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Defence Committee

Re-thinking defence to meet new threats

Tenth Report of Session 2014–15

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

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The Defence Committee

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Summary

The world is more dangerous and unstable than at any time since the end of the Cold War. Is the UK ready to respond?

For the first time in twenty years, an advanced military state has challenged the borders of European nations, and the security challenges in the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia have increased dramatically in scale and complexity. Russia has annexed Crimea, and Russian-backed separatists have taken much of Eastern Ukraine. DAESH (or ISIL) have seized the second largest city in Iraq, and now control areas of a territory larger than the United Kingdom. The Libyan government has retreated to a ship off the coast. The President of Yemen has fled from his capital. Boko Haram controls swathes of Northern Nigeria. South Sudan—the newest country in the world—is in Civil War. Over 10,000 civilians were casualties in Afghanistan last year. Serious instability persists in Darfur, Somalia, the Central African Republic, and Pakistan. Three million people have been displaced and two hundred thousand killed in Syria.

The UK cannot afford to ignore these challenges and retreat to isolation. Global peace and security is of immense importance to the world, and to the UK itself. The UK occupies a key leadership role in international organisations, and can leverage both its formidable military heritage, and its network of alliances. It still has the capacity to play a deeply constructive role in preserving and restoring security.

But the UK's current Defence Assumptions are not sufficient for this changed environment. The 2010 National Security Strategy had assumed that "Cold War" capacities for state-on-state conflict were no longer needed, and that instead, the military would focus on 'fragile states', lightly-armed insurgents and terrorists, through enduring stabilisation operations (which were assumed to be relatively infrequent). The SDSR was primarily designed in the light of the UK's presence in Afghanistan (a mission, in which the UK deployed fewer than 10,000 troops as part of a 100,000 strong, US-dominated coalition). Future Force 2020 planned to deal with one problem at a time by deploying 6,600 troops on a decade-long enduring stabilisation operation in a single country. And even US doctrine, envisaged sustaining a deployment in only two countries.

Now there is a requirement to support stability in a dozen different theatres simultaneously, and to engage with both unconventional and conventional threats. The first task for the UK is to ensure that it is able to engage as part of a broad coalition or alliance in tackling these threats (which are beyond the scope of any one country). In particular, the UK must build on its strong alliance with the United States, and ensure that European NATO allies are operating at maximum effectiveness. It must use its leadership position in NATO to ensure that NATO has the full spectrum of conventional forces, trained, exercised, and psychologically prepared to defend the European order against a conventional threat. The UK's commitment to spend 2% of GDP on Defence, will be an important mark of seriousness to our US allies, and an important symbolic marker for other NATO countries.

Second, the UK must rebuild its conventional capacities eroded since the Cold War. The requirements are many, including Maritime Surveillance, Nuclear, Biological, Chemical and Radiological warfare training, developing a Ballistic Missile Defence capability, an enhanced Navy and Air Force, a comprehensive carrier strike capability, and full manoeuvre warfare capacity. This will involve demonstrating a conventional and nuclear capacity and determination to deter any further threats to the European order.

Third, the UK must develop new capabilities to respond to the threat from 'next-generation' or asymmetric (also described as ambiguous) warfare—in particular threats from cyber attack, information operations, and the use of Special Forces to support subversion.

Fourth, the UK must simultaneously develop the capacity to respond to an expanding series of challenges outside Europe—terrorism, brutal authoritarian regimes (killing their own citizens), extremist groups holding large territories as pseudo-states, state collapse, civil war, and state fragility. It needs to do so concurrently, and with limited resources.

This number of concurrent challenges will make the type of highly resource-intensive stabilisation operations seen in Iraq and Afghanistan increasingly unlikely. Instead, the UK may need to rebuild the capacity to repeat the successes of operations such as Bosnia and Sierra Leone, while also developing the new force structures and capacities to deal with the kinds of situations that we face in Libya or Ukraine.

All this will, in turn, require a much deeper understanding of alien political contexts, effective defence relationships with host governments, and the knowledge and confidence to respond rapidly and precisely to prevent an escalation. The new Force Structure will have to reflect this in education and training, the relationship with other government departments, a new appetite for uncertainty and risk, and the use of conventional military power not as an alternative to but as a support for political solutions.

None of this will be easy. But the peace will not be achieved through isolation or inaction. The prudent use of military force has been a central contributor to the peace in Europe for seventy years, both in a deterrent capacity and playing a constructive role in countries from Bosnia to Mali. The UK can contribute significantly to restoring stability.

But the current National Security Strategy is no longer adequate for this changed world, nor is the Future Force structure. It will be necessary to continue to commit to 2% of GDP to enhance the NATO alliance and retain US involvement in Europe. But this will not be sufficient. The UK will need to make tough choices within limited resources, about what to do, and perhaps equally importantly—what not to do. This will require immense discipline and imagination. But it is vital to rethink the fundamental assumptions of our Defence planning, if we are to help arrest the descent into chaos, which threatens to spread from the Western Mediterranean to the Black Sea.

1 The Existing Assumptions and Force Structure

Introduction

Underlying Assumptions of UK Defence policy 1998–2014

1. The 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review was the first full defence review undertaken by the UK Government since 1998. But the fundamental assumption remained unaltered between the two reviews. This was that—with the end of the “Cold War”—there was unlikely to be state-on-state conflict again and that “Cold War” capacities, relevant for fighting an advanced military state, were no longer a high priority.

2. The second set of assumptions was that the greatest risk in the early 21st century was expected to come from crises in ‘fragile states’, that the adversaries would be lightly-armed insurgents or terrorists, and that these should be addressed through intensive, long-term stabilisation operations. The overall troop numbers required for stabilisation operations was considerable. But the UK contribution to such missions was expected to be relatively modest (less than 10% of the total troop numbers in interventions such as Iraq or Afghanistan). The unstated assumption was that such humanitarian or security crises would happen sufficiently infrequently for the UK and its allies to be able to tackle them in turn.

Context

3. The 2010 SDSR also emerged in the specific context of a financial crisis and significant cuts in public spending. Inherited defence spending plans were then considered “unaffordable” both for reducing the public sector deficit, and in terms of a large unfunded liability in the equipment programme, claimed to be in the 10s of billions of pounds,¹ although the Committee has been unable to substantiate a precise figure.² The SDSR also identified a “legacy of overstretch”, arguing that between 2006 and 2009, the UK had been deployed in both Afghanistan and Iraq at medium scale, in excess of the existing planning assumptions. The SDSR therefore said it would make:

[...] tough decisions which will result in some scaling back in the overall size of the Armed Forces and the reduction of some capabilities that are less critical to today’s requirements.³

4. The SDSR re-emphasised working in coalition with other countries (implicitly mainly the US). But it continued to assume that the UK’s most useful contribution to operations in coalition or partnership would still be to “broadly” retain a full spectrum of capabilities. In

1 [The Strategic Defence and Security Review](#) Cm 7984, October 2010, page 15, para 2.4;

2 The Strategic Defence and Security Review and the National Security Strategy, Sixth Report, Session 2010-12, HC 761 paragraph 204; and Ninth Special Report, Session 2010-12, HC 1639, paragraph 44.

3 [The Strategic Defence and Security Review](#) Cm 7984, October 2010, page 16, para 2.8

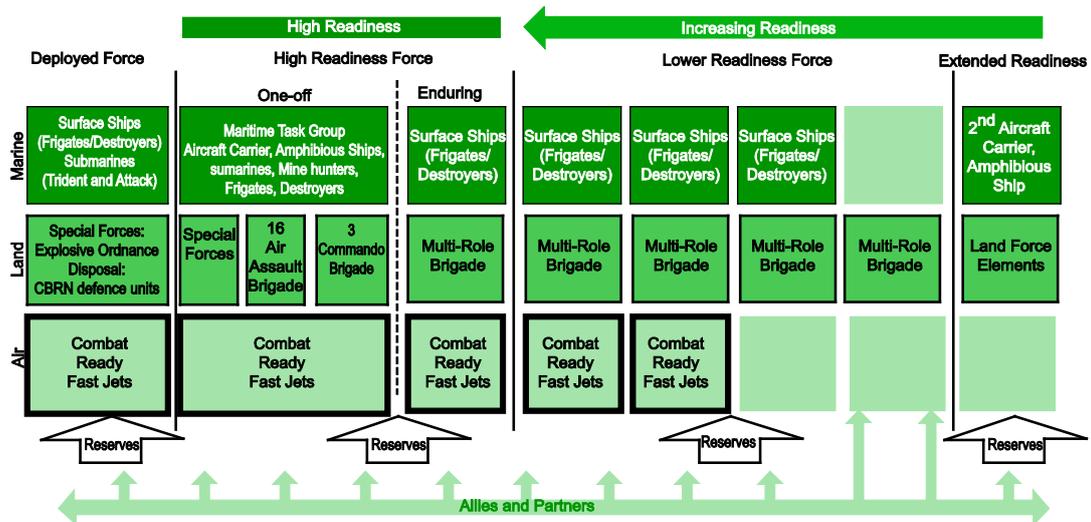
other words, despite the spending reduction, the UK would not choose to develop niche skills, or specialise in particular capabilities, while leaving other tasks to allies. Instead, it would continue to try to maintain every capability of an advanced military power—with three full Services, employing everything from tanks, and the latest fighter jets, to submarines, nuclear weapons, and air-craft carriers. It also assumed that, rather than focusing on a particular region (Europe and the Middle East for example), the UK would continue to engage globally from the Pacific to sub-Saharan Africa. In recognition of resource constraints, however, the SDSR emphasised that there would be a greater focus on “tackling risks before they escalate, and on exerting UK influence, as part of a better coordinated overall national security response”.⁴

5. On the basis of such arguments, the 2010 SDSR set out new Defence Planning Assumptions, envisaging that the UK Armed Forces should be structured to be able to conduct:

- a) An enduring stabilisation operation at around brigade level (up to 6,500 personnel) with maritime and air support as required, while also conducting:
 - One non-enduring complex intervention (up to 2,000 personnel), and
 - One non-enduring simple intervention (up to 1,000 personnel);
- b) Or alternatively:
 - Three non-enduring operations if we were not already engaged in an enduring operation;
- c) Or:
 - For a limited time, and with sufficient warning, committing all [UK] effort to a one-off intervention of up to three brigades, with maritime and air support (around 30,000 personnel, two thirds of the force deployed to Iraq in 2003).⁵

4 [The Strategic Defence and Security Review](#) Cm 7984, October 2010, page 17, para 2.10

5 [ibid](#) page 19, para 2.15

Figure 1: Future Force 2020 structure

Source: The Strategic Defence and Security Review, Cm 7948, October 2010, page 20

6. The Army component of the Future Force 2020 structure outlined in the 2010 SDSR was to comprise 16 Air Assault Brigades plus five Multi-role Brigades. The notion of the Enduring Stabilisation Operation was central to the design of the Force Structure. It provided for pre-deployment training, deployment, post-deployment, and recovery cycles to sustain a single Brigade of 6,600 for a period of many years in a theatre, akin to Afghanistan.

7. Two new aircraft carriers were procured to support 'intervention operations'—providing a 'sovereign' platform far from the UK.⁶ Meanwhile the Royal Navy now operates with a surface fleet of 19 frigates and destroyers. The number of these vessels was, it seems, kept relatively low, again because it was assumed that, since the enemy was likely to be lightly armed insurgents, there was no need to calculate for attrition or loss of these vessels. The Royal Navy also retained some of its traditional assets, including the Trident force, the seven Astute-class nuclear submarines, a maritime helicopter force, resupply and refuelling vessels, mine counter-measure vessels, maritime ISTAR capabilities, an oceanographic survey capability, an ice patrol ship, and maritime strategic transport. Curiously, however, despite the new emphasis on 'small wars' against lightly armed insurgents, the UK decided not to invest in smaller 'corvette-type' vessels for lighter coastal operations, or to maximise helicopter landing-strips in its new frigate design.

8. Since 2010, six Type 45 destroyers have been introduced into service, with HMS Daring being the first. There are now thirteen Type 23 frigates, the first of which was commissioned in 1991. The Type 23s are due to be replaced by the Type 26 Global Combat Ship in two variants, anti-submarine warfare and general purpose vessels. The procurement of the Type 26 moved from the assessment to the demonstration phase on 1 April 2015.

6 The SDSR 2010 said that this would be based around a single new operational carrier with the second planned to be kept at extended readiness.

9. The Maritime Patrol Aircraft programme, Nimrod, was cancelled, and a successor was not procured between 2010 and 2015, presumably again, because the types of operations envisaged in the 2010 SDSR put less emphasis on maritime surveillance. Air capabilities were to include the fast jet fleet (of Typhoon and Joint Strike Fighter), strategic and tactical airlift (C-17, A400M, Airbus A330 and tanker aircraft), Chinook helicopters and strategic surveillance and intelligence platforms. The increasing focus on the counter-insurgency (COIN) environment had given an increasing prominence to Remotely Piloted Air Systems (RPAS) in Afghanistan. But the COIN environment did not lead the Royal Air Force, to adopt slower, (and cheaper) air-platforms, such as the US Marine propeller planes, for supporting troops in a counter-insurgency context.

