

# Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy: Call for Evidence

Submission by Defence UK, PO Box 819, Portsmouth PO1 9FF

## Introduction

Defence UK is an independent pressure group that campaigns for a strong and well-resourced Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force to ensure the security of the United Kingdom, her sovereign territories, trade and commerce, and to protect her citizens wherever they may be. We also call for a greater commitment by the UK Government to the nation's defence industries, and to non-military services such as the Merchant Navy, Coastguard, Border Control and Homeland Security that are essential to the defence of the realm.

Defence UK ([www.defenceuk.org](http://www.defenceuk.org)) was formed in 2007 as the UK National Defence Association (UKNDA) and became Defence UK in 2019. The Patrons of Defence UK are Rt Hon The Lord Campbell of Pittenweem, Field Marshal The Lord Guthrie and Admiral The Lord West of Spithead. We enjoy the support of a wide range of serving and retired military personnel as well as the wider Armed Forces community, families and others with an interest and concern for Britain's defence and security.

The defence element of the Government's Integrated Review of Defence, Security and Foreign Affairs must not be simply another cost-cutting exercise. Defence must be financed on the principle of what is needed. Over the last three decades, the defence budget has been insufficient to maintain our Armed Forces at the required level and in consequence the UK's military capabilities, equipment and manning levels are far below what is needed.

The General Election Manifesto of the Conservative Party stated unequivocally: "The Security of our Nation comes First." Defence UK naturally agrees with this statement, and the case for greater investment in defence that we have laid out, in our responses to the questions posed in the Integrated Review consultation, represents what we believe should underlie the Government's attitude to the defence of the realm.

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Our answers to the questions posed by the Government are as follows:

Q 1

**What are the key opportunities, challenges, threats and vulnerabilities facing the UK now? (Submissions focusing on rapidly evolving areas such as science, technology, data, cyber, and space are particularly welcome.)**

There is a growing threat from China and its spreading tentacles of influence through Iran, Argentina, and even NATO ally Turkey. Then, of course, there is Russia. Yes, they have massive cyber capability, which must be countered, but they also deploy large and effective conventional military forces which must be faced off with similar hardware. Deterrence means having the capability and the readiness to use it. History teaches that weakness and lack of resolve attracts aggression.

The threat to electricity supplies and critical infrastructure is often seen in terms of the risk of cyber attack but in fact there remains a serious threat from physical attack, which might be the easiest way for Russia to neutralise the UK. It is not just energy assets that are vulnerable. Any RN ship or submarine in dock being re-fitted or in harbour would be a sitting target. This includes those Ballistic Missile submarines that are not at sea. It also includes GCHQ and many other high-value targets.

Britain has a comprehensive suite of electronic warfare systems, including cyber awareness, but there is a weakness in homeland defence systems against nations that have a strong conventional deterrence armoury. Cyber has covered new ground in its ability to disrupt civil society and the vulnerabilities are indeed huge. These must be countered but this is a civil defence issue as much as a military one. The Home Office, responsible for domestic civil order, should therefore pay most of that bill.

It is a fallacious argument, if not militarily illiterate, to consider surrendering hard military capabilities (e.g. tanks, F35, personnel) to fund cyber warfare, for which an increase in the Defence budget will be necessary. We are about to deploy our Carrier Strike Group whose support programmes of T26 frigates and F35B aircraft are, it is suggested, about to be decimated. Meanwhile, Australia, which has a more robust approach to national and regional security, is rightly building up its maritime and amphibious forces. South Korea is to build aircraft carriers and Japan is converting its largest helicopter carriers to carry F35Bs. The 2018 Dunne Report proposed a doubling of UK Defence R&D from the current 1.2% of the MOD budget to 2.4%. In addition, there is a skills shortage: a shortfall in engineers and other graduate and postgraduate level disciplines, and of technician level people, which will need to be addressed.

