, no differentiation will be made between the terrorist group using nuclear weapons and the state which supplied them.

### **A Conventional Attack on the UK**

- 3.35 The threat of a conventional attack on the UK remains low. This is the result of the limited capability of potentially hostile powers to attack Britain directly, the ability of the UK to retaliate in kind, and the political consequences of such an attack being potentially disproportionate to any military gain.
  
- 3.36 The only plausible scenario under which the UK could come under direct attack would be during a broader conflict between NATO and Russia. Given the importance of the UK as both a NATO logistics hub and as a military power in its own right, there is potential for the country to become subject to limited offensive action.
  
- 3.37 Such attacks would most likely take the form of strikes via submarine and bomber-launched cruise missiles. There is also the potential for the interdiction of shipping in our waters. Such raids would come at a cost to the aggressor: defensive measures would take their toll, any assets involved in such an operation would have to be diverted from other tasks, and the sheer scale of the target set Britain presents would make the overall military utility of such an operation questionable.
  
- 3.38 Nevertheless, such a threat demands appropriate precautions. As a result, we will take measures to enhance the air defence and anti-submarine warfare provisions available to the UK in a way that is proportionate to the challenge.

### **The Spread of a Lethal Epidemic**

- 3.39 An outbreak of a lethal disease that is difficult or impossible to treat represents the only realistic<sup>7</sup> non-nuclear path via which the UK could suffer from catastrophic loss of life.
  
- 3.40 For the most part, managing such a crisis would fall to non-security civilian agencies. However, the police, the Security Services and the Armed Forces would be expected to provide any assistance asked of them.

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<sup>7</sup> For the purposes of this review, we are discounting highly improbable events such as an asteroid strike.



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# DEFENCE ■ PLANNING ■ ASSUMPTIONS



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4.1 The defence planning assumptions contained within SDSR 2010 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 (FF 2020). Specifically, the viability of the defence planning assumptions laid out in SDSR 2010 were contingent upon:

- a period of strategic warning prior to the emergence of any sustained threat to the UK or NATO/EU members - the NSS that accompanied SDSR 2010 judged a conventional attack on NATO or EU states to be a 'Tier Three' threat
- the MENA region remaining, if troubled, strategically stable.

4.2 It is clear that the strategic assumptions of SDSR 2010 have been overtaken by global events. The FF 2020 structure, as it stands, would have allowed the UK to retain the resources to project meaningful influence, but shrinkage in Britain's ability to project power would have been unavoidable.

4.3 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 limited 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.

4.4 The UK's ability to contribute to the response to this challenge is further complicated by the fact that Russia retains a limited ability to strike directly at Britain. FF 2020 in its SDSR 2010 form emphatically does not provide for Britain to make a

significant contribution to the defence of Eastern Europe whilst simultaneously providing for homeland defence and other intervention, stabilisation, standing commitment and defence engagement requirements.

## OPERATIONS

Operations will broadly be divided into the following types:

**Interventions:** These are non-enduring (lasting six months or less) high-tempo operations of varying scale: complex examples include the 2003 invasion of Iraq and the 2000 deployment to Sierra Leone; non-complex examples include the evacuation of UK citizens from Lebanon in 2006.

**Stabilisations:** These can be non-enduring or enduring (in excess of six months with at least one force rotation), and encompass peacekeeping, counterinsurgency – past examples include operations in Bosnia and Afghanistan – or defensive deployments in periods of crisis.

**UK Homeland Defence and Resilience:** This is focused towards the protection of the UK and its population: examples include air defence, bomb disposal and domestic disaster relief.

**Other Standing Commitments:** Beyond the UK's borders, we maintain a number of indefinite operations designed to support our wider security: examples include the deployment of mine countermeasure vessels to Bahrain and the Continuous At Sea Deterrent.

**Defence Engagement:** The primary focus of these operations is bilateral and multilateral security support, and includes various defence diplomacy programmes and 'non-combat' security support missions.

4.5 With this in mind, we believe that a substantial revision to the defence planning assumption is desirable. FF 2020's expeditionary elements will therefore be reconfigured to be able to conduct:

- an enduring stabilisation<sup>8</sup> operation at around brigade level (up to 6,500 personnel) with maritime and air support as required, whilst also conducting
- one non-enduring stabilisation or complex intervention operation at around brigade level with maritime and air support as required, and
- one non-enduring simple intervention (up to 1,500 personnel).

Or alternatively:

- with sufficient notice (3-6 months) one non-enduring complex intervention of up to three brigades (one division), with maritime and air support (around 35,000 personnel), whilst also sustaining:
- one non-enduring post-conflict or defensive stabilisation operation at around brigade level.

4.6 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 another region of the world simultaneously.

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<sup>8</sup> Note: this review uses an expanded definition of the term 'stabilisation' compared to the one seen in SDSR 2010: it now also encompasses deployments to deter offensive enemy action in times of crisis.

## UK Homeland Defence and Resilience

4.7 Additionally, the component of our forces retained in the UK for homeland defence will be enhanced in order to provide a credible response to the risk of conventional attack.

4.8 The UK faces no plausible threat of invasion. As a result, efforts will concentrate on improving Britain's air defence provisions – particularly its ground-based elements. But we will also invest to enhance our anti-submarine warfare capabilities in order to better secure our maritime approaches.

4.9 In addition to conventional defence, the Armed Forces also have a role to play in domestic counter-terrorism. For the most part, this will involve the provision of specialist capabilities such as bomb disposal. There may be instances where a broader set of resources is brought to bear. But we do not, however, foresee that troops would ever be deployed on a large scale for an extended period on the streets of the UK in anything but the most catastrophic emergency.

4.10 We also envisage that the Armed Forces will continue to play a role as an aid to the civil powers in times of domestic non-security emergencies by providing a body of trained personnel and specialist equipment.

4.11 This is most frequently seen in response to major flooding, but could also occur in the event of other natural disasters or accidents.

### Other Standing Commitments

4.12 In addition to the defence of the UK mainland, the Armed Forces are also assigned standing commitments abroad – permanent operations designed to support the UK’s wider defence interests. These include tasks ranging from maritime patrols in the Persian Gulf region to the ongoing efforts to protect the Falkland Islands and wider South Atlantic territories. We anticipate that these tasks will continue to be undertaken concurrently to any other operational commitments.