10. The RAF currently has seven combat squadrons—four Typhoon squadrons and three Tornado squadrons. The RAF has a total of 125 Typhoons and 102 Tornados. However, these numbers do not indicate numbers of aircraft that are currently deployable. The Typhoons are in the process of being converted to a multi-role aircraft from the current air to air capability. As a result, for air to ground combat, such as current operations in Iraq, the RAF is reliant on the Tornado squadrons. By 2020, the RAF will have six Typhoon squadrons and one F-35 squadron with the Tornado fleet no longer in service.

11. The 2010 SDSR was required to implement an 8% cut in the defence budget; it has been estimated that this reduced the conventional capabilities of all three UK services by 20–30%.⁷

Developments since the 2010 SDSR in Future Force 2020

12. The 2010 SDSR foresaw an army of 94,000, a reduction of 7,000 in Regular Army personnel. However, the SDSR was then followed by two studies: a three-month exercise to close the remaining post-SDSR gap in the Department's funding; and a study into the future role and structure of the UK Reserve Forces. The three-month exercise resulted in the trained strength of the Regular Army being reduced by a further 12,000 to 82,000. The Reserves review, which was not linked to the three-month exercise, announced that the Reserves would be 30,000 with a training margin of 8,000⁸ Reserves.⁹

13. The components of the Army 2020 structure outlined in 2012 were to be:

A Reaction Force (RF): a higher readiness force of three armoured infantry brigades undertaking short notice contingency tasks and providing the Army's conventional deterrence.¹⁰ It would be trained and equipped to undertake the full spectrum of intervention tasks and would provide the initial basis for any future enduring operation.

7 Brigadier (Retired) Ben Barry OBE, Senior Fellow Land Warfare, International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), [Future Army 2020](#), Ninth Report of Session 2013–14, Ev 36

8 The 8,000 would be additional personnel in training to sustain the overall number of 30,000 trained Reservists.

9 [HC Deb, 19 January 2012, col 939W](#)

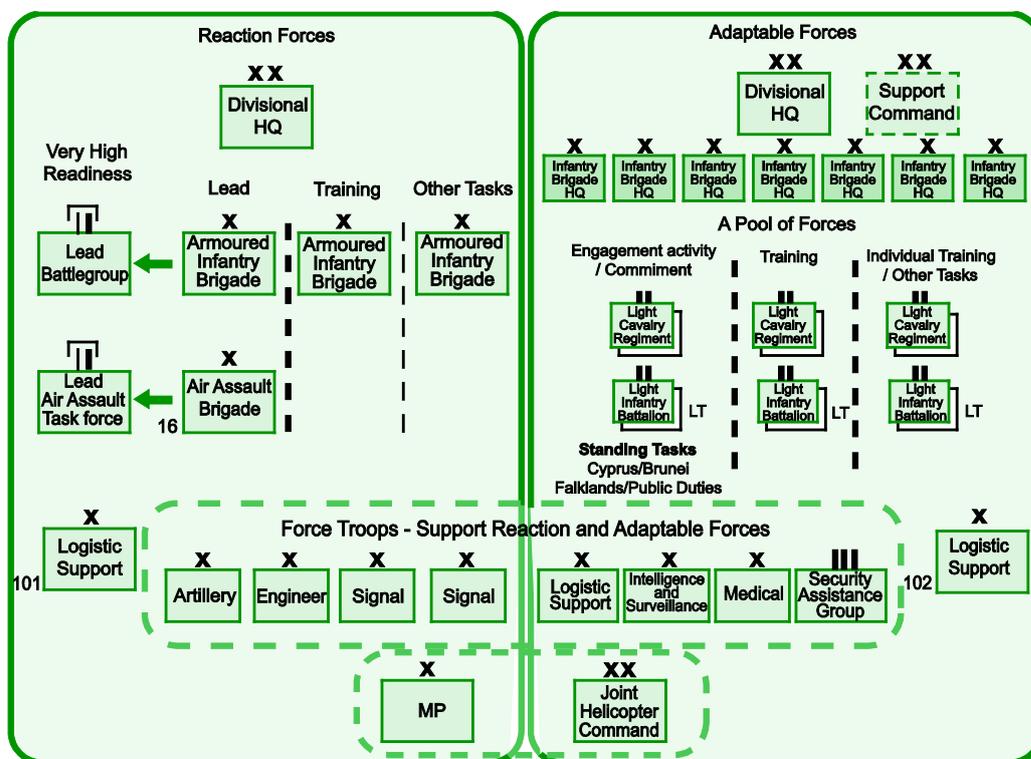
10 The Reaction Force will be designed to deploy rapidly to respond to events anywhere in the world and is designed to deter adversaries from acting against UK interests.

An Adaptable Force (AF) comprising a pool of Regular and Reserve forces that would consist of seven infantry brigades and a logistics brigade. This would be used for a wide range of tasks, including providing headquarters and units for enduring operations, acting as the primary source of capability for Defence Engagement at home and overseas,¹¹ as well as meeting standing tasks in the UK and abroad (e.g. Cyprus, Falkland Islands, Brunei and Public Duties).

Force Troops¹² would brigade Combat Support, Combat Service Support and Command Support in 'functional' formations, under a 2* HQ, to maximise efficiency and sustainability.¹³

The Army 2020 structure is illustrated below:¹⁴

Figure 2: The Army 2020 Structure



Source: British Army, *Modernising to face an unpredictable future: Transforming the British Army*, July 2012, p4

14. In June 2011, a review chaired by Lord Levene of Portsoken recommended¹⁵ the establishment of Joint Forces Command (JFC), see Box below:

11 Overseas defence engagement is the use of defence assets and activities short of combat operations building to achieve influence. In the UK it is the Armed Forces' contribution to homeland resilience, for example supporting civilian emergency organisations in times of crisis.

12 Force Troop Brigades would provide a broad range of Regular and Reserve capabilities. These would include engineer, artillery and medical support from a centralised pool as well as a coordination and control function for key tasks such as overseas capacity building.

13 [The Strategic Defence and Security Review and the National Security Strategy](#), Sixth Report of Session 2010–12, Ev w3

14 [British Army, Modernising to face an unpredictable future: Transforming the British Army, July 2012, p 4](#)

Table 1: Levene Report recommendation on the creation of Joint Forces Command**Key recommendation 7**

Some military capabilities have to be integrated on a 'joint' basis to effectively enable operations. Such enabling capabilities need more effective proponentcy within Defence. To that end, a **Joint Forces Command** should be created to manage and deliver specific capabilities and to take the lead on joint warfare development, drawing on lessons and experimentation to advise on how the Armed Forces should conduct joint operations in the future. Certain joint and Defence capabilities should continue to be delivered on a 'lead Service' basis.

- (a) The Joint Forces Command should be led by a military 4 star, and should have responsibility for commanding and generating the joint capabilities allocated to it and setting the framework for joint enablers that sit in the single Services.
- (b) As a result, a number of military organisations currently managed by the Central TLB should pass to the Joint Forces Command.
- (c) The Permanent Joint Headquarters should sit within the Joint Forces Command, but report for operational purposes direct to the CDS.
- (d) In implementing the Joint Forces Command, the Department should systematically review joint or potentially joint capabilities and functions across the Services against the criteria set out below to determine which might be rationalised, the merit of further joint organisations, which should transfer to the Joint Forces Command and which should transfer to a lead Service.

Source: *Levene Report June 2011*¹⁶

15. The JFC was established in April 2012. The MoD told us that the establishment of the JFC had brought greater coherence to the delivery of joint enablers such as C4ISR, cyber and medical capabilities.¹⁷ The aim of JFC is described by the MoD as:

making military operations successful by making sure joint capabilities, like medical services, training and education, intelligence, and cyber-operations, are efficiently managed and supported.¹⁸

16. Our inquiry into Future Force 2020 builds on our earlier inquiry into Future Army 2020.¹⁹ We took oral evidence from: Lieutenant General (retired) Sir Graeme Lamb; Mark Urban, BBC correspondent and military historian; Professor Paul Cornish, Exeter University; Peter Roberts, senior fellow at the Royal United Services Institute; Professor Philip Sabin, King's College, London; Admiral Sir George Zambellas, First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff; General Sir Nicholas Carter, Chief of the General Staff; Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford, Chief of the Air Staff; General Sir Richard Barrons, Joint Forces Commander; Peter Watkins, Director General Security Policy, Ministry of Defence; Air Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier, Deputy Chief of Defence Staff, Military Capability ; and Rt Hon Michael Fallon MP, Secretary of State for Defence. We would like to thank all these

15 [Defence Reform – an independent report into the structure and management of the MoD, June 2011](#)

16 [Defence Reform – an independent report into the structure and management of the MoD, June 2011](#)

17 [MoD written evidence, FUT0006](#)

18 [MoD website](#)

19 Defence Committee, [Future Army 2020](#) Ninth Report of session 2013–14, HC 576

witnesses who gave oral evidence to us. We would also like to thank all those who provided written evidence to our inquiry.

2 Old Assumptions, New World

Role of the Armed Forces

17. From the 1998 Strategic Defence review to the 2010 NSS and SDSR the UK was focused on “the end of the Cold War”. The Foreword to the NSS stated that the UK was “more secure, in the sense that we do not currently face, as we have so often in our past, a conventional threat of attack on our territory by a hostile power”.²⁰ Instead, the National Security Strategy insisted “twenty years after the Berlin Wall came down, the equipment we have available is still too rooted in a Cold War mind-set”. The NSS categorised “a conventional attack by a state on another NATO or EU member to which the UK would have to respond” as a tier three (or lowest) priority threat.

18. The 2010 Security and Defence review, which was produced on the basis of this NSS, “set”, according to General Sir Peter Wall (until November 2014 Chief of the General Staff), “a lower level of ambition for UK involvement in global security than ever before.”²¹ Specifically, the SDSR did not plan for deployment against a well-resourced conventional state, nor envisage a return to large scale European standing or enduring commitments. Nor did it emphasise the conventional deterrent role of the Armed Forces, (the ability to deter potential adversaries through the demonstration of capability and the willingness to use force should the need arise).

19. Instead, UK Strategy focused on different threats, defined in the opening section of the 2010 National Security Strategy (“the security context”) as terrorism, instability and “lawless regions”, nuclear proliferation, organised crime, and natural hazards. The security section of the NSS concluded that “our most urgent task is to return our nation’s finances to a sustainable footing.”

20. On the basis of this assessment in the NSS, the SDSR categorised future military operations as either:

- Standing commitments: permanent operations essential to UK security or to support key UK global interests;
- Intervention operations: short-term, high-impact military deployments, such as the deployment to Sierra Leone in 2000; and
- Stabilisation operations, longer-term mainly land-based operations to stabilise and resolve conflict situations primarily in support of reconstruction and development

20 [A Strong Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The National Security Strategy](#), Cm 7593

21 Article: The Telegraph, [Don't play politics with defence](#), 10 March 2015

and normally in partnership with others, such as the UK contribution to coalition operations in Afghanistan.²²

21. ‘Intervention’ and ‘stabilisation’ operations were generally intended to respond to crises in ‘fragile states’. They could be ‘humanitarian’ in nature (Bosnia, Sierra Leone and Kosovo), or respond to threats of terrorism (Afghanistan) or concerns for the regional order (Iraq). Because, these missions were often ‘expeditionary’, (taking place far from sovereign territory), aircraft carriers offered a useful platform for ‘intervention operations’. The primary force, however, in both ‘intervention’ and ‘stabilisation’ was anticipated to be infantry, who, after the initial intervention (or ‘regime change’) worked with the aim of ending a conflict, and restoring governance. Their tasks extended from securing population areas, to demobilising militias, training local security forces, and supporting local government.

22. The overall troop numbers and time commitment required for stabilisation operations was believed to be very considerable. US doctrine argued that achieving stability, or defeating an insurgency, required up to 20 soldiers for every 1000 members of the civilian population,²³ and the task was expected to take over a decade. Such operations in Iraq and Afghanistan absorbed a very high proportion of UK capacity, but the UK still provided the minority of the overall coalition deployment (with the majority coming from the United States). The Future Force 2020 concept was designed to be able to sustain only 6,600 British troops in a single ‘enduring stabilisation operation’—between 5 and 7% of the total numbers in recent interventions (in Iraq, there were 130,000 international troops; in Afghanistan over 100,000). The Future Force structure put a strong emphasis on the brigade, as opposed to the division or battle-group, as the central unit of future enduring operations.

23. If, as in Iraq and Afghanistan, the international troops faced an insurgency, they were to be reinforced by remotely piloted air-systems, precision-bombing, surveillance and Special Forces. But their adversaries were likely to be ‘technologically-inferior or lightly armed’: they would not have the capability of sinking coalition ships, or shooting down coalition jets.

24. Even the US—which dwarfed by a factor of five any other coalition contributor—could not be expected to have the resources to conduct more than two operations of this scale and intensity, at any one time, and in fact, in practice, it strained to sustain even two. The unstated assumption was, therefore, that ‘interventions’ or ‘stabilisation’ operations would happen sufficiently infrequently, for the UK and its allies to tackle them in turn.