Brexit will free the UK from having to compromise unduly with EU requirements in our dealings with the other 91% of the world's population. OneWeb's headquarters are in Britain, and as one of the controlling bodies will allow the UK Government to bring much of the production here from Florida, significantly enhancing our hi-tech base. Together with development of the Space Hub Sutherland (SHS) on the A'Mhoine peninsula in Scotland, the UK space industry is set for a major boost, which will keep this country in the front rank of the world's hi-tech nations. OneWeb will eventually provide 5G coverage worldwide.

Question 2

**What are the key global and domestic trends affecting UK international policy and national security out to 2030, and how should the government prioritise its efforts in response to these?**

When it comes to global trends and threats that will affect the UK, an eastward shift in the centre of commercial gravity is the overriding one. For business that means a move to greater cooperation with our trading partners in the Asia-Pacific region, and for the military, an increased focus on facing down the threats there. The major danger is of course from China (whose navy is now acknowledged by the Pentagon to outstrip the US navy), but with Russia and North Korea also posing significant challenges in the region. If we wish to deter aggression, then we must be overt in our display of capability. As important as they are, that will not be achieved with a room full of 'cyber warriors'! We must have military assets in the region, and ones that impress. In countering Chinese expansionism, the required display of raw power can only come from naval forces, working in conjunction with our allies (in this case primarily Australia, the USA and Japan).

Closer to home, as a member of NATO we have a responsibility to support the Baltic States in defending themselves from covert Russian incursions, backed by the threat of something more aggressive. To this end it is important that we retain the ability to field forces in Northern Europe and the Baltic alongside our NATO allies there. Again, deterrence requires an overt show of capability, thus a further cut in the British Army, the Royal Air Force or the Royal Navy (especially the Royal Marines) will only attract further Russian aggression.

The Middle East cannot be ignored because Iran continues to threaten closure of the Strait of Hormuz and is building the ability to close or restrict movement through the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait, at the southern end of the Red Sea. Both of those choke points are very important to the free flow of UK trade. Again, it is largely naval forces that will be required to counter this effect. Our energy security depends on this. The perpetual threat to our gas supplies in the Gulf needs to be addressed by exploiting more of our domestic resources.

There are also continuing problems of instability in the Mediterranean region. This is largely a problem for Southern Europe but some of that upheaval will inevitably reach these shores, not least from the flow of illegal immigrants across the Mediterranean and overland through Western Europe to the English Channel.

The question of Spain's claim on Gibraltar looms large, due to Brexit. The EU 26 are unlikely to back us in maintaining the British connection with the Rock. In fact, they may openly work in support of Spain, their fellow EU member. The UK Government will have to be hard-headed in its resolve to rebuff any Spanish claim (as they will with the Argentine claim for the Falkland Islands, an ambition already receiving some Chinese support). There is a military dimension to this, as repeated Spanish incursions into Gibraltar's territorial waters are unacceptable and should be more effectively deterred.

Question 3

**What are the key steps the UK should take to maximise its resilience to natural hazards and malicious threats? How can we build a whole of society approach to tackle these challenges?**

Natural, hazardous, events will continue to occur, and they will have to be handled largely by the emergency services, backed up by the military, for which they will need manpower. To that end, the emergency reaction services that exist at every level of government should be overhauled and bolstered. We recommend the re-forming of the UK's Civil Defence Corps (which was stood down in 1969). The lower level of this emergency reaction network is manned largely by volunteers, as was the old Civil Defence Corps, and it is this that should be developed, drawing in established voluntary sector bodies such as the Red Cross and St John Ambulance to work alongside the re-established CD organisation. The Government and local authorities must spread the message of contingency planning throughout society, it should be taught in schools and universities - and there will be no shortage of eager volunteers. (The successful deployment of Red Cross Community Reserve to meet a variety of local emergency situations is a shining example of volunteering in action.)

With regard to cyber and military threats to critical infrastructure, public education has a key role to play. It would be advisable for households, if possible, to keep a supply of batteries, candles, non-perishable food in cans and packets and other key items, sufficient to sustain them for a week or two at least. Particular attention should be paid to the families of service personnel and emergency services, to avoid the risk that these key personnel might be distracted from their duties by the need to keep their families safe.