### Defence Engagement

4.13 The UK’s wider defence and security interests are also supported via defence engagement. This encompasses alliance building and strengthening, defence diplomacy and ‘non-combat’ security support. Given recent experiences in Iraq and Ukraine, where the breakdown of local security forces have resulted in situations which threaten our wider interests, we will place a new emphasis on aiding in the development of the security forces of those actors whose values and interests reflect our own.

## INTERVENTION AND STABILISATION: A NEW APPROACH

The UK cannot reasonably be expected to make provisions to manage every potential threat we face simultaneously, even with allied help. Nevertheless, the emergence of new threats in the MENA region and of renewed Russian aggression in Eastern Europe has proved that we must be prepared to make meaningful contributions to dealing with challenges concurrently. It would be unacceptable to find ourselves unable to respond to a crisis in one region due to a commitment already made in another, or worse still, unwilling to commit forces to one theatre simply due to the risk of a crisis emerging in a second theatre. We should not pretend to ourselves that our enemies are unaware of events in the wider world: indeed, they may choose to act against us when our attention is focused elsewhere.

Simultaneously, the return of Russia as an international aggressor has also seen the re-emergence of a limited conventional threat to the UK itself. Whilst this should not be overstated, Russia does retain the ability to launch limited strikes on the British mainland – principally utilising cruise missiles launched from long-range bombers and submarines – as well as the ability to interdict air and shipping movements around the UK. It also possesses significant non-kinetic aggressive capabilities, most notably in the realm of cyberwarfare.

As a result, at the centre of this defence review will be a recalibration of our defence posture to allow us to contribute to two expeditionary operations of significant size simultaneously for a limited period, whilst maintaining a credible domestic defence force. This represents a notable step up from SDSR 2010, which only envisaged a marginal UK capability to engage in simultaneous operations and next to nothing in reserve to defend the homeland. However, we believe that as long as we remain ambitious but realistic in our goals, and retain the core assumption that we will always be fighting alongside our allies in all but the most limited circumstances, it will be possible for Britain to play a key role in maintaining international security whilst ensuring the safety of our own country.

We do not intend to repeat the mistakes of 2006-2009, when the Armed Forces were tasked to carry out simultaneous long-term missions in Iraq and Afghanistan when they lacked the resources to do so. Our planned changes to the force structure will not grant them this ability. However, we must position ourselves to be capable of dealing with multiple challenges of a significant scale simultaneously for a limited period of time.



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# ■ NAVAL FORCES ■



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5.1 The principal tasks of the Royal Navy will continue to be the delivery of the Continuous At Sea Deterrent (CASD); the conventional defence of the UK and its overseas territories; the delivery of an intervention and stabilisation capability in defence of our allies and in support of our values; and the projection of an enduring presence around the world in order to both deter aggression and contain threats.

5.2 Broadly, we judge that the general balance of capabilities laid out in the overview of FF 2020 in the SDSR 2010 document remains fit for purpose. However, in light of changes to the strategic situation since 2010, re-evaluation of how existing assets can best be utilised to secure maximum value, and a modest increase in available resources, SDSR 2015 envisages our future naval forces' core structure as being based upon:

- a total trained Royal Navy force strength of 33,000 regular and 3,100 reserve personnel
- a CASD delivered via the Trident missile system, deployed between four Vanguard and subsequently four Successor-class submarines, on a level of alert posture higher than that at present
- seven Astute-class submarines; these will be capable of anti-submarine and anti-ship operations, as well as Tomahawk strike and intelligence gathering operations - we envisage that they will operate both independently, and as part of integrated task forces of UK and allied ships: however, in both instances, there will now be an increased emphasis on supporting operations on land
- a carrier-strike/major aviation support capability based upon two aircraft carriers; one of which will always be deployed or at high readiness to deploy; and one of which will be at reduced readiness, in refit or working up to replace its sister ship
- a surface fleet of nineteen frigates and destroyers: however, their employment will be re-orientated so that their capabilities are more appropriately utilised
- a force of nine large River-class offshore patrol vessels, the majority of which will be dedicated to low-intensity overseas operations
- two Albion-class amphibious landing ships, which will form the core of our troop landing capability
- a Royal Marine Commando Brigade, one unit of which – the Lead Commando Group – will be at very high readiness, with the remainder of the brigade available with sufficient notice
- a Fleet Air Arms helicopter force comprising of Merlin HM.2, Wildcat HMA.2, and Merlin HC.4: additionally, the Royal Marines will share a pool of AH.1 Wildcats with the Army
- a Fleet Air Arms fighter force of one F-35B squadron, with a deployable strength of twelve aircraft, being available to operate from whichever carrier is at high readiness – three further RAF squadrons of equal strength being available to provide support: initial operational capability will be reached in 2020, with the full force available in 2025

- a force of fifteen mine counter-measure vessels – currently eight Hunt-class and seven Sandown-class ships
- a Royal Fleet Auxiliary force of six large fleet tankers, three solid stores ships, four large landing ships, one primary casualty-receiving/ aviation support ship and one fleet repair ship, with a further four chartered roll-on/roll-off sealift ships in support
- reduce the practice of committing frigates and destroyers to tasks not requiring such ships: major surface combatants will now be primarily tasked with missions requiring high-end capabilities – notably deployments to the Persian Gulf and carrier group escort work – and low-intensity tasking, particularly anti-piracy work, will be partially transferred to smaller patrol vessels

### 5.3 We shall therefore:

- increase the trained strength of the Royal Navy by 4,000 personnel
- give final main gate approval for the procurement of four Successor-Class submarines, henceforth to be known as the Defiance-class, and to be named HMS Defiance, HMS Devastation, HMS Dreadnought and HMS Dementor (see ‘The Deterrent’ section for details)
- increase the level of ‘readiness to fire’ deployed submarines are held at, from the current posture of ‘a matter of days’ to ‘a matter of hours’
- procure one hundred additional Tomahawk missiles to enable better utilisation of the increased weapons carrying capability of the Astute-class
- complete the construction of and bring into operation both the Queen Elizabeth-class aircraft carriers
- order thirteen Type 26 frigates: this will not only sustain the existing force, but also provide financial savings through a single large order while putting an end to industry uncertainty
- retain the four Batch 1 River-class patrol vessels in service for operations in home waters and duties in the Falklands, commit the three currently under-construction Batch 2 vessels to supporting operations overseas, and order a further two ships to the same design: additional manning requirements will be met by the increase in Royal Navy personnel numbers
- make efforts to secure the ‘buy-back’ of the Bay-class vessel sold to Australia in 2011 to remedy the shortage of shipping for the Royal Marines: alternative arrangements will be made should this not prove possible
- return to the practice of running both Albion-class landing ships concurrently: additional manning requirements will be met by the increase in Royal Navy personnel numbers
- provide additional resources to 3 Commando brigade to restore its ability to deploy at full strength when appropriate