25. In line with these expectations, the US Defence budget which had amounted to 4.7% of GDP in 2010 fell to 3.8% in 2013. The UK Defence budget fell from 2.4% of GDP in 2010 to 2.2% in 2013. On the basis of current spending plans and growth assumptions, UK

22 [The Strategic Defence and Security Review](#) Cm 7984, October 2010, page 18

23 [A Historical Basis for Force Requirements in Counterinsurgency](#). Steven M Goode

spending is expected to fall to 1.7% of GDP by 2020–21.²⁴ The spending of other European countries had already fallen more steeply, so that by 2015, the reduced US Defence budget, accounted for 70% of the total NATO budget—with the other NATO countries, whose combined populations and economy were larger than the US, contributing only 30%.

26. All these planning assumptions, embedded in the National Security Strategy and the Strategic Defence and Security Review, have been challenged by the re-emergence of a conventional threat from Russia, and an ever-expanding list of fragile states, many dominated by terrorist-affiliates. In the words of General Sir Peter Wall:

The 2010 SDSR did envisage a reasonably benign security environment for this decade, once we had completed our combat role in Afghanistan. Alas, unpredicted events have cast a shadow on that expectation. Chaos across North Africa and the Middle East in the aftermath of the Arab Spring continues to cause some serious strategic and military dilemmas; so, too, the state-on-state confrontation in Europe initiated by Russia in the aftermath of the Sochi Olympics. Both are complex, long-term issues that pose considerable threats to UK interests. In an era of moral and physical disarmament the West has been caught napping.²⁵

The threat from Russia

27. For the first time, since the Second World War, a technologically advanced European power has expanded its own territory by force, rejecting international borders, and posing fundamental questions about NATO's ability to respond to Russian aggression, and to defend NATO member states.

28. As we have outlined in detail in our report *Towards the next Defence and Security Review: Part Two—NATO* Russia's new actions reflect Moscow's belief that NATO is a strategic adversary.²⁶ Russia has demonstrated the intent to push back, by force and subversion, what it perceives as Western interference in countries bordering Russia. It has demonstrated in Georgia, and through a cyber-attack on Estonia, a willingness to use violence to achieve its ends. And most markedly, in Crimea, a willingness to annex territory of another sovereign state, expand its own territory, and challenge the borders of Europe.

29. It does so with a Defence Budget that will be close to 100 Billion dollars for 2016,²⁷ a commitment to radically increase Defence Spending, an upgrade of its conventional nuclear capacity. It has also shown through the Zapad 2013 exercise the ability to mobilise

24 Professor Malcolm Chalmers, The Financial Context for 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review, RUSI Journal.

25 Article: The Telegraph, [Don't play politics with defence](#), 10 March 2015

26 Defence Committee Report: [Towards the next Defence and Security Review: Part Two—NATO](#) Third Report of session 2014-15, HC 358

27 IHS Pressroom, [Global Defence Budgets Overall to Rise for First Time in Five Years](#), 4 February 2014

over 150,000 troops at 72 hours' notice²⁸ and, in operations in Crimea, formidable command and control skills, and ability with asymmetric or ambiguous warfare.

30. The current conventional wisdom is that a Russian attack on a Baltic State would be a low probability, high-impact event. But this is predicated on NATO's willingness and ability to uphold its Article 5 commitments; and on the assumption that Russian actions would not be kept deliberately 'below the threshold' of Article 5. So far, at least, economic sanctions, and the collapse of the Russian economy, the oil price and the rouble does not appear to have weakened President Putin's resolve or popularity (which currently still stands at almost 90%).²⁹ Putin's particular combination of nationalism, sense of grievance at the collapse of the Soviet Union, paranoia about NATO intentions, authoritarian power, political skills, and flexible opportunism makes him a dangerous and unpredictable opponent.

31. This was acknowledged on 19 February, by Rt Hon Michael Fallon MP, the Secretary of State for Defence, who said that Russia represented a "real and present danger" to the Baltic States. He added that

You have tanks and armour rolling across the Ukrainian border and you have an Estonian border guard being captured and not yet still returned, [...] When you have jets being flown up the English Channel, when you have submarines in the North Sea, it looks to me like it's warming up.³⁰

28 [Dr Jamie Shea, Regent's Report 2014, Transatlantic Relations: a European perspective](#)

29 Forbes article, [Putin's approval ratings nearly 90%](#), 6 October 2014

30 BBC News UK, [Russia 'danger' to Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia – Fallon](#), 19 February 2015

3 Response to Russia—First Steps

32. As we argued in our report on *Towards the next Defence and Security Review: Part Two—NATO* this new threat required immediate reassurance measures, to reassure NATO allies, and reinforce our commitment to Article 5 protection of NATO allies. These included:

- Dramatic improvements to the existing NATO rapid reaction force;
- The pre-positioning of equipment in the Baltic States;
- A continuous presence of NATO troops on training and exercise in the Baltic;
- The re-establishment of large-scale military exercises;
- The establishment of headquarters structures at divisional and corps level focussing on Eastern Europe and the Baltics; and
- The re-establishment of a NATO standing reserve force along the lines of the Allied Command Europe Mobile Force—Land, involving all Member States.

33. The subsequent NATO summit in Wales accepted many of these proposals. We welcome in particular the commitments made at the NATO Summit for the UK to provide a battle group and brigade headquarters to the new Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF); to facilitate a NATO presence in the Baltic States; and to increase levels of exercising at scale and, in particular, the US and UK leadership in securing a NATO commitment to spend 2% of GDP on Defence—a key mark of seriousness in the face of Russian expansion.

34. But fully supporting, and enhancing such reassurance measures, requires more work. Russia, for example, can deploy 150,000 troops at 72 hours' notice. NATO on current planning would take 6 months. Creating the VJTF—able to deploy 5,500 troops at 48 hours' notice—will take until 2016.³¹ And even this will stretch the capacity of the framework nations. The UK would have to provide at any one time three battle-groups on varying stand-by times (to cover training and recovery), and restrict whether these battle-groups could be assigned to other operations. France has already indicated that it reserves the right to deploy the troops it has committed to the VJTF to other theatres should the need arise.

35. Although there is an aspiration to extend the scope of NATO exercises, they will still fall far short of the scale of the recent Russian exercises, deploying not 70,000 troops as Russia did in Zapad 2013,³² but a fraction of that number. Early indications suggest that the UK would contribute 1,000 troops to the next exercise.³³ By comparison in 1984, the UK

31 Article: NATO International, [NATO Foreign Ministers announce interim Spearhead Force](#), 2 December 2014

32 [Stephen Blank, The Jamestown Foundation, What do the Zapad 2013 exercises reveal?](#)

33 [HC Deb, 2 March 2015, col 781](#)

deployed 57,700 Service personnel to a single NATO exercise, Exercise Lionheart. Rebuilding the skills to conduct all-arms divisional, let alone corps-level exercises within NATO, after a 25 year gap, will require very substantial investment. Most serving NATO officers and soldiers have never participated in such an exercise.

Response to Russia—strengthening the alliance—and 2% of GDP

36. Responding to a Russian threat is, of course, a joint NATO-obligation, and not the sole responsibility of the UK. The UK has a GDP larger than Russia's but it is not necessary for the UK to attempt to match single-handedly all Russian capacity (despite its smaller economy, the Russian military currently has over a million people under arms, and a Defence Budget twice that of the United Kingdom).

37. It is realistic to expect the US to play a significant role (70% of total NATO defence expenditure is currently accounted for by the US). And it is generally assumed in attrition calculations that another nation—almost certainly the United States—would be able to compensate with its own forces for any losses to UK ships or planes.

38. But the US is increasingly asserting its responsibilities in Asia, and looking to European powers to lead on the Defence of Europe. Fragmentation, rivalries, lack of focus, and decades of underinvestment have left parts of NATO—although impressive on paper—much less than the sum of its parts.

39. One of the central tasks, therefore for the UK in responding to Russia—or indeed other threats—must be to ensure that it is able to sustain a close and constructive working relationship with coalition partners. And it must use this influence to ensure that NATO has the full spectrum of conventional forces, trained, exercised, and psychologically prepared to defend the European order against a threat such as that posed by Putin's Russia.

40. Future Force 2020 takes the existence of a robust alliance for granted, arguing that the UK would:

work more with allies and partners to share the burden of securing international stability and ensure that collective resources can go further.³⁴

41. Within Europe, the strongest potential partner for the UK remains France. The French operation in Mali appears to have been an impressive example of combining long-term country-knowledge and defence engagement with the rapid deployment of combat troops to defeat state collapse, and a terrorist-affiliate take-over. The UK should study this example closely, and see if there are lessons which could be applied for other zones of instability—for example in Northern Nigeria.

42. UK-French co-operation has been emphasised since the signing of the Lancaster House Treaties in 2010. There have been some set-backs, (the hope that French jets would be able

34 [The Strategic Defence and Security Review](#) Cm 7984, October 2010

to fly from British aircraft carriers has been blocked by the decision not to install catapults on the carriers, and France continues to request more generous UK support for operations in the Central Africa Republic, for example) but the CJEF concept has potential. As the MOD asserted:

“the UK-French Combined Joint Expeditionary Force introduces extra resilience around FF2020, broadening the military capabilities we can access through partnership in support of our requirements.”³⁵

43. The MoD noted that 2015 would see the start of the Combined Joint Expeditionary Force (CJEF) GRIFFIN series of exercises, building on the single Service exercises run with the French military in recent years.³⁶ These include a military strategic table top exercise; an operational planning exercise; and an operational and tactical level live exercise scheduled for April. This final exercise was expected “to provide full verification of concept by demonstrating the ability to plan, command and conduct a CJEF operation”.

44. Meanwhile, the strongest example of joint UK-French operations was the intervention in Libya in 2011. The experience suggests that the coordination and cooperation on the initial air campaign was impressive, and ultimately successful. But the interpretation of the UN resolution has strained relationships with China and Russia, and the joint effort did not seem able, or perhaps willing, to really invest in understanding, or stabilising Libya after the initial intervention stage. Libya—currently fragmented between two warring governments and dominated by militia groups—is a powerful symbol of the continuing challenges to intervention and coalition operations.

45. The most powerful ally of the United Kingdom, however, remains the United States and again, much Defence Planning is based on the assumption that the UK would generally operate in coalition with the US, and that the US valued and admired the British contribution to operations, and would compensate for UK capability gaps, or for any attrition of UK assets. Despite, the tensions between the US and UK in operations from Suez, through Vietnam to the Falklands War, the default assumption continues to be that the UK could rely on the US in any major operations.

46. General Sir Nicholas Carter, Chief of the General Staff told us:

I cannot remember a time in my career when our relationships with the Americans were closer.³⁷

47. Admiral Sir George Zambellas, First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff, argued that, given the difference in size between the US and UK military, the strength of the relationship was founded on the quality and credibility of UK forces:

In the complex, demanding domain of submarine and underwater, it is absolutely about how good you are, not that you have the same amount as

35 [MoD supplementary memorandum](#), Q 13 (further questions which Committee did not have time to ask)

36 [MoD supplementary memorandum](#), Q 261 (additional evidence)

37 [Q 196](#)

the Americans. That is why a statement of intent is signed between the Secretary of State for Defence and the Defence Secretary in the US for the carrier delivery ambition. It is about maintaining strategic value transatlantically, where we can, at the top end of business.³⁸

48. Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford, Chief of the Air Staff, told us that:

[...]The level of understanding of where we are has never been stronger and there are still some very niche capabilities that the British military brings to the fight [...]. I am in no doubt that the US military, at the very senior level, fully understands the quality of the British servicemen, regardless of service.³⁹

49. But recent comments by the United States suggest that there are in fact growing tensions within the alliance. The US has become increasingly concerned by a situation in which it now contributes 70% of NATO spending—creating a ‘moral hazard’ of other countries no longer investing because they rely on US support.

50. General Raymond Odierno, US Army Chief of Staff used a statement in March 2015 to try to encourage NATO allies to increase their commitment:

As we look to the threats around the world, we need to have multinational solutions. They are of concern to everyone, and we need everybody to help, assist and invest.⁴⁰

51. He went on to express his concerns about the impact of UK defence cuts on the levels of UK-US military cooperation.⁴¹ Robert Gates, former US Defence Secretary also warned that cuts in the UK Armed Forces were beginning to limit the country’s ability to be a major player on the world stage. He singled out the cuts to the Royal Navy as particularly damaging and told the BBC:

With the fairly substantial reductions in defence spending in Britain, what we’re finding is that it [the UK] won’t have full spectrum capabilities and the ability to be a full partner as they have been in the past.⁴²

52. It has also been reported in the press that President Obama has privately called on the Prime Minister to reaffirm his commitment to the 2% target.⁴³

53. The US has made it clear that a central plank of the NATO alliance, and its respect for the role of the UK in the alliance is in its commitment to 2% of GDP. Following the NATO Summit in Wales, the Prime Minister announced the UK’s commitment to spending 2% of

38 [Q 198](#)

39 [Q 197](#)

40 Article: [The Telegraph, US fears that Britain's defence cuts will diminish Army on world stage, 1 March 2015](#)

41 [Ibid](#)

42 [BBC interview](#), 16 January 2014

43 Article: The Telegraph, [Obama to Cameron: maintain UK defence spending or weaken NATO](#), 10 February 2015

its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on defence, with a fifth of the defence budget being spent on major new equipment.