#### Question 4

**What are the most effective ways for the UK to build alliances and soft power?**

Alliances are built upon mutual interest, and conflict occurs when those interests separate. Therefore, it is important when dealing with international actors to emphasise the common ground and minimise the differences. Soft power, or influence, comes from a friendly interface between governments and an integration of business interests. Hopefully, 'Global Britain' will be able to enhance this effect. To that end, overseas aid being offered in line with foreign policy can be very effective and for that reason the combining of the FCO with DfID is a positive move which we warmly welcome.

Military alliances often go hand in hand with commercial interaction. The joining together of protective forces gives business interests confidence that their investments in the allied country will be safe. However, participation in a military alliance requires each country to be able to help in the defence of the other. For that purpose, hard military assets are required which should be deployed and seen. To that end, the army must continually be engaged in training and support roles around the world. Those 'boots on the ground' are a show of the UK's com-

mitment to the wellbeing and stability of friendly (and sometimes beleaguered) allied countries.

The most overt show of support for an alliance, outside continental Europe, comes from the deployment of naval forces. As an example, HMS Queen Elizabeth will, next year, deploy on a world cruise and carry with her a mixed air group of British and American aircraft. Britain and America have a history of helping each other out with aircraft carriers. A part of that cruise will be through the China Sea and she will be escorted by vessels from friendly (alliance) countries. This is the way to bond an alliance. Interdependence supporting common interests.

An alliance requires the countries involved to show that they can support it or it has no meaning and everything else that grows from it will wither. Strong military forces, with an overt footprint, are required to demonstrate that support.

Both NATO and the EU suffer from the same weakness, namely that they contain over two dozen countries and to get such a large number of countries with differing cultures and interests to make big decisions, quickly, is difficult if not impossible. In time of war it would be essential to assemble smaller groups of nations with similar outlook and needs ('coalitions of the willing') to prosecute operations. Indeed, it would be best to assemble these informal coalitions before a crisis occurs. There is no need to obtain the consent of Bulgaria, Turkey and Greece to deal with a crisis in the Baltic. Similarly, Latvia, Norway and Poland will have little interest in a crisis in the Eastern Mediterranean. It may be impolitic to publicise these coalitions but they can and should be assembled discreetly.

#### Question 5

**What changes are needed to Defence so that it can underpin the UK's security and respond to the challenges and opportunities we face? (Submissions focusing on the changing character of warfare, broader concepts of deterrence, technological advantage and the role of the Armed Forces in building national resilience are particularly welcome.)**

We should recognise that defence policy is an exercise in risk management and risk is a function of probability and consequence. It should not be just a question of how likely it is that any particular crisis might occur, but also its consequence. The chances of a conflict with Russia might (or might not) be low, but the consequences are undoubtedly very high indeed.

The MOD, with the Treasury, require a robust strategy to interface with industry, so that procurement can be processed more efficiently. This strategy needs to support and expand our industrial base, especially the hi-tech areas. R&D desperately needs to be expanded. Some might say that warfare is changing but it could be suggested that it is broadening. Electronic systems, which include cyber, are becoming more sophisticated but they are still only an extension of the man with a gun.

Deterrence requires you to impress on a possible opponent that you can do him unacceptable harm. That can be commercial as well as physical but usually it will involve both. For the physical, conventional forces that can reach out and touch him will be required. He must know that you have them in sufficient number and are prepared to use them. Technological advantage is of course important and to stay ahead of the other side R&D is very important but for all that, we still come back to the man with the gun. Deterrence goes from that man, right up the ladder, through the different stages of military capability, of which cyber is only one and a supportive one at that, to the submarine lurking in the depths of the ocean, with enough power to turn your opponent to glass. Deterrence says 'don't mess with me or you'll get hurt' - and for that you need a well-equipped and capable military.

Warfare hasn't changed. Strategy, tactics and equipment have. So, a word of caution about relying too much on the latest technological advances. As important as they are, history is littered with examples of the latest advances which promised a lot but in practice delivered little and fell far short of what was expected of them. The musket took a long time to replace the long bow, and that was primarily for the ease of training a man to use it, rather than its effectiveness. The thought that cyber can replace kinetic systems is a myth. It is just another weapon system, another arrow in the quiver, but you still need the bow.