- order an additional eight of our Merlin HM.1 helicopters to be upgraded to HM.2 standard to enable the fielding of a dedicated Airborne Surveillance and Control squadron
- order a total of seventy F-35B aircraft to support a combined Royal Navy/RAF force pool
- continue our programme to define the most appropriate form of future mine countermeasure capability
- enhance our efforts in relation to ballistic missile defence (BMD) research and development – notably with regards to the Sea Viper system carried by the Type 45 destroyer
- accelerate current plans for the order of three solid stores ships for the RFA in order to replace RFA Fort Victoria, RFA Fort Rosalie and RFA Fort Austin
- assess the feasibility of rebuilding HMS Ocean to serve as a replacement for RFA Argus in the primary casualty receiving and aviation training role: should this not prove possible, alternative options for a through-deck vessel in the 20,000 tonne class will be studied
- examine options regarding the procurement of a new forward repair ship to replace RFA Diligence.

## QUEEN ELIZABETH-CLASS AIRCRAFT CARRIERS

There can be no doubt that the Royal Navy's aircraft carrier programme has been both troubled and controversial. However, the core concept it represents – that of granting the UK the ability to deploy military aviation assets on a large scale with only limited logistical support from other nations – remains valid. Once both ships are in service in 2020, it is our intention that one will always be available for operations, with the second at reduced readiness, in refit or embarked on training duties.

The air group the carrier will embark will be mission-specific. For example, for general purpose operations, a compliment of twelve F-35Bs, six Merlin helicopters configured for Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) and three Merlins in an Airborne Early Warning & Control (AEW&C) role could be carried. For 'strike heavy' training and operations, an air group might comprise of thirty F-35Bs and five Merlins configured for AEW&C. For amphibious support, a force of fifteen F-35Bs, three Chinook helicopters, eight Merlin transport helicopters and five Apache attack helicopters could be deployed. In all, up to forty aircraft could be operated from each ship, with a reduced number if troops are also embarked.

The ships are both designed for an operational lifespan of fifty years, and will form the centre of non-nuclear Royal Navy power until well into the second half of this century. Whilst not a solution to all the power projection challenges we face, experience has proven that carriers are an indispensable component of expeditionary warfare. When fully operational, the Queen Elizabeth-class will provide the UK with a capability rivalled only by the US.



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# ■ LAND FORCES ■



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6.1 The British Army is currently in the midst of realigning its force structure to match that set out in 2012's Army 2020 review.<sup>9</sup> As envisaged, it would have allowed the UK to maintain its homeland defence/resilience and wider standing commitments whilst also embarking upon small, short-term operations combined with a medium-scale enduring commitment; or alternatively to engage in a major intervention. Developments since 2010 have made this planning assumption inadequate.

6.2 However, we believe that the Army 2020 model has sufficient flexibility to allow the required changes to be made. To this end, SDSR 2015 envisage the future land forces core structure as:

- a total trained force strength of 90,000 regular and 30,000 reserve personnel
- a principally regular-manned Reaction Force, comprised of:
  - three armoured infantry brigades – one of which will be kept at high readiness, with one battlegroup – in the form of the Lead Armoured Task Force - deployable at very short notice: these units will be available for both interventions at up to division level and to support enduring commitments
  - one air assault brigade, one battle group of which – in the form of the Air Assault Task Force – will be available at very short notice: this force will form the core of the Army's rapid reaction capability – notably in relation to NATO's new Very High Readiness Force
- one 'stabilisation' mechanised infantry brigade – with a Lead Stabilisation Task Force at high readiness to deploy – which will be tasked with providing the British contribution to a post-conflict or defensive stabilisation operation
- a mixed regular/reserve Adaptable Force, at the core of which will be five infantry brigades – in peacetime, they will provide administrative support to regular and Army Reserves elements in their geographical area: given sufficient notice, two will be deployable (although not concurrently) to support an enduring commitment
- the Force Troop Command: this will provide artillery, air defence, command, intelligence, communications, CBRN, reconnaissance, and medical support for the Reaction and Adaptable Forces
- the Special Forces: whilst details will remain undisclosed, we will retain a capability that is unrivalled in the world.

6.3 We shall therefore:

- recruit an additional 8,000 regular personnel and continue with plans to expand the Army Reserves to a trained strength of 30,000, whilst completing the withdrawal from Germany by 2020
- enhance 16 Air Assault Brigade's capacity by adding an additional infantry battalion to its order of battle, as well as the artillery, engineering, signals and logistical capability required for it to deploy as a full brigade

<sup>9</sup> *Transforming the British Army* (2012) HM Government. The Stationary Office, London.

- disband two of the current Adaptable Force infantry brigades and transfer their assets to the other formations
- form a mechanised brigade dedicated to leading stabilisation operations (see inset) – it will typically be composed of one armoured infantry, one heavy protected mobility infantry and two light infantry battalions, a ‘hybrid’ armoured/armoured reconnaissance regiment and supporting elements: Force Troop Command will be expanded commensurately to support this new unit
- restore the deployability of the 1st (UK) Division’s HQ
- enhance the ‘weight’ of the Adaptable Force by forming a deployable Army Reserve tank regiment
- enlarge the force of operational Challenger 2 tanks to 290, and proceed with a Life Extension Programme
- proceed with the Warrior Capability Sustainment Programme (CSP) and expand its scope in order to acquire sufficient vehicles to fully equip all armoured infantry units (including one new unit for the stabilisation brigade and one for the Army Reserves)
- upgrade fifty of our existing Apache attack helicopters to AH-64E standard
- advance with a wider Army equipment recapitalisation programme, including:
  - procuring a new vehicle to replace the Foch in the CBRN reconnaissance and surveillance role
  - moving forward with the Armoured Battlegroup Support Vehicle (ABSV) programme to replace the FV432
  - proceeding with the Multi Role Vehicle - Protected (MRV-P) and the Mechanized Infantry Vehicle (MIV) programmes.

## THE STABILISATION BRIGADE

The new stabilisation brigade will form the core land component of the two-theatre strategy. Its function will be to provide Britain with a rapid reaction mechanised force designed to be deployed for up to six months. We anticipate that one of its primary duties will be to periodically be made available to the NATO Reaction Force as one of its two assigned follow-on brigades, particularly in instances where the wider UK defence effort is focused elsewhere. However, it will at other times be available for wider global tasking.