The summit reached an important agreement on defence spending. One of the problems with NATO is that only a small number of countries have achieved the commitment to spend 2% of their GDP on defence. As a result, the share of spending by the largest country, the United States of America, continues remorselessly upwards and now accounts for around 70% of the total. That is not sustainable. The summit addressed that by agreeing the responsibility of those countries that have not achieved 2%. The conclusions were very clear about that. Through the Wales pledge, every NATO member spending less than 2% has now agreed to halt any decline in defence spending, to aim to increase it in real terms as GDP grows and to move towards 2% within a decade.⁴⁴

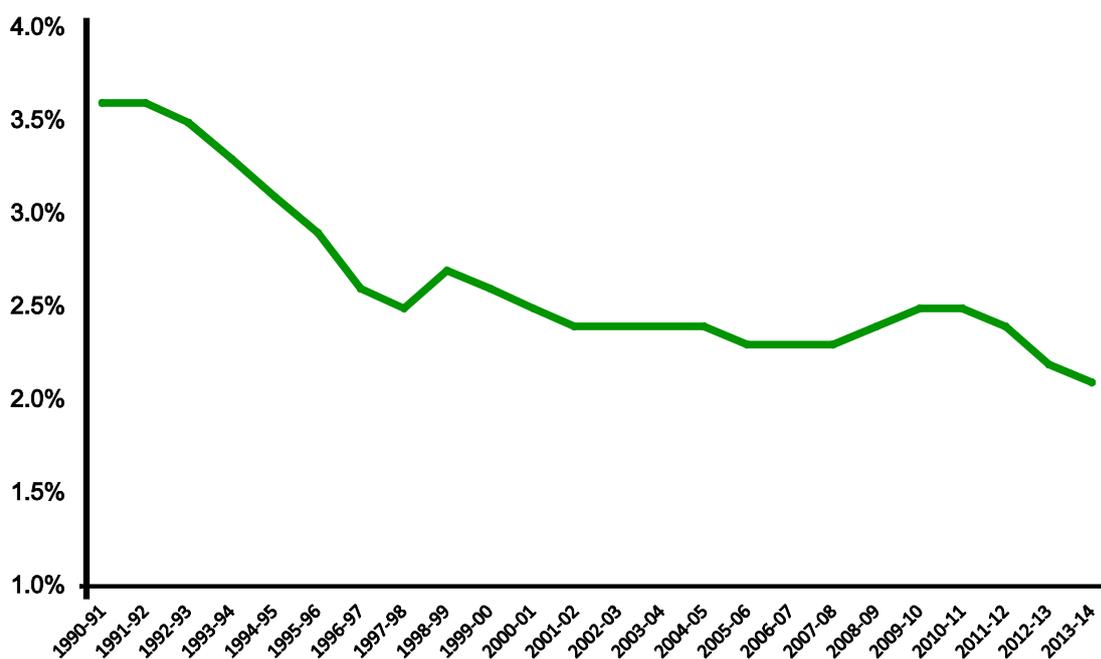
54. UK defence spending, including that on operations, has been above the target 2% of GDP for many years.⁴⁵ However, Mark Urban told us that to meet the 2% target over the next ten years would require a substantial increase in defence spending.⁴⁶ Professor Malcolm Chalmers, RUSI, has also concluded that, on current spending plans and growth projections, UK defence spending will fall below 2% of GDP in 2015–16:

[...] UK defence spending is set to fall below the NATO 2% target for the first time next financial year, to an estimated 1.88% of GDP in 2015–16. Existing Ministry of Defence (MoD) planning assumptions (for modest real-terms growth in its budget after 2015–16) would, in the context of projected GDP growth, see spending falling to around 1.7% of GDP by 2020–21.

44 [Prime Minister statement to House of Commons, 8 September 2014, col 654](#)

45 [Written evidence, Professor Paul Cornish](#)

46 [Q 20](#)

Figure 3: UK Defence spending as percentage of GDP, 1990–2014

Source: HM Treasury, PESA 2014, Table 4.2

55. Professor Chalmers speculated that, in the context of wider plans for further cuts in expenditure after 2015–16, even this could prove “over-optimistic”, suggesting that cuts of between 4–10% in real terms over five years could push defence spending down to between 1.5% and 1.6% of GDP in 2020–21.⁴⁷

56. Given the Prime Minister’s stated commitment to all NATO members meeting the defence spending target of 2% of GDP, we asked the Secretary of State whether the UK Government was going to continue to meet the target. He was equivocal in his answer telling us:

We are spending at the NATO target of 2% this year and we will go on spending 2% next year. That is the spending review period that takes us right up to the end of March 2016. I cannot forecast for you where the percentage will land beyond that.⁴⁸

57. Admiral Sir Anthony Dymock, former senior military attaché to the USA and UK Military Representative to NATO, has said that the UK’s relationship with the USA will be damaged if the UK fails to keep defence spending above 2% of GDP.⁴⁹ Sir Nigel Sheinwald, Ambassador to the United States up to January 2012, echoed this concern and called for the next Government to recommit to the 2% promise after the election.⁵⁰

47 Professor Malcolm Chalmers, [The Financial Context for the 2015 SDSR](#), RUSI journal

48 [Q 224](#)

49 Article: Daily Telegraph, [David Cameron ‘endangering special relationship with America’ by not protecting defence spending](#), 14 January 2015

50 [Ibid](#)

58. **The US has made it clear that it perceives the UK's commitment as the lynchpin of the broader NATO commitment to increase Defence Spending. And, therefore, if the UK were to reduce expenditure, it would undermine the alliance as a whole.**

59. **We are concerned that, should defence spending in the UK fall below the NATO target of 2% of GDP in 2016–17, the impact on the UK's credibility as a military ally would be extremely damaging, particularly in the eyes of the US and our European partners. It would damage UK leadership in NATO and Putin's Russia will be looking very carefully for signs of weakness in NATO.**

60. The committee congratulates the government on having led the commitment at the Wales Summit to pushing NATO expenditure above 2% of GDP. But as one of the major military powers in the alliance, it is also incumbent on the UK both for its own sake, and in order to encourage others, to invest in rebuilding its conventional military capacity.

Niche Capabilities

61. Reduced resources, and the existence of apparently reliable coalition partners, of course, raises the option of the UK choosing to specialise in a particular 'niche' set of capabilities, leaving other capabilities to other partners. Some of our witnesses implicitly conceded that the US relationship with the UK was no longer primarily based on a 'full-spectrum capability' and that instead, from the point of view of the Special Relationship, Defence Investment could be targeted on a narrower set of skills, less dependent, for example, on ships or planes.

62. General (retired) Sir Graeme Lamb quoted President Obama as saying that the special relationship with the Americans rests with the "at-sea deterrent, special forces and the relationship with GCHQ".⁵¹ Max Hastings has quoted Sir Michael Howard as emphasising the need for "spooks, geeks and thugs", suggesting an investment in intelligence services, cyber experts and special forces, in combating modern security threats.⁵²

63. Such views, however, directly challenge Future Force 2020, which is based on the assumption that the UK's most useful contribution to operations in coalition or partnership is to provide a full spectrum capability. The government's decision to retain an independent Navy, Air Force, and Army, the Trident nuclear missile system, to procure two aircraft carriers, and seven nuclear submarines, are all indications that a strategic decision has been made not to specialise in a niche capability. Instead, the UK's global posture, its relationship with the US and NATO, continues to be predicated on the assumption that the Government still wants a 'full-spectrum capability.' This report, therefore, works on the assumption that this remains the strategic goal of the government, and proposes the UK acquires the necessary capabilities to perform across all capabilities, rather than assuming that an ally such as the United States will 'fill the gap.'

51 [Q 23](#)

52 Article: [Mail Online, Why the liberals who defended traitors like Snowden and Assange should look at this photo and admit: We were deluded fools, 10 January 2015](#)

4 Rebuilding conventional capacity to deter an advanced military nation

Maritime surveillance

The recent appearance of Russian submarines in UK coastal waters, for example, has re-emphasised the UK gap in maritime surveillance capacity, outlined in our 2012 Report.⁵³ The Secretary of State explained that a plan had been put in place in 1996 for 21 Nimrod aircraft to be in operation by 2003 but that the incoming Government in 2010 had

found no aircraft and a budget that was some £800 million overspent. [...] It is nice to say that you are going to have 21 aircraft, but if you have not actually got them and cannot finance them, then it is not a strategy that is deliverable.⁵⁴

64. In its response to our Report, the Government clarified that it:

has accepted a capability gap and increased risk by deleting Nimrod and we assess that other assets used as part of a layered approach can reduce this risk to some degree, and it remains within tolerable level.⁵⁵

65. But as Peter Roberts has remarked this is a substantial capability gap since:

Maritime patrol aircraft are absolutely essential to provide permanent wide-area surveillance; greater use of hyperspectral intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance through the use of unmanned aerial platforms; and a dedicated weapon that allows navies to overcome problems of swarm tactics, which are increasingly being used by adversaries.⁵⁶

66. Maritime surveillance remains a crucial gap in the capabilities of the Armed Forces with extremely serious implications for the protection of other capabilities within the Armed Forces. Bridging this critical capability gap must be a very high priority for the next Strategic Defence and Security Review.

CBRN and BMD

67. Next, given that Russia retains large quantities of Chemical, Biological, and Radiological weapons, the UK and its allies should be required to rebuild their capacity in Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear training among all their conventional forces.

53 Article: [The Independent, MoD asks for American help in searching for Russian submarine near Scotland, 8 January 2015](#)

54 [Q 241](#)

55 Defence Committee, [Future Maritime Surveillance](#), Fifth Special Report of Session 2012–13, HC 827

56 [Q 70](#)

68. Such CBRN warfare training—which was standard for all conventional forces in the 1980s—has ceased to be so. Restoring it would involve not simply a change to training, but a change to the threat assessment and doctrine, underlying the training. (The SDSR was again focused on ‘chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear attack by terrorists;’. “An attack on the UK or its Overseas Territories by another state or proxy using chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear (CBRN) weapons” was identified only as a tier 2 risk to the country).⁵⁷

69. Russia has announced a program of heavy investment in its nuclear capability and its military doctrine provides for the use of tactical nuclear weapons. The UK should, therefore, also provide for ballistic missile defence. Current US plans for BMD, focus on continental Europe. The UK would need to decide whether and how to procure its own solution—and this has considerable resource implications.

Royal Navy

70. The 50 frigates and destroyers, which the Royal Navy possessed in 1990 were reduced to 23 by 2010, and have now been reduced to 19. The Secretary of State, however, emphasised that this was in line with the Future Force 2020 planning:

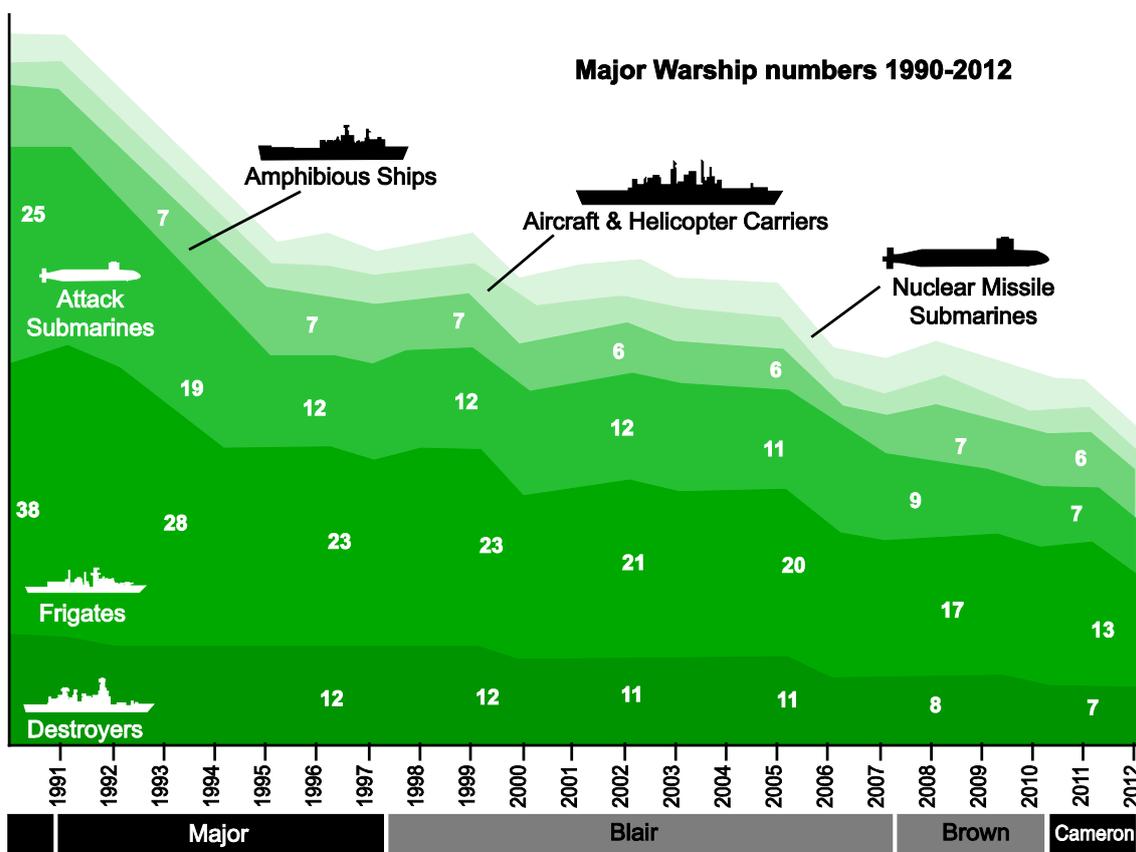
It is important to recognise that we are fulfilling our commitments. Of course, there is always more that you can do. [...] but we are fulfilling our basic commitments with the 19 frigates and destroyers that we have. And we have only just seen enter into service the last of the T-45s, HMS Duncan, which was a part of the NATO summit.⁵⁸

71. A table illustrating the reduction in major warship numbers since 1990 is provided below:⁵⁹

57 Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) defence units form part of the “land component” of the Deployed Force under Future Force 2020 and capabilities for CBRN detection, identification and monitoring will also form an element of Future Force 2020 for the RAF. [The Strategic Defence and Security Review](#) pages 21 and 26.