#### Question 6

**How should the UK change its governance of international policy and national security in order to seize future opportunities and meet future challenges? (Submissions focusing on the engagement of an increasing range of stakeholders while maintaining clear responsibility, accountability, and speed of action are particularly welcome.)**

For the best part of the last two decades a de facto 'Ten Year Rule' has applied. The unspoken assumption has been that there is no need to prepare for conflict against a 'peer opponent' and that has justified several cases where gaps have been allowed to develop in the UK's defences - anti-submarine patrol planes being one glaring example. The developing situation in the Far East, with China's illegal expansion into the South China Sea and its stated intent that the Taiwan 'situation' will not be allowed to continue for another generation, makes it seem distinctly possible that armed conflict could break out in that region. If it does, then a window of opportunity opens up for Russia to pursue any aggressive intentions it may have in Europe. While state-on-state conflict is not inevitable, it is by no means out of the question either, and the risk needs to be taken seriously.

For reasons both of environmental sustainability and energy security, many countries including the UK are rightly trying to wean themselves away from reliance on fossil fuels. Others are talking about it but actually doing nothing, and some, like China, are going in the opposite direction. Indeed, China is reported to be opening a new coal-fired power station every two weeks, and now produces twice as much CO<sub>2</sub> as the US, the EU and Japan combined. Britain is in the forefront of the green revolution and should fully capitalise on her leading role. Climate change activists

are pushing against an open door in this country, and the Government should be clearer about this.

The end of the Cold War and the breakup of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s resulted in the UK cashing in on what has been described as a 'peace dividend', when expenditure on Defence could be cut back and the money saved ploughed into social welfare programmes. That this three decades long period of relative ease is now coming to an end does not seem to have been realised by a large portion of the public, and especially by a young generation with little perception of the security considerations that went before. The previous public understanding of the critical role of the military has been eroded by years of apparent peace. Wars fought in 'far off countries' such as Iraq and Afghanistan have been seen by the majority of people purely in terms of these conflicts' effect on individual servicemen and women. Casualties have become the public face of our military thanks to scenes of flag-draped coffins at Royal Wootton Bassett, disabled and disfigured veterans and Help4Heroes collecting tins in our high streets. Seldom is the contribution of our military to the security of the UK homeland registered by the media or general public. So, again, there is a role for public education, to make clear the vital importance of Britain's Armed Forces in the preservation of our freedom and way of life in these islands.

#### Question 7

**What lessons can we learn from the UK's international delivery over the past 5 years? Which are the key successes we should look to develop and build on, and where could we learn from things that didn't go well?**

However reluctant we may be to embark on peace-keeping type operations such as those on-going on Mali, we really have no choice as the unacceptable alternative may be to allow countries to descend into chaos and anarchy, fuelling the refugee crisis and creating a safe space for both terrorism and organised crime. It is essential, however, to have a proper understanding of the internal politics of the countries in which we are intervening. This clearly was not the case in either Iraq and Afghanistan, where protracted military operations and avoidable casualties were the consequence of lack of strategy. Nor was this the case with British and French intervention in Libya, which turned out to be tragically counter-productive, bringing about the disintegration of that state rather than merely 'regime change'. In contrast, the contribution which the UK made to controlling the Ebola outbreak in Sierra Leone is something to be proud of, and the military and FCO (incorporating DfID) need to continue to cooperate in such activities.

The taking of a British-flagged tanker by the Iranians could have been foreseen, and was by some, even to the point that the then Defence Minister tried to convene a COBR meeting to discuss it and authorise the bolstering of our forces in the region; but Brexit dominated all political decision-making at that point and consequently nobody at Cabinet level was interested, until the inevitable happened.

The UK largely pulled back from the Middle East after the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, neither of which can be considered a success. However, whether you think of it like that or not depends on what you believe the reason for embarking on these operations was in the first place, because the reasons for staying there seemed to change as we got drawn deeper in ('mission creep'). The lesson from these conflicts is to decide what you intend to achieve before you embark on a military campaign and, once that has been achieved, get out.