Typically, it will comprise of one armoured infantry battalion, one heavy protected mobility infantry battalion, two light infantry battalions, a ‘hybrid’ armoured/armoured reconnaissance regiment and supporting units. It will be structured on the assumption that it will have additional allied units under its command, but will itself be designed to act as a component of a larger multinational force. The formation will have two tasks. Firstly, it will give the UK the ability to rapidly deploy the core components of a robust post-conflict stabilisation force for a limited period without excessively compromising the ability of the other elements of the Reaction Force to engage in an intervention at up to division-level, or the wider sustainment of an enduring stabilisation operation. Secondly, it will allow the UK to contribute mechanised elements to a defensive stabilisation force (notably in Eastern Europe) for a limited period in times of tension without surrendering our ability to engage in an intervention at up to division-level or an enduring post-conflict stabilisation operation at brigade level elsewhere.



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# ■ AIR FORCES ■



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7.1 The Air Force structure originally envisaged by FF 2020 was designed to maintain its standing commitments whilst also embarking upon small, short-term operations combined with a medium-scale enduring commitment; or alternatively to engage in a major intervention. It is now clear that these planning assumptions are inadequate.

7.2 Unlike existing plans for the ground and naval force elements of FF 2020, those put forward in SDSR 2010 for the RAF – particularly with regards to its combat arm – cannot be adapted for the current new planning assumptions with only minor restructuring. As a result, SDSR 2015 envisages the following as the future RAF core structure:

- a total trained force strength of 36,000 regular and 1,800 reserve personnel
- a fast jet force of ten squadrons – initially, this will comprise of seven Typhoon and three Tornado squadrons: by 2025, this force will comprise of seven Typhoon and three F-35B squadrons
- a maritime patrol aircraft force of two squadrons of P-8 Poseidon aircraft: these will be tasked with anti-submarine warfare, anti-surface warfare and SAR
- a fixed-wing transport force of one squadron of C-17s, three squadrons of A-400Ms and one squadron of C-130Js
- a rotary-wing transport force of three squadrons of Chinooks and two squadrons of Pumas

- an ISTAR force of one squadron of Sentry E-3D AWACS aircraft, one squadron of RC-135W Rivet Joints, one squadron of Sentinels R1s, one squadron of Shadow R1s and three squadrons of unmanned aerial combat vehicles (UCAVs)
- a surface-to-air missile force of two squadrons of long-range missiles.

7.3 We shall therefore:

- recruit an additional 4,500 personnel
- continue to take delivery of Typhoon aircraft, proceed with planned upgrade work and form two additional air defence-dedicated squadrons from older Tranche 1 aircraft previously earmarked for disposal (see inset)
- retain our Tornado aircraft in service until 2025
- confirm our intention to order a total of seventy F-35B aircraft, the majority of which will be utilised by three front-line RAF squadrons operating alongside a single Royal Navy squadron
- procure twelve P-8 Poseidon maritime support aircraft, along with associated weapons and support equipment
- retain our existing eight C-17s, continue to take delivery of the planned twenty-two A-400Ms and retain and upgrade eight C-130J aircraft for special forces support and light transport duties

## THE TYPHOON FORCE

Under the original FF 2020 plan, it was intended that the oldest Tranche 1 aircraft (comprising of 53 surviving jets) would be retired in 2019, and the Tranche 2 and 3 aircraft (a total of 107 fighters) would be upgraded and retained in service. This would allow for sufficient aircraft to sustain five front-line squadrons. As well as financial considerations and a lack of a perceived need for the older aircraft in the then envisaged force structure, there were practical reasons for disposing of them: they were unable to easily receive the upgrades planned for the more recently delivered aircraft.

However, we now intend to retain the Tranche 1 aircraft in service and form them into two new squadrons that will be centrally tasked with UK air defence. Although less capable than their younger counterparts, the aircraft will still be more than a match for most threats to the British mainland. Crucially, their retention will also free up the more potent and fully multi-role Tranche 2 and 3 aircraft for deployment on intervention and stabilisation operations where their abilities are more likely to be required.

- retain the existing Chinook and Puma force, and commence studies relating to a potential replacement for the Puma post-2025
- replace the current ten Reaper UCAVs with twenty Reaper-derived Protector aircraft
- commence the procurement of an off-the-shelf long-range surface-to-air missile system
- recommission the Saxa Vord radar site in the Shetland Islands to provide enhanced air surveillance of the UK's northern approaches
- reduce non-essential costs: notably, the Red Arrows will be withdrawn in 2019 unless non-government funding can be found to replace them.

## F-35B LIGHTNING II

The F-35B will represent the greatest leap forward in the UK's aerial combat capability since the 1960s. Together with the Typhoon, it will form the core of the UK's expeditionary strike force when the Tornado leaves service in 2025.

The F-35B force will be jointly operated by the RAF and Royal Navy, with the former being the lead service. We intend to purchase a total of seventy aircraft: this will allow for the formation of four twelve-aircraft squadrons (three RAF and one Royal Navy), an operational conversion unit and an operational evaluation unit, all of which will be based at RAF Marham. The force will allow the sustaining of a squadron-sized deployment to support an enduring commitment (with three squadrons taking it in turns to deploy), whilst leaving a fourth unit available for short-term contingencies. Alternatively, multiple units would be able to mount a surge deployment (to the operational carrier, bases on land, or both) in order to support a major intervention.

As well as standard systems, the F-35B will be equipped to carry UK-specific weapons including the Paveway IV bomb, Brimstone II air-to-ground missile, Meteor air-to-air missile and Storm Shadow cruise missile. The aircraft will also provide a substantial electronic attack capability, which the UK currently lacks.