58 [Q 268](#)

59 Article: [Save the Royal Navy](#)

Figure 4: Major Warship numbers 1990–2012

72. The MOD has taken much comfort in the fact that although the total number had been reduced, the quality is much improved. In the words of Peter Watkins, Director General Security Policy:

I [...] remember the days of 42 destroyers and frigates. Indeed, we used to talk about 50. I think it is fair to say that some of them were pretty ancient. Many of them were unserviceable most of the time, so what we have moved to is a smaller, but much more capable and reliable fleet. We can be more sure that they are available if they are needed.

73. It was further assumed that they could defend themselves well against enemy attack. In Peter Watkins' words, the ships, in comparison to their predecessors "are also considerably better armed [...]. I think we can manage the risk".⁶⁰

74. The planning assumption appeared to be that none of these ships will be lost, and all will remain serviceable. In the words of the Secretary of State:

We are accepting that there is not a lot of redundancy. [...] the 19 are spread round the world, fulfilling their commitments.⁶¹

60 [Q 269](#)

61 [Q 269](#)

75. Lord Astor of Hever, the Defence Minister, has clarified:

In determining fleet sizes no specific provision is made for the possible loss of ships on war fighting operations. The Royal Navy has lost just four frigates and destroyers to enemy action in the last 50 years, all of which were during the Falklands War, and steps have been taken to learn lessons from these losses. Ship design, capability, training and doctrine all play a part in maximising operational effectiveness and help to ensure ship survivability.⁶²

76. This answer implies that the planning assumption is for 0% attrition. In other words, in the 19 strong frigate and destroyer fleet there is no spare capacity to meet unexpected demands or breakdowns or to cope with the loss of ships to hostile action. This partially reflects the fact that SDSR 2010 was conceived at a time when the expected enemies (insurgents or terrorists of an Afghan or Iraqi type) were not expected to have a navy, (and certainly not vessels capable of sinking Royal Naval ships).

77. As Lord West of Spithead, former First Sea Lord, however, has argued the MoD decision to reduce the size of the frigate and destroyer fleet should have factored in loss rates in complex war-fighting operations. This is particularly true, if the fleet was to act as a conventional deterrent to an advanced military state such as Russia.

78. We do not find the statement that no frigates and destroyers have been lost since the four lost in the Falklands War encouraging, since the Falklands War was the last conflict fought with another Navy. We do not believe that the previous vessels were as inferior as the MOD implies, or that the lessons-learned exercises or new armaments would be sufficient to guarantee security of the new generation of vessels against another conventional attack. Numbers matter, if for no other reason than that it is impossible to be in two places at once. Possessing only 19 frigates and destroyers means, by definition, that the Royal Navy will only be able to show a presence in a limited number of naval theatres. We see logic in Lord West's argument that the Royal Navy needs at least two more Type 45s on the basis that there is no provision for the loss of ships on war fighting operations.⁶³ Furthermore, there would be a strong rationale for expanding the frigate force to 16 (restoring 3 out of the 4 cuts of 2010). This would provide for a more balanced fleet with greater redundancy.

Carriers

79. In 2002, a decision was made to procure two aircraft carriers. This again followed the logic of a focus on 'intervention operations': the fundamental concept behind the carriers being the ability to deploy air power at a time and place of our choosing, rather than relying on allies to provide land basing. But the carriers are not expected to reach full operational capability until 2026, and there is as yet no clear evidence how substantial the capability will be even then.

62 [HL Debate, 24 April 2012, col WA385](#)

63 Article: [The News, The Royal Navy needs at least two more Type 45 destroyers, 26 April 2012](#)

80. After a period when it seemed the second carrier would not be brought into service, the Prime Minister announced at the 2014 NATO Summit in Wales that the new aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth, would indeed be supplemented by a second carrier, HMS Prince of Wales:

This will ensure that we always have one carrier available 100% of the time. This investment in our national security, our prosperity and our place in the world will transform our ability to project power globally, whether independently or together with our allies.⁶⁴

81. Again, however, a two carrier fleet (with only one available at any one time) relies on an attrition calculation close to zero, assuming that adversaries would not have the capacity to sink the carrier then at sea, and with it a very large proportion of our latest jets. We do not believe that given the very high proportion of the overall Defence budget currently absorbed by the carrier commitment, that it would make sense to press for an additional carrier battle group. But the UK would have to be very cautious about placing excessive reliance on a single carrier, in a confrontation with an advanced military nation.

82. In the meantime, there will be a further five years before the new carriers enter service. The last carriers were decommissioned in 2010 and the plan is to have ships and planes ready by 2018 with initial operating capability by 2020.⁶⁵

83. Significant questions remain over what the ‘full carrier strike capability’ of these carriers will be when they enter service. Each carrier is designed to accommodate up to 36 F-35s. But the MoD has so far agreed to purchase only eight F35s with more to be purchased in due course. Each F-35 is estimated to cost in excess of £100 million, implying a cost of many billions to equip the carriers. As Admiral Zambellas clarified:

The price in jet terms, which is a key output that the Chief of the Air Staff and I are working towards, is still to be fully quantified, depending on how many jets we take from that ship, but there is no point in having the carriers without jets.⁶⁶

84. The Committee was able to receive no further undertakings on how many planes would be purchased. The Secretary of State said that the MoD had deliberately not confirmed the total number that would be likely to be bought for commercial reasons.⁶⁷ Air Chief Marshal Pulford told us that no decisions had been made about the number of F35s that would fly off the carriers and decisions would be taken as part of the 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review.⁶⁸ In response to our question about how many extra aircraft would be bought given the deployment of the second carrier, Air Marshal Hillier told us

64 [Prime Minister statement to House of Commons, 8 September 2014, col 654](#)

65 [Q 271](#)

66 [Q 173](#)

67 [Q 272](#)

68 [Q 175](#)

that this decision would be made in the 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review,⁶⁹ but used the phrase an ‘operational squadron’, without specifying numbers:⁷⁰

As for the number of aircraft on the ship, this is where we get into the operational planning space: we put the number of aircraft on the ship for the tasks that it needs to do at the time,⁷¹

85. It is difficult not to conclude that the inability to give even a ballpark estimate on the number of aircraft, implies uncertainty about whether sufficient funding will be available in the next SDSR to achieve comprehensive carrier strike capability. Supporting these carriers requires very substantial capacity in refuelling and resupply—and the resupply vessels travel much more slowly than the carriers. This entails the development of a very complex carrier battle group, which would need to be resourced. All this has a profound impact on the ‘readiness’ and ‘sustainability’ of the carrier package.

86. In reflection of this, our witnesses could not clarify whether the Prime Minister’s commitment to ‘100% availability’ was to the carrier hulls and manning alone, or whether it also applied to the full carrier strike capability, including associated aircraft and ships, or what level of readiness was actually envisaged. Air Chief Marshal Pulford, for example, emphasised that the Prime Minister had committed to 100% capability of “an aircraft carrier, either at sea or at readiness” rather than 100% “carrier strike capability at sea or at readiness”.⁷²

87. When, we asked the Secretary of State whether the carriers would be adequately protected, he recognised that the decision to maintain the two carriers had resource implications, both in the total number of ships required by the Royal Navy and indeed in personnel, but he told us that these implications would be addressed in the spending review in 2015.⁷³

88. We are concerned that bringing the second carrier into service will involve very considerable additional costs, additional manpower, extra aircraft and the considerable amount of support and protection needed to make it viable. It makes little sense to maintain an additional aircraft carrier without aircraft to fly off it and the necessary aircraft, surface ships and submarines to protect it. In response to this Report, the Government should set out its assessment of the consequences of its decision to bring the second carrier into service for the other capabilities that will be required by the UK Armed Forces. It should also set out the consequences for the personnel required in the Royal Navy. If there is to be no increase in Royal Navy manpower, then it should set out how the second carrier will be manned and what effect the manning of the second carrier will have on the rest of the fleet.

69 [Q 273](#)

70 [Q 274](#)

71 [Q 275](#)

72 [Q 180](#)

73 [Q 279](#)

Army

89. General Sir Peter Wall has also argued that “we need to ensure that we can field a resilient land force at the divisional level, which means stemming the creeping obsolescence of the Army’s manoeuvre capabilities.”⁷⁴ This requirement would include restoring specialist engineering skills such as wide wet water bridging capacity, providing close-air support from the Army headquarters (rather than two-levels removed), artillery capacity, helicopter Forward Air Refuelling Positions, and the whole practice of armoured warfare.

90. All this would require substantial investment in C4 ISTAR, and battlefield communications to support the manoeuvre environment in a complex battle space (for example a Russian military with jammers, cyber-capacity, advanced air-to-air and surface-to-air missiles, and other capabilities not available to lightly-armed insurgents).

91. And deterring Russian land operations on its borders in Europe would require a much more significant commitment of heavy armour. Professor Cornish suggested that the UK would have to give up the idea that it might have a “serious heavy armour role in a major conflict in Europe”, noting that this would have to be left to other Allies.⁷⁵ He added,

if you have got one or two armoured regiments then, really, getting them to Europe and deploying them into Europe, and making use of them in this notional [...] scenario of an armoured manoeuvre battle in Europe seems to me to be almost too difficult for the UK to contemplate any more.⁷⁶

92. Our witnesses were opposed to freezing the redeployment of the last British Army brigade from Germany back to the UK. Edward Lucas from the Economist questioned the value of continuing to station UK troops in Germany and suggested that there might be other places in Europe where they could be better deployed.⁷⁷ General Sir Richard Shirreff, former Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe, argued that

to be absolutely credible and send a strong signal to Russia that NATO means what it says by collective defence, NATO has got to have some form of permanently stationed forces in areas of threat. I would not include Germany in this, because frankly, moving troops from central Germany to the Baltic states is as much of a challenge as moving them from the UK to the Baltic states. [...] I think it makes no strategic sense at all.⁷⁸

93. However, General Lord Dannatt disagreed arguing that the UK should retain a force of 3,000 troops in Germany.⁷⁹ The Committee believes that, in the context of the next

74 Article: The Telegraph, [Don't play politics with defence](#), 10 March 2015

75 [Q 90](#)

76 [Q 94](#)

77 Towards the next Defence and Security Review: Part Two–NATO, [Q 187](#)

78 Towards the next Defence and Security Review: Part Two–NATO, [Q 270–1](#)

79 BBC News, [Dannatt: UK needs to retain 3,000 troops in Germany](#), 24 March 2014

Defence and Security Review it may be worth re-assessing the costs and benefits of withdrawal from Germany.

Royal Air Force

94. Alongside a comprehensive carrier-strike capability, the UK need to sustain sufficient combat air squadrons to undertake future contingencies, which go beyond its current NATO air-policing, reassurance measures in the Baltic, and precision-bombing in Iraq. Again, the number of Royal Air Force planes is at a historic low. It has been reduced from 33 squadrons in 1990 to just seven now. It is increasingly difficult for the Royal Air Force to mobilise critical mass in the air. There has also been an increasing focus on helicopters and fast jets, leaving a potential capability gap for a cheaper, more flexible platform for light air-support activities in a counter-insurgency context (the US equivalent would be an AT-6).