Also, if we are to embark on another military campaign, a message that has come through from both of these campaigns, and those that preceded them, is that political restrictions on the Armed Forces which tie their hands, make them less effective and so generally reduce the chances of success. As an example, when British troops were trying to hold things together in Basra, they were being targeted by local militias organised by an Iranian general. The SAS had a plan to assassinate this general but were stopped by the then Foreign Secretary, so he continued murdering allied personnel until the Americans eventually stopped him with a drone strike. Also, when we put a gun into the hands of our soldiers, and in a moment of stress they pull the trigger at an inappropriate moment, they should not be prosecuted. While it is right to ensure that our troops follow correct rules of engagement, and international law, they should not feel the additional pressure of criminal prosecution.

## Question 8

### **How should UK systems and capabilities be reformed to improve the development and delivery of national strategy?**

One serious weakness is air defence, particularly anti-missile defence. Over the ten-year period in question it would probably be impractical to build any more Type 45 destroyers but those we do have need to be upgraded to maximise their potential. They only have 48 missile tubes, about half of what many contemporary destroyers and cruisers possess but there is room for extra missiles to be carried, not just more Aster-30s but also anti-ship, anti-submarine and land-attack cruise missiles. These ships are currently 'one-trick ponies', fitted for air defence but not a lot else save for the embarked anti-submarine helicopter. They should also be fitted with the Cooperative Engagement Capability (CEC). In addition, the Type 31 frigates as currently proposed are barely worth calling frigates, £250m simply does not build a first-rate warship in this day and age. They are, of course, licence-built Iver Huitfelt-class vessels and the three vessels in the Danish Navy have a much heavier armament than the Type 31s. If the number were to be increased from five to six, and the ships fitted with Aster-30 missiles as well as other types, and CEC, they could be teamed up with the Type 45s and the two ships together (one Type 45 plus one Type 31) would have, between them, an armament to match almost any Russian or Chinese warship.

Land-based air defence units also should be considered. The RAF is now concentrated on a perilously small number of undefended air bases and we should invest

in proper airbase defences such as we had in the Cold War (and such as Poland is investing in now). Longer-range surface-to-air missiles need also to be seriously considered, such as a land-based version of the Aster-30, or Patriot, or similar.

The Government should fully support the rejuvenation of British industry, with an emphasis on green technologies, and to this end develop a full industrial strategy. Tax returns emanating from government investment should be researched so that the net cost of those investments can be properly judged, as laid out in the Treasury Green Book. A new 'Buy British' policy, especially for government procurement, will generate internal turnover, the lifeblood of a successful economy.

Hi-tech industries, which includes defence, space and green energy generation, should also be properly supported. When looking at energy, nuclear power should not be ignored as it still has an important role to play in a balanced portfolio of energy-generating assets. Foreign policy, which includes overseas aid, backed by overtly strong defence forces and a vibrant home industry, which allows us to interface with our allies and friends, but at the same time allows the freedom to act independently is, or should be, the aim. Anything that detracts from that should be expunged.

## **Last Word**

We would do well to heed the words of Defence UK Vice-President, and pre-eminent historian, Professor Andrew Roberts, when he said: "The only thing that is predictable in warfare is its unpredictability. As soon as experts, general staffs and politicians decide what they believe will be the nature of the next war in order to prepare for it properly, an entirely different kind of conflict develops. The witness of history is so uniform in this regard that it needs to become a general law of warfare. The war we expect and plan for is almost never the one we're called upon to fight. For all we know today, drones and satellites and cyber might be the Zeppelins or crossbows of the future, wildly overstated as war-winning weapons."

Patron of Defence UK, Admiral The Lord West of Spithead, agreed with this when he recently observed that whilst our leading politicians recite the rubric that their greatest responsibility is the defence and security of the nation and its people worldwide, their actions belie this; some of them seem to imagine that future wars will be fought solely in cyberspace and that there is no need for conventional military forces. He considers this to be dangerous nonsense, and we agree.