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# ■ THE DETERRENT ■



- 8.1 The use of nuclear weapons against the UK or one of its treaty allies by another state actor represents a ‘Tier Two’ threat. However, the low probability of such an attack should not mask the seriousness of the consequences were it to take place.
- 8.2 At present, there remains no hostile state with both the will and the means to utilise nuclear weapons against the UK. However, the intent of nations possessing such capabilities can change overnight.
- 8.3 In addition, a number of states that either are or could potentially become hostile to Britain and/or its allies have the technical resources to develop and field nuclear weapons relatively quickly. Given that current UK nuclear weapons policy has a time horizon running to the year 2060, it must have sufficient flexibility to deal with such developments.
- 8.4 As already outlined, we judge that it is unlikely that a terrorist group could acquire a nuclear weapon without the identifiable support of a state actor. As such, the deterrent also has a role to play in deterring such an attack.
- 8.5 We have carried out an exhaustive study of the alternative forms our nuclear deterrent could take.<sup>10</sup> However, after analysing the alternative systems available and postures such systems could take, we have determined that the perpetuation of Continuous At Sea Deterrent (CASD) based upon a fleet of four submarines represents the best solution from an operational, technical and financial standpoint.
- 8.6 We envisage no change to the physical composition of the UK’s nuclear strike force as laid out in SDSR 2010. As a consequence, the components of the deterrent will be structured as follows:
- There will be four ballistic missile-carrying submarines, currently the Vanguard-class, which will be replaced by new vessels from 2028 onwards.
  - Each submarine will carry a maximum of eight missiles and forty nuclear warheads.
  - The UK’s number of active warheads will remain at no more than 120, with a total stockpile of warheads of no more than 180.
  - At any one time, at least one submarine will be deployed in order to maintain a CASD.
- 8.7 As a consequence, we will:
- move ahead with the renewal of the nuclear submarine fleet by placing orders for four new ballistic missile-carrying submarines, to be known as the Defiance-class
  - work with the US, under the provisions of the 1958 UK-US Agreement for Cooperation on the Uses of Atomic Energy for Mutual Defence Purposes, to replace the UK’s stockpile of nuclear weapons and update the Trident missile bodies to which Britain has access.

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<sup>10</sup> *Trident Alternatives Review* (2013) HM Government. The Stationary Office, London.

8.8 In support of its efforts to further nuclear non-proliferation, the UK will also maintain its pledge not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against states that do not possess nuclear weapons.

8.9 We have historically maintained ambiguity over our nuclear strategy, saying only that we would utilise such weapons in extreme circumstances of self-defence, in the event of an attack upon ourselves or an ally. However, we feel that as a result of the evolving strategic situation, it is desirable to both modify our doctrine and make a public declaration of these changes.

8.10 We will introduce an explicit counterforce component to our strategy. Our Trident system has always retained a latent ability to target enemy nuclear weapons that are in the process of being used against ourselves or an ally. By fully operationalising this capability, we will:

- grant the UK the ability to take measures against an enemy nuclear strike that may reduce its effectiveness
- make clear the willingness of the UK to take all necessary measures to defend itself and its allies
- highlight the priority we place on the preservation of civilian life even in the most extreme circumstances.

8.11 These changes emphatically do not mean that we intend to reduce the threshold for the use of nuclear weapons. It also does not indicate that counterforce will be the only component of UK nuclear strategy: we recognise that circumstances may arise where such an approach is not viable. However, it does add an additional level of flexibility and

reactivity that will enhance the deterrent's credibility and utility.

8.12 In order to enable this capability, we will:

- reduced the 'readiness to fire' level on which our submarines are held from 'a matter of days' to 'a matter of hours', and be ready to cut it further in a crisis
- enhance the communications systems of our existing and future nuclear assets in order to preserve and enhance the reactivity of our deterrent.

8.13 The UK will remain committed to working towards a world without nuclear weapons. However, until that day comes, we will remain clear eyed with regards to the need to maintain our security in the face of evolving threats.

## DEFIANCE-CLASS

Since 1968, the UK's strategic nuclear deterrent has been carried by submarines of the Royal Navy, initially in the four Polaris missile-armed Resolution Class and, since 1993, in the four Trident missile-armed Vanguard-class. The length of time it takes to build such complex vessels means that it is now appropriate to move forward with the latter's replacement.

As a result, it is our intention to commission four vessels as successors to the Vanguard-class submarines. To be known as the Defiance-class, and named HMS Defiance, HMS Devastation, HMS Dreadnought and HMS Dementor, they will be British-built and will sustain the nuclear deterrent from 2028 to around 2065. Each vessel will carry eight updated Trident missiles with a combined total of forty warheads, although they will be built with a capacity of twelve missiles: this latter capability will give us the flexibility to adjust the size of our deployed nuclear force should it be judged necessary.



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# ■ Wider Security ■



9.1 The UK has a proud tradition of civilian primacy in security matters. Not all of the security issues facing the UK could or should be faced with a response that is led or directly supported by the Armed Forces. Indeed, in most instances, our first response to any threat is via civilian agencies. But even where military action is the most visible component of an effort to support our wider security, there will still be a crucial role to be played by actors outside of our Armed Forces.

9.2 We judge the security challenges that will demand the most substantial cross-governmental response to be:

- counterterrorism
- conflict prevention and mitigation
- cyber security

### Counterterrorism

9.3 Although terrorism - a 'Tier One' threat - can originate from a wide variety of sources ranging from lone individuals with an ill-defined grudge against society, to large and highly regimented groups with a clear political agenda, the single greatest terrorist threat to the UK today is sourced from various branches of Islamic extremism.

9.4 As already outlined, we believe that Al Qaeda and its affiliates will remain the leading threat to Britain in the short term.

9.5 However, the organisation faces having its capabilities and actions eclipsed by both the better resourced Islamic State and the phenomenon of independently operating individuals and groups who carry out more frequent but lower-impact attacks.

9.6 Since 2003, CONTEST<sup>11</sup> has represented the core of the UK's counterterrorism strategy. It is organised around four work streams:

- **Prevent:** to stop people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism
- **Pursue:** to stop terrorist attacks by detecting, investigating and disrupting threats
- **Protect:** to strengthen our protection against a terrorist attack
- **Prepare:** to mitigate the impact of a terrorist attack

Broadly, this approach has proven successful: it has now been ten years since the last mass casualty terrorist attack in the UK.

9.7 However, the threat is evolving. The rise of the Islamic State has led to a huge broadening in the efforts of extremists to recruit followers from the most vulnerable elements of our society. Although we have had some success in countering such schemes, there have also been notable failures - some involving children.

9.8 Around five hundred British citizens have departed the UK to fight for the Islamic State. We expect that the majority of these individuals will attempt to return.

9.9 The tactics of terrorists are also evolving. Monolithic attacks utilising explosives and - potentially - chemical, biological and radiological weapons remain a priority threat. However, cruder 'marauding' attacks are now also a distinct possibility.

<sup>11</sup> CONTEST: *The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorist* (2011) HM Government. The Stationary Office, London.