95. More fundamentally, though serious thought needs to be invested in the new strategy, to take into account the changes in technology in air power. The planning for the Royal Air Force was conducted on the assumption of operations against adversaries who did not possess advanced air defences. This provided the assumption of continuing operations—such as those currently conducted in Iraq—in which Tornados operate in conjunction with Reaper (the Remotely Piloted Air System). As Professor Sabin, however, has pointed out, the RAF is now likely to be facing an enemy with more advanced air defences than have been encountered in Afghanistan:

[...] we are no longer facing just people like the Taliban in Afghanistan. Even ISIS in Syria might be able to do things, and the Ukrainian rebels have already shown what they can do with air defences, so if we are to have any kind of capability in the context of more symmetrical confrontations, rather than asymmetrical ones, unmanned air systems of the current generation will not give you very much at all.⁸⁰

96. In general, SDSR 2010 was written when control of the air was taken for granted, allowing the Air Force to choose when and where to apply force. Afghanistan—a relatively benign air environment—did not require maintaining the training for more testing operational environments. But adversaries such as Russia would offer a much more considerably contested air environment—particularly given their strength in air to air and surface to air missiles. Our current technological advantage could be eroded very rapidly.

97. The UK is to be congratulated on the lead it has taken—with France—in developing a fifth generation “Future Combat Air System” and on its awareness that technology is increasingly blurring the lines between manned and unmanned platforms, between platforms and missiles, and between platforms and information systems, and that ‘Big Data’ links and communications pose astonishing new challenges in integration.

98. These are only examples of the kinds of capability, which may be required to provide firmer conventional deterrent against an advanced military state such as

80 [O.72](#)

Russia. But even this short list—maritime surveillance aircraft, CBRN capabilities, Ballistic Missile Defence, a comprehensive carrier strike capability, more Royal Navy vessels and Royal Air Force planes, and enhanced divisional manoeuvre and armoured capacity in the military and possible pre-positioning of troops in continental Europe, will require a significantly increased Defence budget.

5 Next Generation Warfare

99. As we argued in our report on *Towards the next Defence and Security Review: Part Two—NATO*, however, the most likely threats to NATO member states would not be of a Soviet armoured invasion, but would instead come from ambiguous or asymmetric warfare—cyber-war, propaganda, subversion, and deniable special forces.⁸¹ Again, such a threat—supported by the full weight of the Russian state, including the deployment of the most up-to-date military hardware, such as T-90 tanks—was not envisaged in the SDSR. And it requires the development of very particular skills in addition to conventional capabilities.

Strategic Understanding

100. The development and maintenance of capabilities for strategic understanding must be a priority in combating next generation warfare. This requires the investment in both historical analysis and contemporary conflict research; such a capability would consider political statements, military doctrine and concepts as well as organisational and technical issues. The demise of the ARAG (which subsumed the Conflict Studies Research Centre), for example, reduced the MoD's ability to understand Russian military doctrine and development, not least in the realm of ambiguous warfare. Such a capability needs to be rebuilt.

101. We urge the MoD to re-establish a Defence Historical Analysis and Conflict Research Centre in order to address the lessons of recent conflicts and to investigate current trends in warfare.

Strategic Communications

102. The first area in which Russian actions in Ukraine and even the Baltic States have proved strongest is in strategic communications—and in particular the use of Russian language television, to stir up support for 'separatism', blacken the reputation of the central government, confuse the narrative, and attack critics or their actions at home and abroad. The recent activities of DAESH in Syria and Iraq, however, show that such a threat does not only come from Russia. Instead, the recruitment of almost 20,000 foreign fighters has been driven by a very sophisticated, and omnipresent campaign on social media. Such threats were still in their infancy at the time of SDSR 2010.

103. During our inquiry into *Deterrence in the twenty-first century*, we were told by Paul Bell of Albany Associates, a specialist in the use of communications to counter terrorism and extremism, that

As asymmetric warfare becomes the global mode of violent engagement, increasingly the psychological and sociological domain is becoming the real

81 [Towards the next Defence and Security Review: Part Two—NATO](#), Third Report of Session 2014–15, HC 358.

“battle space”. These conflicts are promoted, amplified, judged and, as a result, effectively fought through the media.⁸²

104. General Barrons conceded that this was an area in which the UK military needed further development:

In the whole arena of information, we should acknowledge that we are broadly on the approach march into the information age. The debate that is coming in intelligence, command and control, and operations is how those advances, which will be led by the commercial sector, are adopted in the military space. How do we adopt big data and the internet of things? How do we do big data analysis at the heart of how we plan operations or conduct intelligence? All those things will produce wholly different ways of doing business.⁸³

105. The Independent reported on 31 January plans to develop a capability in strategic communications within the proposed new 77 Brigade:

They will specialise in “non-lethal” forms of psychological warfare, using social media including Facebook and Twitter to “fight in the information age”. The Chief of the Army, General Sir Nick Carter, believes that the radical new plan is essential to face the “asymmetric” battlefields of the 21st century.⁸⁴

Cyber

106. The second new threat—raised in part by Russia’s apparent involvement in the 2007 cyber attack on Estonia, a NATO member state—is in cyber. In our report on *Defence and cyber security*, we concluded that

The cyber threat is [...] one which has the capacity to evolve with almost unimaginable speed and with serious consequences for the nation's security. The Government needs to put in place—as it has not yet done—mechanisms, people, education, skills, thinking and policies which take into account both the opportunities and the vulnerabilities which cyber presents. It is time the Government approached this subject with vigour.⁸⁵

107. The UK has declared that it has a cyber capability within the Armed Forces and that it has an offensive capability led by the RAF with reservists forming a major element. However, General Lamb noted that there was, as yet, no doctrine on the use of a cyber capability. Our report on *Deterrence in the twenty-first century* noted questions around the

82 [Ev w43](#)

83 [Q 189](#)

84 The Independent, [New British Army unit ‘Brigade 77’ to use Facebook and Twitter in psychological warfare](#), 31 January 2015

85 [Defence and Cyber-Security](#) Sixth report of Session 2012–13, HC 106

proportionality and legality of responding to a cyber attack on the UK.⁸⁶ In our report on *UK Armed Forces Personnel and the Legal Framework for Future Operations* we also called on the Government to inform us of its work in

Determining the legal framework of possible cyber operations and its plans to incorporate such work into training of personnel and the preparation of appropriate manuals.⁸⁷

108. We asked General Lamb how he saw cyber being merged into the Future Force 2020 structure. He described it as a “complicated space”, admitting that “we have left it unattended, probably since we first saw it emerging”.⁸⁸ Peter Roberts was concerned that the cyber capability was not being delivered in an integrated way.⁸⁹

109. General Lamb stressed that the nature and broad extent of the cyber security threat had to be recognised:

Do not underestimate the nature of the people on the other side. We always put them into the radicals or into the Russian or Chinese camp, but beware the criminal camp, because they can afford people who would leave you cold.⁹⁰

110. We are unclear as to how work on cyber warfare has developed in the Armed Forces. The Government should tell us when it will finalise its doctrine and guidance on the use of cyber defence and warfare.

Intelligence

111. In any battlefield, intelligence is essential. But the nature of Russian asymmetric subversion and warfare—relying on Russian intelligence agencies—makes intelligence particularly central to a NATO response. The same is true for a DAESH threat which is now spreading from Libya to the edge of Pakistan.

112. General Lamb told us that the crucial aspect about intelligence was the quality rather than the quantity of information and the depth of understanding. He told us that the problem would not be solved by throwing money and personnel at it but needed more imaginative solutions, in particular, the use of external experts including those working in the commercial sector.⁹¹ He also emphasised the need “to understand the unreasonable men”:

86 [Deterrence in the twenty-first century](#) Eleventh Report of Session 2013-14, HC 1066, para 26

87 [UK Armed Forces Personnel and the Legal Framework for Future Operations](#) Twelfth Report of Session 2013-14, para 101.

88 [Q 26](#)

89 [Q 76](#)

90 [Q 28](#)

91 [Q 23](#)

Most people in government are decent fellows and women. Actually, you need to find the unreasonable people who can sit there with a warlord, a drug baron or some other scallywag and recognise him or her exactly for what they are and what they will be prepared to do, because they do not fit into the norms of life.⁹²

113. Mark Urban made a number of suggestions about how to obtain the right focus for intelligence collection:

Could there be a case for extending the type of partnerships that GCHQ has on crypto and cyber with certain universities, in terms of language and regional skills with academia? Is that an approach for DIS, SIS or central intelligence machinery?⁹³

114. We welcome the Armed Forces' focus on keeping pace with the developments of the "information age" in gathering intelligence. The fast pace of change requires the Armed Forces to exploit all areas of expertise and we call on the MoD to examine opportunities for work in partnership with academics and the private sector. However, the gathering of intelligence represents only part of the picture. Combating asymmetric subversion and understanding ambiguous Russian tactics also requires a deep understanding of the country itself. Re-developing and maintaining the capacity for proper analysis and assessment of events in Russia and other areas where the UK Armed Forces may be engaged is as important as the gathering of intelligence itself.

92 [Q 24](#)

93 [Q 24](#)

6 Terrorism and failing states

115. Perhaps, however, an even more fundamental challenge than a resurgent Russia, is the emergence of concurrent threats from failing states, increasingly dominated by radical jihadist groups. The SDSR concept acknowledged the threat posed by such situations—quintessentially in Afghanistan—but it presumed that they were sufficiently infrequent to be dealt with, one at a time, and with the investment of massive resources, over a prolonged period. The Iraq and Afghan campaigns cost the US and its allies over a trillion US dollars, and involved the deployment of over a million individual soldiers in a twelve year period.

116. Now, ‘Afghan-style’ threats—of failing states, or “ungoverned space”, providing safe-haven to terrorists, or even governed by terrorist groups—have emerged in half a dozen countries simultaneously. Afghanistan is still unstable, terrorist groups continue to thrive in Pakistan and in Somalia. But the problem has metastasised. There are now terrorist groups controlling large swathes of Northern Nigeria, of Libya, of Yemen, of Syria and Western Iraq. And the number is likely to grow—spreading from Nigeria towards Chad or Niger, from Libya into Mali, and from Syria potentially to Lebanon or Jordan. All this coexists with severe humanitarian crisis and conflict in Darfur, South Sudan and the Central African Republic.

117. The Future Force 2020 Structure—based on the assumption of deploying 6,600 soldiers into a single country for a decade, in order to conduct counter-insurgency operations, as part of a hundred thousand strong coalition—is manifestly the wrong structure for this new environment.

118. One option—potentially tempting to planners would be simply to refuse to design a structure suitable for tackling this volume of threats. They could argue either that failed states, dominated by terrorists were not an existential threat to the UK (this would involve rethinking the fundamental rationale for operations in Afghanistan); or that the UK no longer wanted to be a global power, and would leave tackling such threats to the US and others; or potentially that no-one had the capacity to deal with such threats regardless of whether they were a threat, or whether the UK wanted to deal with them.

119. Assuming, however, that the UK still believes such states to pose a substantial threat to the global order and to the United Kingdom itself; that the UK still sees itself as a global power; and that the UK believes it is possible to improve the situation in these countries, a radically new doctrine, approach and force structure would be required.

120. The nature of this structure, would require very profound thought in the next SDSR, and is beyond the scope of this committee. But it would seem worth considering in this context, re-examining the successes of Sierra Leone and Bosnia, and asking what capabilities might be required to improve the chance of success in current crisis zones such as Libya, Yemen, Ukraine or Iraq. A model should reflect the fact that resources are unlikely to allow British troops to control large sections of territory, or attempt to hold population areas in the future; and that operations are increasingly likely to be in support

of a host government. Even training missions are unlikely to be able to be conducted on the scale of training in Afghanistan (where training the Afghan police and army involved 12 billion dollars of expenditure in the single year 2008).

121. All this calls into question whether the brigade is likely to remain the central unit of operations. Force structure is an immensely complex issue, deeply related to complicated questions of resources, basing, enablers, command and control, and even career structure. We would not, therefore, presume to try to micromanage the details of force structure. But it is worth at least pointing out that, if the threats and operations change, the force structures may have to change accordingly. We have already made the point that the current focus on brigades may have to be replaced by increasing capability at a larger divisional level to counter an advanced military threat in Europe. But the need to deal with concurrent terrorist-linked failed states also implies a need to develop increasing capability for independent operations at a smaller battle-group and even company level.

122. Two examples may illustrate this potential requirement. First, recent French operations in Mali suggest not only how a reinforced battle-group (of 1,000 as opposed to 6,600 men) can be a very suitable format in a world of multiple concurrent threats, but also how it requires a very particular support mechanism in country. Second, pre-posting troops in military assistance or training missions to places such as Northern Nigeria (for operations against Boko Haram) could possibly require even smaller deployments. So too, if the military wished to commit to developing and sustaining deep defence relationships and country knowledge through basing units (perhaps even with ISTAR and RPAS enablers) in countries such as Jordan or Tunisia. Again these are simply indicative examples, but they suggest very substantial thought needs to go into ensuring that the new force structure is highly flexible in sustaining units of very different sizes in very different theatres.

123. All this puts an increasing focus on deep-country knowledge and expertise, and strong defence relationships. Both of these seem to have been a critical component in the French operations in Mali, where a thousand troops were able to build on a pre-existing Embassy and Defence footprint to achieve a remarkable and rapid impact.