- 9.10 Whilst the police, Security Services (MI5, MI6 and GCHQ) and their partners in wider government have all performed outstanding work, it is our judgement that scope remains to enhance our counterterrorism efforts.
- 9.11 However, we must also have the humility to recognise that in certain areas – notably the Pursue element of our activities – we are at the limit of the forms of action we can take if we wish to preserve a free and open society.
- 9.12 As a result, the improvements that we will implement in this review, as you will see further, will focus primarily on the Prevent, Protect and Prepare strands.
- 9.13 The recent *Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 Act (CTSA 2015)* puts Prevent on a statutory footing. From July 2015, key public bodies have been obliged to “have due regard, in the exercise of its functions, to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism”. Given the vulnerability of children and young people – as well as various marginalised groups – to extremist narratives, we will:
- ensure that as part of their new duties under the *CTSA 2015*, local authorities, as well as the Department for Education working through the offices of Regional Schools Commissioners, enhance efforts to counter the radicalisation of school-aged children
  - resource the Ministry of Justice to take new steps as part of their *CTSA 2015* obligations to prevent the radicalisation of serving prisoners
  - support collaborative work between local authorities, schools, higher education institutions and the police to block efforts by extremist groups to entice individuals – particularly children and young people – to travel abroad to conflict zones.
- 9.14 There is also a need to enhance our Protect and Prepare capabilities. The UK has always had a tradition of an unarmed police force. However, the changing nature of the threat we face means that there is now a requirement to increase the number of firearms officers available for contingency operations. There is also a pressing need to enhance the security of elements of the defence estate and critical national infrastructure.
- 9.15 In our judgement, the Ministry of Defence Police (MDP) are best placed to partly fulfil this requirement. Given the MDP’s status as an armed civilian police force with a national jurisdiction, and its well established role in counterterrorism and community-based intelligence gathering, we feel that additional investment in the force would represent good value for money. As a result, we will expand the MDP from 2,700 to 3,500 officers.
- 9.16 As this review has already stated, we do not foresee that members of the Armed Forces would be deployed on the streets of the UK in an armed role in anything but the most extreme circumstances. However, we will make contingencies to, in emergencies, utilise military personnel to ‘back-fill’ the role of firearms officers – particularly those engaged in facilities protection work – in order to free officers up for a more mobile role.

9.17 We will, unfortunately, not be able to avoid further cuts to the budget of the Home Office police force. However, the element of its funding that is dedicated to counterterrorism work will be protected.

### **Conflict Prevention and Mitigation**

9.18 As was the case in the last SDSR, managing the type of conflict and instability that can give rise to threats to the UK and its interests will be a major focus of our efforts. Today, extremist groups in countries ranging from Nigeria to Pakistan thrive as a result of poor local government, insecurity and poverty. It is in our interest to engage with these issues early and at source.

9.19 The UK's efforts in this field will build upon our previous approach outlined in 2011's *Building Stability Overseas* Strategy document.<sup>12</sup> However, in light of recent experience, we have moved core decision making from the Department for International Development (DfID), Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and MoD to the UK's National Security Council (NSC). Funding has also been centralised, with the new Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) replacing the previous Conflict Pool.

9.20 The Stabilisation Unit, an NSC-controlled, CSSF-funded agency supporting cross-departmental efforts to promote security and stability overseas, will remain central to our strategy.

9.21 Tightly focused stability operations will continue to be supported by our wider developmental assistance, poverty-reduction and humanitarian relief efforts, led primarily by the DfID. We will continue to spend 0.7 per cent of our GDP in this field.

9.22 However, despite recent changes to the way in which our conflict prevention and mitigation efforts are led, further modifications to our approach in this area are now necessary. Specifically, we will:

- increase funding for the CSSF in line with inflation until 2020/21
- mandate and resource the Stabilisation Unit to embark on a new programme of cooperation via the Civilian Stabilisation Unit to draw on the knowledge and experience of the UK's academic community
- place an increased focus on supporting the anti-corruption efforts of foreign governments
- enhance our defence engagement efforts to train the security forces of states suffering from instability.

### **Cyber Security**

9.23 As with traditional terrorism, cyber-attack represents a 'Tier One' threat to the UK. Cyber-attacks on British businesses increased by forty per cent between 2013 and 2014. The economic cost of this is substantial, with five of the six largest companies in the country acknowledging

<sup>12</sup> *Building Stability Overseas* (2011) Published jointly by the Department for International Development, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Ministry of Defence. The Stationary Office, London.

having been attacked, and the average cost of a major cyber-attack on a large business having doubled between 2014 and 2015 to £1.46m.

9.24 Whilst the threat to life may be less direct than that of terrorism, it must be remembered that numerous elements of our critical infrastructure are dependent upon computers that routinely take potentially life and death actions: air traffic control systems, emergency services coordination and machinery dealing with hazardous industrial processes are just three high-profile examples.

9.25 There is also a risk to life that could arise were a state or non-state actor able to infiltrate or disable the systems supporting our national defence and security efforts. Even something as simple as corrupting a military logistics database could result in chaos on a battlefield.

9.26 As part of the last SDSR, the UK established the National Cyber Security Programme (NCSP). Its core objectives, as enunciated in the 2011 UK Cyber Security Strategy Document<sup>13</sup>, are:

- tackling cybercrime and making the UK one of the most secure places in the world to do business online
- making the UK more resilient to cyber-attack and better able to protect its interest in cyberspace
- the UK helping to shape an open, vibrant and secure cyberspace that can be used safely and supports open societies

- the UK having the cyber-knowledge and capabilities it needs.

9.27 This effort has been supported to date by a total funding allocation of £860m. Around half of this is allocated to GCHQ, with the remainder divided between a number of military and civilian agencies and programmes. These include the MoD's Joint Cyber Units, the National Crime Agency's National Cyber Crime Unit (NCCU), and numerous training and awareness schemes aimed at both businesses and the general public, including 10 Steps to Cyber Security, Cyber Essentials and Cyber Streetwise.

9.28 There has also been substantial progress in efforts to build the skills base we need to engage with the cyber threat.

9.29 We can be broadly satisfied with the progress that has been made in the last five years. However, the UK cannot afford to be complacent. As a result, we will:

- commit £1bn to fund the NCSP over the next five years
- enhance our focus on defending against cyber-attacks from other states: Russia in particular has demonstrated advanced capabilities in this area, and its doctrine of 'hybrid warfare' means that such strikes represent a key offensive option in both times of tension and of war
- broaden our offensive cyberwarfare capabilities: the possession of a credible high-end cyber-attack potential will both not only provide additional options for policymakers, but also act as a deterrent.

<sup>13</sup> *The UK Cyber Security Strategy* (2011) Cabinet Office. The Stationary Office, London.



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# Alliances & Partnerships



10.1 Whilst the defence of the UK will always ultimately centre upon our own security priorities, it is also true that Britain exists at the heart of a network of global alliances and institutions that have helped advance peace and prosperity for some seven decades. Many of our key strategic partnerships date back even further. As the world grows more complex and the opportunities and threats it contains become more diverse, collaboration will only grow more essential.

10.2 We have identified the six key priorities for international engagement in order to advance our future security as:

- sustaining and enhancing NATO as the West’s pre-eminent inter-governmental security alliance
- perpetuating and deepening our security and defence relationship with the US
- building on our existing bilateral security and defence links with France
- securing a sustainable future for an outward-facing EU designed to facilitate the physical, economic and social security of its citizens
- engaging with and encouraging reform at the United Nations in order to secure its future relevance
- utilising our network of relationships that are sustained via the Commonwealth to enhance our collaboration with existing allies and to recruit new partners.

## NATO

10.3 The conclusion of NATO’s combat role in Afghanistan and Russia’s aggression in Ukraine has resulted in NATO pivoting back toward its original purpose of directly defending the territory of its member states. However, a simple return to a Cold War stance is not an option, as wider security issues abound in relation to terrorism, piracy and the challenge of failed states on the NATO periphery.

10.4 As a result, we will focus on supporting the alliance in working towards being able to engage with a broad spectrum of threats simultaneously.

10.5 Our response to the Russian threat to Eastern Europe will be based upon the Readiness Action Plan agreed to during the NATO Wales Summit in September 2014. These alliance efforts fall under two headings – ‘Assurance Measures’ and ‘Adaption Measures’.

10.6 Assurance Measures include:

- the sustaining of an enlarged fighter aircraft presence in the Baltic States
- an enhanced rotational presence of NATO ground forces in Eastern Europe
- larger and more frequent training exercises between NATO partners
- new surveillance measures to provide early warning of a potential threat.

The UK will play a full role in all of these efforts. Additionally, we will press for the commencement of a comprehensive NATO public information programme to counter the output of Russia’s state propaganda.

10.7 Adaption Measures include:

- creating a 5,000 strong Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) designed to be deployable within a few days
- enhancing the size of the overall NATO Response Force (NRF) to 40,000 personnel
- establishing and sustaining six forward NATO Force Integration Units (NFIU) in the Baltic States, Poland, Romania and Bulgaria in order to support the deployment of high-readiness forces
- prepositioning equipment and supplies in Eastern Europe for use by high-readiness forces in a crisis.

Again, the UK will play a full role in these initiatives, and will lead the VJTF in 2017.

10.8 The UK will provide material and political support to NATO's efforts in Eastern Europe. But there are other challenges which the alliance must confront. As a result, we will also work with our allies to:

- support the government of Afghanistan in building the necessary authority and influence, particularly in the context of providing continued assistance to the Afghan National Security Forces we helped train
- combine resources and coordinate strategy in the fight against terrorist groups, particularly the Islamic State
- promote and resource efforts to further enhance collaborative NATO activities in the field of cyberwarfare

- ensure that NATO sustains its counter-piracy and counterterrorism operations in the Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean
- prepare NATO to undertake expeditionary intervention and stabilisation operations beyond its core area of responsibility when circumstances demand.

10.9 In addition to frontline threats, NATO also faces internal challenges. Chief amongst these is the need for member states to spend an adequate amount on defence. The UK has pledged to spend the NATO target of two per cent of its GDP on its military, and we will continue to press alliance members to follow our lead.

10.10 It is also crucial that NATO remains an outward facing alliance. With this in mind, we will continue to provide support to aspirant members whose priorities and values reflect our own.

**The United States**

10.11 The US will remain our principle ally at both the bilateral level, and as a partner in NATO and fellow member of the UN Security Council. Our unique relationship has assisted in both the preservation and advancement of freedom and prosperity throughout the world, and has endured through some of the darkest chapters of human history.

10.12 As part of our commitment to this relationship, we will, at the military level, continue to cooperate with the US in ensuring our armed forces have the ability to operate together wherever necessary, and coordinate US and UK responses to crises wherever they arise.

- 10.13 Our intelligence sharing efforts under the UKUSA Agreement (an arrangement also including Canada, New Zealand and Australia, known as ‘Five Eyes’) will also be perpetuated in order to ensure that the UK has access to timely intelligence from the best sources available.
- 10.14 Diplomatically, we will continue to work together both bilaterally and in coordination within multilateral institutions in order to advance our shared priorities with regards to:
- counterterrorism
  - conflict prevention
  - institution building in fragile states
  - nuclear non-proliferation
  - fighting organised crime
- 10.15 Our most unique area of collaboration with the US is with regards to our nuclear deterrent. The 1958 Mutual Defence Agreement, an arrangement that was renewed and updated in 2014, allows for the transfer of key nuclear weapons technology and material between the US and UK. This will be crucial given our plans to update our nuclear strike force.
- 10.16 France represents the second NATO and Security Council partner with which the UK will deepen its bilateral defence and security cooperation with in the coming years. This relationship is also crucial as it represents an alliance between both the dominant military powers of the EU and the only two member states which possess nuclear weapons.
- 10.17 The Lancaster House Treaties, signed between the UK and France in 2010, marked the further deepening of a security relationship that dates back more than a century. The provisions of the Defence & Security Co-operation Treaty element of the agreement include pledges to enhance collaboration between the armed forces of our two countries, notably via equipment sharing and the formation of a Combined Joint Expeditionary Force. There is also a supporting treaty on mutual collaboration regarding nuclear weapons sustainment. Both documents are supported by agreements on industrial and armament cooperation.
- 10.18 Whilst still very much a work in progress, the utility of joint operations between the armed forces of the UK and France have been proven in Libya and Mali, where each force provided complimentary capabilities that neither nation could have supplied alone. The emerging threats of the Islamic State and a revanchist Russia will require further initiatives to be incorporated into our collaboration, including additional efforts to combine our resources when working towards common goals.