Defence Engagement

124. We, therefore, strongly welcome the fact that in July 2013, the Army announced that the adaptable force brigades, and some Force Troops Command brigades would have assigned responsibilities for particular regions of the world, enabling brigade units “to develop understanding of the geography, culture and languages of their specified region”.⁹⁴ It was added that “Adaptable Force brigades [would be] the default choice to conduct overseas exercises; provide short term training teams in their allocated region; and coordinate the participation of troops from other parts of the Army”.

125. Air Chief Marshal Pulford said that the RAF was fully participating in defence engagement.⁹⁵ General Carter and General Barrons emphasised the need for a whole Government approach to defence engagement including the Foreign Office, Department for International Development and the military, coming together under the National Security Council.⁹⁶

126. The development of deep relationships over a substantial period with key decision-makers, and future decision-makers, in a given country is central to this process. One important challenge will, therefore, be to identify how limited numbers of personnel can be best deployed to develop these deep relationships when it may not be possible to predict where the future security priorities for the UK will be. 2014 highlighted threats emerging in Eastern Europe and the Middle East and North Africa, but new threats may emerge in 2015 and beyond. Mark Urban said:

We know that language skills and analytical skills take years to grow, and if you are suddenly yawning around saying, “Actually, this week’s priority is west Africa”, the number of people who can speak the right dialects for northern Nigeria would clearly be tiny when you have spent the past five or 10 years investing in Arabic, Urdu or Pashto and the previous 40 years in Russian and other east European languages.⁹⁷

127. General Barrons recognised the importance of language training and acknowledged its previous neglect in the Armed Forces:

[...]it is absolutely recognised that an important future role for defence is how we are able to interact in UN and other operations where language is a core skill. We may have been guilty in the past of just speaking English slowly and loudly and hoping that that would work, but that is clearly not going to cut it in future, so the way we train people through staff college, where language is now an option, and the way we select people with an eye to producing a career stream focused on defence engagement, will all help. [...]I see that as part of the professional armed forces in the future.⁹⁸

128. We were impressed on our visits to Iraq and Jordan by the determination of British Military officers who were clearly committed to learning Arabic and working very closely alongside local forces.

129. But an admirable concept, appears to still be some way from being fully realised in practice. There were at the time of our Baghdad visit, only 3 British officers in Iraq outside Kurdistan. The following table outlines the numbers trained by the Defence Academy in the principal languages since 2011–12.⁹⁹ This table illustrates a substantial decline in recent

95 [Q 191](#)

96 [Q 212](#)

97 [Q 24](#)

98 [Q 158](#)

99 SLP = Standardised Language Profile. The levels are not accredited outside Defence but roughly read across as follows:

years in those studying Russian and Arabic, two languages which should be a priority in the context of the changing threats that we have discussed.

Training Year	Number of people being trained (per academic year)							
	2011-12		2012-13		2013-14		2014-15	
	Lower (SLP 1-2)	Upper (SLP 3-4)	Lower (SLP 1-2)	Upper (SLP 3-4)	Lower (SLP 1-2)	Upper (SLP 3-4)	Lower (SLP 1-2)	Upper (SLP 3-4)
French	17	17	1	29	0	24	3	25
Russian	3	9	2	11	0	3	0	2
Arabic	32	18	36	12	25	1	23	20
Spanish	4	9	1	16	0	16	0	7
German	2	0	1	4	0	4	0	3

130. The UK needs to plan to play a role again in intervention—even if it involves following the French model and choosing to take responsibility for a particular place, rather than working as a small part of a smaller coalition (the UK could, for example, take the lead role in Northern Nigeria). Defence Engagement and all the associated training in language and culture would be vital to any success in the future. Any solution also needs to address the fundamental gap—identified by this committee in its reports on Afghanistan—between the military and other government agencies. This was the heart of the ‘comprehensive approach’ designed to combine the FCO, DfID, and the military.

131. But a related gap also exists in the information and intelligence sphere. The Foreign Office has increasingly turned away from area expertise, and deep political reporting. The era of ‘Oriental secretaries’ and the IRD in the Foreign Office is long-past. SIS continues to be required to focus on single-source, strategic reporting, in response to Joint Intelligence Committee requirements, and has neither the mandate, nor the resources, to collect either overt or tactical information. UK Special Forces and the Intelligence Corps continues to focus on the most tactical level. This leaves a significant gap, as was found in Helmand, for example, in mapping tribal, criminal and patronage networks, connecting the politics in the capital to instability on the ground, or developing a workable strategy of stabilisation. This too is an area where the NSS, and the SDSR should focus, and where the MoD—along with others—should play a role.

132. Other options, which would need to be explored in a new force structure might range from an increasing focus on Military Assistance Teams, to a much more developed and extensive Defence Intelligence Service and Defence Attaché capacity, and potentially the development of second-tier Special Forces (on the US Green beret model). And again, consideration needs to be given to the potential role of reserves, military contractors, and even civilians in this new approach.

133. Related to these issues, are those more broadly of ‘soft power’. The National Security Strategy 2010 stressed the importance of soft power stating that the UK needed to draw

1 = GCSE; 2 = A Level (basic); 3 = A level (advanced); 4 = Post graduate, non-native speaker.

In addition to the above the MoD offer further training in operation specific languages such as Dari and Pasto.

together, and use, all the instruments of national power. Admiral Zambellas emphasised the value of the deployment of soft power in support of broader objectives.

[...]we are invited to understand that the way out of recession is a trade-led performance of the UK. That means a global footprint, and that means using military soft effects, as they are called, in support of strategic objectives. I can only speak for my own service, but we would look to co-ordinate across defence for a combined defence engagement strategy that maximised the total value across defence of Navy, Army and Air Force.¹⁰⁰

134. Professor Cornish warned, however, that soft power relied on the ability to exercise hard power and could not be a substitute for hard power. Other countries would only look to build links with the UK Armed Forces if the UK retained the ability to deploy and project substantial “hard power” forces:

[...] we talk a lot about defence engagement and the value of foreign militaries training with us, or in our academies, staff colleges and all that sort of thing. That is a very important part of soft defence power, but my point is that soft defence power is a proxy for hard defence power, not a substitute for it, and that you will not have that soft defence power, which I guess is your primary interest here, if you do not have the hard power as well behind it.¹⁰¹

100 [Q 191](#)

101 [Q 52](#)

7 Funding the assumptions and plans of SDSR 2010

Funding of the Armed Forces

135. We have laid out a series of arguments on why it is necessary to rewrite and reconceptualise the underlying assumptions of SDSR 2010, and Future Force 2020. We believe that a changed world requires new force structures and resources to match a threat from an advanced military state, such as Russia, and to respond to the ever-expanding set of threats from failed states, and terrorist-affiliates. But even without reconsidering the fundamental assumptions in a changed world, there are some risks in even sustaining the current force structure and security assumptions.

136. We asked the Service Chiefs whether the current level of resources would enable them to achieve Future Force plans by 2020. They replied that funds were adequate if they were given the uplift in resources currently planned for 2015–16 and beyond, that is an increase in current expenditure in line with inflation and a 1% increase above inflation for the equipment budget. They also recognised that wider financial constraints had been an important factor in determining the available resources for SDSR 2010 which had created some capability gaps.¹⁰² In particular, Air Chief Marshal Pulford said:

we look forward to SDSR15, as planned, answering some of the risks that we are still carrying from that 2010 review. All four of us are acutely aware that you cannot have adequate defence without taking into account the resources available to you.¹⁰³

137. However, Admiral Zambellas warned that, if the Royal Navy did not get the resources it expected to deliver Future Force 2020, it would need to say to the Government:

We now cannot do what we are mandated to do, what do you wish us to give up”. That, frankly, is something that is going to be tested vigorously in the comprehensive spending review next autumn.¹⁰⁴

138. We asked the Secretary of State whether he thought that the Chiefs of Staff were content with the available financial resources. He argued that resources were:

Adequate to do the jobs that have been thrust on us. You have seen this year how we have responded, particularly how the Royal Air Force has responded to the demands put on it in terms of countering ISIL, and you have seen all three services in action down in Sierra Leone helping to combat Ebola. Nobody turned round to me and said, “We haven’t got the capability and we

102 [Oq 118, 123 and 124](#)

103 [Q 118](#)

104 [Q 127](#)

haven't got the budget. We're not able to do these things." In fact, we were able to deploy a ship, three helicopters and several hundred men within 10 days of being asked, and send them a very large distance. Very few countries can do that.¹⁰⁵

139. We are not reassured by this statement. We note that the operation to combat the spread of Ebola in Sierra Leone was funded by the Department for International Development. In our report on *The situation in Iraq and Syria and the response to al-Dawla al-Islamiya fi al-Iraq al-Sham (DAESH)* we also argued that the UK's contribution to date to operations countering the threat from ISIL had been "strikingly modest".¹⁰⁶

Personnel

140. In his speech to RUSI in December 2013, the Chief of the Defence Staff drew attention to his concerns about the Armed Forces having 'exquisite technology' without the personnel to operate it:

Indeed, the one bit of Defence's future funding that has political commitment to real growth is the equipment programme. But the dawning reality is that, even if we maintain the non-equipment budget in real terms, rising manpower costs raise the prospect of further manpower and activity cuts. Unattended our current course leads to a strategically incoherent force structure: exquisite equipment, but insufficient resources to man that equipment or train on it. This is what the Americans call the spectre of the hollow-force. We are not there yet; but across Defence I would identify the Royal Navy as being perilously close to its critical mass in man-power terms.¹⁰⁷

141. Professor Sabin told us that to be adaptable, the Armed Forces needed the right personnel. He told us that "kit can be made adaptable, but only by people. If you invest too much in the technology and you lose out on the people, you really are in trouble".¹⁰⁸

142. Following the 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review and as part of the restructuring of the Armed Forces under Future Force 2020, the MoD instituted a redundancy scheme. So far there have been four tranches: tranches 1 and 2 were across all Services but tranche 3 applied only to the Army. A fourth and final tranche was announced in January 2014. 1,060 service personnel have been selected for redundancy in this tranche, predominantly Army personnel, plus approximately 50 medical and dental officers and

105 [Ministry of Defence Annual Report and Accounts 2013-14](#), Q 20

106 [The situation in Iraq and Syria and the response to al-Dawla al-Islamiya fi al-Iraq al-Sham \(DAESH\)](#), Seventh Report, Session 2014-15, Summary.

107 [CDS speech to RUSI](#), 18 December 2013

108 [Q 43](#)

nurses in the RAF and 10 in the Royal Navy.¹⁰⁹ The following table gives a breakdown of the number of personnel selected for redundancy under each tranche for each Service.

Table 2: Redundancies by Service

Service	Tranche 1	Tranche 2	Tranche 3	Tranche 4	Totals
Royal Navy	1,020	160	0	10	1,190
Army	920	2,880	4,450	1,000	9,250
Royal Air Force	920	720	0	50	1,690
Total	2,860	3,760	4,450	1,060	12,130

Source: UK armed forces redundancy program statistics: index¹¹⁰

Note: Due to appeals, transfers and personnel leaving for other reasons, this may not reflect the number of personnel who will eventually leave the Armed Forces.

143. The Secretary of State acknowledged the necessity of instituting redundancies in the Armed Forces, arguing that

[...] Getting the budget in order meant some painful decisions, both on the investment side, on the maritime patrol capability and, indeed, on the people side.¹¹¹

144. He did, however, acknowledge that more needed to be done to recruit and retain personnel to man the equipment, noting that he had given evidence to the Armed Forces Pay Review Body, who were also focused on this question:

You can have the best aircraft carrier in the world, but you do need the engineering ratings and officers to man it, and we need the pilots to pilot our aircraft and so on.¹¹²

145. In response to our question about the manning crisis in the Royal Navy, Admiral Zambellas acknowledged the challenges to the Royal Navy in retention:

[...]It is a highly technical service and that is a product of the design and operation of our ships. That group of people are highly desirable outside the service. The pressures on the individuals, largely through work-life balance, getting more and more out of the platforms over the years, pushing outwards all the time, has created the difficulties that we now face.¹¹³

146. The Royal Navy had received support from the US coastguard who had offered engineers on secondment and would be seeking support from other navies. The Royal Navy had also been using Royal Marines to do more engineering work allowing naval engineers to work on ships.¹¹⁴ The MoD informed us that the Royal Navy's voluntary outflow rate for the 12 months up to 31 October 2014 was 5.6%, above the five-year

109 [HC Deb, 23 January 2014, cols 461–463](#)

110 [Government website](#)

111 [Q 225](#)

112 [Q 225](#)

113 [Q 187](#)

114 [Q 187](#)

average rate of 4.7%, but that the outflow rate in pinch-point trades, such as surface ship and submarine engineers, was a “particular challenge”.¹¹⁵ All three Services have significant shortages in technical trades, with the worst problems in the Royal Navy.