## France

## The European Union

- 10.16 France represents the second NATO and Security Council partner with which the UK will deepen its bilateral defence and security cooperation with in the coming years. This relationship is also crucial as it represents an alliance between both the dominant military powers of the EU and the only two member states which possess nuclear weapons.
- 10.19 The EU is a unique body which represents a pioneering effort of supranational governance. The financial crisis of 2008 and this year’s influx of refugees has led to the organisation having to face deep challenges. However, even in the face of such trials, it still remains an institution to which nations and their populations aspire. We must never forget that people on the streets of Kiev gave their lives to protect their country’s European future.

10.20 It is our intention to remain a leading member of a reformed EU. For all of its flaws, its role as an institution to promote European economic integration and collaboration is irreplaceable. From a security perspective, it has proven invaluable in the process of helping the states of Central and Eastern Europe that were either Soviet-occupied, or part of the USSR itself, move on from that trauma. As we have witnessed in Ukraine, this process is incomplete. The EU also continues to have a vital role to play in supporting the former states of Yugoslavia in their post-war recovery and reconciliation efforts.

10.21 Although it is our intention that NATO will remain the core ‘hard’ security actor in Europe, there will continue to be niche areas in which the EU can lead military operations. More broadly, however, it will be wider, ‘non-kinetic’ security issues that the EU will focus upon. With this in mind, our key priorities with regards to the EU in the coming years will be to:

- support the organisation’s continued expansion in circumstances where candidate states meet the required criteria
- work to secure agreement between the EU and US with regards to the signing of a Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) that promotes economic prosperity whilst preserving social safeguards
- support the creation of a European Energy Union as part of efforts to manage climate change and reduce dependency on Russian gas and oil supplies

- take measures to ensure the EU External Action Service places a particular emphasis on promoting international religious freedom and other human rights, ending sexual violence in conflict, conflict prevention and countering terrorism
- support, in the wake of the Mediterranean refugee crisis, the enlargement of the mission of the EUNAVFOR MED operation (also known as Operation SOPHIA)
- provide additional resources to support the Radicalisation Awareness Network, first set up by the European Commission in 2011, as part of our ‘Prevent’ strand of counterterrorism work
- develop the concept of a joint expeditionary border control force to support member states experiencing large-scale population movements.

### **The United Nations**

10.22 Much like the EU, the UN represents a flawed but vital institution. Moreover, it enjoys a unique level of international legitimacy. Few doubt that reform will be required in order for the UN to retain relevance in the long term, and it is impossible to avoid the fact that elements of the existing structure are open to abuse. But the nature of current arrangements means that any changes will require a level of consent that will prove difficult in the extreme to acquire.

10.23 As a result, we will continue to utilise the key position our membership of the UN Security Council gives us on the world stage, and support the UN’s wider humanitarian and scientific work. As a compliment to this, we will focus our reform efforts in three core areas:

- build international consensus in favour of the ‘Responsibility to Protect’ (R2P) norm that sees states as having a duty to protect their peoples from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity
- make recommendations that strengthen the UN’s human rights machinery and International Criminal Court, and push for the implementation of international laws, conventions and standards
- support further reforms of the UN system that involves rationalisation, streamlining of work, better coordination between agencies and more equitable allocation of UN costs among member states.

**The Commonwealth**

10.24 A major initiative that will emanate from this review will be a new push to expand the role of the Commonwealth in our security efforts. We have long seen the organisation as a forum for promoting democracy, human rights, good governance and the rule of law, as well as the values of freedom, fairness and responsibility. But the latent potential both it and the networks it supports hold, to perform a wider role in international security efforts, has largely been ignored.

10.25 We will move towards rectifying this by:

- ensuring the Commonwealth can engage effectively with other international organisations, such as the G20, UN, World Bank and IMF, and regional associations, such as CARICOM and the Pacific Islands Forum
- building on the Commonwealth’s influence and geographical reach to create a Commonwealth Security Forum (CSF)
- using the CSF to facilitate bilateral private diplomatic and military meetings, provide effective defence capacity-building opportunities, allow for joint training and exercises, enhance conflict prevention measures, and open up business-to-government trade opportunities
- strengthening the Five Powers Defence Agreement (FPDA) that brings together the UK, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia and Singapore on matters of security in Southeast Asia
- using the FPDA as a model to not only recruit other Commonwealth members into the existing arrangements, but also to set up additional multilateral regional security-related linkages between Commonwealth member states.



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# ■ Conclusion ■



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- 11.1 Although containing many noticeable departures from SDSR 2010 and its accompanying NSS, this review must be taken in the wider historical context in order to gain proper perspective. Our pledge to sustain defence spending (as historically defined) at two per cent of GDP may seem immoderate - particularly given the cash increase we have projected - but UK NATO-declared military expenditure was 2.7 per cent of GDP at the time of the last SDSR.
- 11.2 In the same way, the decision to provide the UK with an ability to sustain two substantial operations simultaneously could be interpreted as radical, but the 1998 Strategic Defence Review also envisaged a military that would be capable of maintaining two separate brigade-level deployments for up to six months - and that was on top of what was then a major security effort in Northern Ireland.<sup>14</sup> Our addition of 9,000 personnel to the Army will still see it remain over ten per cent smaller than it was prior to SDSR 2010. The Royal Navy will gain no new major surface ships under our plan, and the majority of the increase in the RAF's combat strength will result from better utilising equipment we have already purchased.
- 11.3 What we have therefore presented here is a plan that will not result in a radical militarisation of Britain - although some will no doubt seek to portray it as such - but a rebalancing that will see us take the most positive elements of the last SDSR and adapt them to better suit the world as it is today.
- 11.4 The stance we have taken to the non-military aspects of our defence is similarly realistic but robust. Funding will rise with inflation, but will otherwise be constrained. Although new initiatives will be required to deal with emerging threats, the era of ever broadening anti-terrorist powers is over. But at the same time, we will address clear areas of deficiency, with the increase in the number of armed police officers being a key development.
- 11.5 Similarly, our alliances and partnerships will seek to capitalise upon what has already been established. We will build on success, but we will not shy away (or run away) from challenges in the hope of finding perfection where none exists.
- 11.6 All security and defence policy ultimately represents a balance between the threats to be faced and the resources that can be practically deployed to counter them. Quantifying both of these factors requires the utilisation of a mix of absolute empirical truths and judgements based upon subjective interpretations of the world. However, we are confident that this review represents a sound foundation upon which the UK can build its approach to the challenges it faces over the next five years and beyond.

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<sup>14</sup> *Strategic Defence Review: Modern Forces for the Modern World (1998)* Ministry of Defence. The Stationary Office, London.



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