147. The Royal Navy has introduced longer deployments of nine months for those on some frigates and destroyers as many of these ships are reported to be more reliable.¹¹⁶ The Chief of Naval Personnel told the Naval Families Federation that longer deployments would result in greater minimum periods between deployments for all ships.¹¹⁷

Role of Reserves

148. The 2010 SDSR announced a reduction of 7,000 Army personnel to leave a Regular force strength of 94,000 by 2015.¹¹⁸ The planned size of the Regular Army was subsequently further reduced to “a trained strength of 82,000 Regulars” with a force of “at least 30,000 Reserves, with a training margin of 8,000¹¹⁹ Reserves”.¹²⁰ The Army expects to reach this level by 2018.¹²¹

149. In March 2014, we published a report on the Army 2020 plans¹²² raising a number of concerns, in particular that

- that the MoD had failed to communicate the rationale and strategy behind the plan to the Army, the wider Armed Forces, Parliament or the public and that the decision to reduce the size of the Regular Army from 94,000 (as announced in SDSR 2010) to 82,000 had not even been discussed by the NSC;
- that the financially driven reduction in the number of Regulars had the potential to leave the Army short of personnel, particularly in key supporting capabilities, until sufficient Reserves were recruited and trained; and
- that the Army 2020 plan could unravel if there were further reductions in the MoD budget or Army personnel.

150. General Carter told us that the proposed size of the Army was adequate for what the Government currently required of it.¹²³ When pressed, he added:

115 [MoD supplementary memorandum following evidence on 17 December 2014](#)

116 Naval personnel are expected to spend 660 days every three years away from home (harmony guideline); breaches are running at some 1%

117 Naval Families Federation article, [Message from Second Sea Lord: Nine Month Deployments](#), 7 August 2014

118 [The Strategic Defence and Security Review](#) Cm 7984, October 2010, p 32

119 The 8,000 would be additional personnel in training to sustain the overall number of 30,000 trained Reservists.

120 [HC Deb, 19 January 2012, col 939W](#)

121 The MoD expects to reach its target for 30,000 trained Reservists by 2018, see British Army, *Modernising to face an unpredictable future: Transforming the British Army*, July 2012, p 9. The reduction in Regular Army personnel to 82,000 is expected to be completed by mid-2015 with the restructuring of the Regular component by 2016, Q 67, Q 125 and Q 271

122 Defence Committee, [Future Army 2020](#), Ninth Report of Session 2013-14, HC 576

123 [Q 105](#)

We have now withdrawn from Helmand and the British Army has some people committed, but not in the numbers we have been accustomed to over the past five to 10 years. It is always a question of what you want the Army to do, and then from that you can determine its shape and size.¹²⁴

151. However, General Dannatt, former Chief of the General Staff, has recently argued that, given the situation in Ukraine, the Army needed a further brigade of 3,000 soldiers. Such an increase would signal that the UK took its defence responsibilities seriously, not only on behalf of its own citizens but on behalf of EU and NATO allies too.¹²⁵

152. At the time of our inquiry into *Future Army 2020*, the Government's intention was that Reserve Forces would participate in operations overseas and in the UK and undertake tasks as set out below.

Table 3: Tasks that the Reserves will be required to undertake

<p>Abroad:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short term operations such as the evacuation of UK citizens from Lebanon in 2006 and the 2011 Libya operation. • Longer term stabilisation operations such as in the Balkans, UN missions, Iraq and Afghanistan. • Standing commitments abroad such as the Cyprus garrison and the defence of the Falkland Islands. • Deployments overseas aimed at Defence engagement, conflict prevention, security sector reform and capability building in priority countries, such as the British Peace Support mission in East Africa and the EU operation in Mali. 	<p>At Home in the UK:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playing a general role in homeland security, including activities such as support to the Olympics and Paralympics, or specialist roles such as cyber. • Delivering national resilience such as responding to the foot and mouth crisis, flood relief, and communications support to crisis management. • Standing national commitments, such as defence of the UK's airspace.
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Source: Ministry of Defence, *Reserves in the Future Force 2020: Valuable and Valued*, Cm 8655 July 2013, page 17

153. We note that this statement of the role of Reserves makes no mention of Reserves being used to complete the order of battle in a national crisis. The MoD also told us that Reserve Forces would be deployed as formed units and sub-units. In the Government Response to our Report on *Future Army 2020*¹²⁶ the MoD restated the policy of using Reserve Forces in formed units in the Adaptable Force.¹²⁷ General Lamb emphasised the value of the Reserve Forces in providing resilience in dealing with uncertainty, supporting operations and bringing expertise into specialist areas.

154. However, we drew attention in our report on *Future Army 2020* to problems in the recruitment of reserves. General Lamb said of the planned increase in reserves recruitment:

124 [Q 106](#)

125 The Telegraph, [Armed Forces: Britain needs another brigade](#), 23 March 2014

126 [Future Army 2020](#), Ninth Report of 2013–14, HC 576

127 [Future Army 2020: Government Response to the Defence Committee's Ninth Report 2013-14](#), Seventh Special Report 2014–15, HC 387

It started off really badly. There was, no question about it, a reluctance on the part of a number of people to introduce the Reserves. They wanted to keep the Regular component as high as they could for as long as they could. I understand the reasons why, but the truth of the matter is that it was not about taking a long-term view.¹²⁸

155. He hoped that the current CDS, who had led the original Reserves Review, and the current CGS would be able to re-establish the proposed relationship between the regulars and reserves and to

put energy behind it and, therefore, to crush over what has been an institutional inertia about making this happen.¹²⁹

156. General Carter acknowledged that there had been delays in processing applications to join the Reserve Forces. The process had been streamlined and the capacity at the assessment centres had also been increased.¹³⁰ On whether the Army could meet the recruitment target for reservists, he said:

[...] the target this year is around 3,200. Already, at the six-month point, we have got to 2,100, and it is my sense that we will increase the numbers beyond the target in this year, which is better than where we were last year, but it is a long project. It is not something that will be solved overnight, because we have had the last 10 or 15 years when we have not invested in the Reserve in the way that we are now investing in the Reserve.¹³¹

157. General Carter described his thinking on the use of Reserve Forces in the Army. The focus would be on providing three aspects of support: specialists such as medics or cyber experts (who were acknowledged to be better found in the Reserve); capabilities such as logistics which did not require a lot of collective training; and combat arms and combat support. For those reserves in this last category, General Carter noted that “their commitment is to training, but the obligation only really cuts in when there is a sense of national emergency”.¹³²

Joint Forces Command

158. In his written evidence, Peter Roberts told us that the JFC has a far wider breadth of responsibilities than the three Service headquarters and has fewer staff. He also told us that the JFC is not well supported by the other Services in terms of manpower provision, with a large number of unfilled posts.¹³³ We asked the MoD what the challenges were in ensuring that JFC got the staff it needed. The MoD told us that the gapping of posts within JFC was

128 [Q 30](#)

129 [Q 30](#)

130 [Q 155](#)

131 [Q 108](#)

132 [Q 108](#)

133 [Written evidence, Peter Roberts, RUSI](#), FUT0014

running at similar levels to the single Services, however, certain specialist roles, particularly in the medical and intelligence domains were difficult to fill with suitably qualified and trained personnel. It further told us what it was doing to address the problem:

JFC is actively managing pressures on regular military personnel by drawing more widely upon the services of reserves, civilians and contractors as part of a whole force approach. There is a continuous dialogue between the Chief of Staff at JFC and the Principal Personnel Officers with the services to ensure a full appreciation at senior level of the priority manning requirement and any possible structural changes within JFC, in order to minimise the incidence and impact of manpower gaps.¹³⁴

159. General Lamb expressed concern about the position of the JFC in Future Force 2020:

[...] I have two concerns. One is that the new Joint Forces Command is not seen as it probably should be, which is as the tri-service driver—the joint driver that delivers the capabilities set out by the National Security Council, the Ministry of Defence, the Prime Minister, the Cabinet, Government, Parliament and all the rest, in terms of what they wish their armed forces to do.¹³⁵

160. General Lamb considered that the Joint Forces Command was working but was concerned that it did not own the joint capabilities. He also believed that JFC needed a senior champion, calling for an individual

with a genuine responsibility and accountability for the delivery of the joint capability that he or she is so presented with, and the ability to deliver that.¹³⁶

161. The latest review of implementation of the Levene Reforms found that Joint Forces Command had made good progress and that there was clear evidence that it had provided an improved focus to “the key technological enablers of modern warfare” and that the relationship between JFC and the single Services had developed well. However, the review identified a challenge for JFC to build on its progress to date

To reinforce further its overall position within Defence (including improving its current manning level of only 84%), and to work with Head Office in giving prominence in the SDSR to both the importance of joint enablers, and key new areas of potential JFC growth (eg. Strengthening various intelligence-related capabilities, not least in response to the advent of “big data”).¹³⁷

134 [MoD further memorandum](#), FUT0018

135 [Q 1](#)

136 [Q 35](#)

137 [Letter: Lord Levene to Secretary of State for Defence](#), 5 December 2014

Conclusions and recommendations

Response to Russia—First Steps

1. The US has made it clear that it perceives the UK's commitment as the lynchpin of the broader NATO commitment to increase Defence Spending. And, therefore, if the UK were to reduce expenditure, it would undermine the alliance as a whole. (Paragraph 58)
2. We are concerned that, should defence spending in the UK fall below the NATO target of 2% of GDP in 2016–17, the impact on the UK's credibility as a military ally would be extremely damaging, particularly in the eyes of the US and our European partners. It would damage UK leadership in NATO and Putin's Russia will be looking very carefully for signs of weakness in NATO. (Paragraph 59)

Rebuilding conventional capacity to deter an advanced military nation

3. Maritime surveillance remains a crucial gap in the capabilities of the Armed Forces with extremely serious implications for the protection of other capabilities within the Armed Forces. Bridging this critical capability gap must be a very high priority for the next Strategic Defence and Security Review. (Paragraph 66)
4. We are concerned that bringing the second carrier into service will involve very considerable additional costs, additional manpower, extra aircraft and the considerable amount of support and protection needed to make it viable. It makes little sense to maintain an additional aircraft carrier without aircraft to fly off it and the necessary aircraft, surface ships and submarines to protect it. In response to this Report, the Government should set out its assessment of the consequences of its decision to bring the second carrier into service for the other capabilities that will be required by the UK Armed Forces. It should also set out the consequences for the personnel required in the Royal Navy. If there is to be no increase in Royal Navy manpower, then it should set out how the second carrier will be manned and what effect the manning of the second carrier will have on the rest of the fleet. (Paragraph 88)
5. These are only examples of the kinds of capability, which may be required to provide firmer conventional deterrent against an advanced military state such as Russia. But even this short list—maritime surveillance aircraft, CBRN capabilities, Ballistic Missile Defence, a comprehensive carrier strike capability, more Royal Navy vessels and Royal Air Force planes, and enhanced divisional manoeuvre and armoured capacity in the military and possible pre-positioning of troops in continental Europe, will require a significantly increased Defence budget. (Paragraph 98)

Next Generation Warfare

6. We urge the MoD to re-establish a Defence Historical Analysis and Conflict Research Centre in order to address the lessons of recent conflicts and to investigate current trends in warfare. (Paragraph 101)
7. We are unclear as to how work on cyber warfare has developed in the Armed Forces. The Government should tell us when it will finalise its doctrine and guidance on the use of cyber defence and warfare. (Paragraph 110)
8. We welcome the Armed Forces' focus on keeping pace with the developments of the "information age" in gathering intelligence. The fast pace of change requires the Armed Forces to exploit all areas of expertise and we call on the MoD to examine opportunities for work in partnership with academics and the private sector. However, the gathering of intelligence represents only part of the picture. Combating asymmetric subversion and understanding ambiguous Russian tactics also requires a deep understanding of the country itself. Re-developing and maintaining the capacity for proper analysis and assessment of events in Russia and other areas where the UK Armed Forces may be engaged is as important as the gathering of intelligence itself. (Paragraph 114)

Formal Minutes

Tuesday 17 March 2015

Members present:

Rory Stewart, in the Chair

Richard Benyon	Mrs Madeleine Moon
Rt Hon Jeffrey M Donaldson	Bob Stewart
Mr James Gray	Ms Gisela Stuart
Dai Havard	Derek Twigg
Dr Julian Lewis	John Woodcock

Draft Report (*Re-thinking Defence to meet new threats*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

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

Paragraphs 1 to 161 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Tenth Report of the Committee to the House.

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

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

[Adjourned till Wednesday 18 March 2015 at 10.00 a.m.]

Witnesses

The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the Committee's inquiry page at www.parliament.uk/defcom.

Question number

Wednesday 22 October 2014

General (Rtd) Sir Graeme Lamb, and **Mark Urban**, BBC correspondent and military historian

[Q1-42](#)

Professor Paul Cornish, Exeter University, **Peter Roberts**, RUSI, and **Professor Philip Sabin**, King's College, London

[Q43-96](#)

Wednesday 5 November 2014

Admiral Sir George Zambellas, First Sea Lord and Chief of Naval Staff, **General Sir Nicholas Carter**, Chief of the General Staff, **Air Chief Marshal Sir Andrew Pulford**, Chief of the Air Staff, and **General Sir Richard Barrons**, Commander Joint Forces Command

[Q97-219](#)

Wednesday 17 December 2014

Rt Hon Michael Fallon MP, Secretary of State for Defence, **Air Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier**, Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff, Military Capability, and **Peter Watkins**, Director General Security Policy, Ministry of Defence

[Q220-355](#)

Published written evidence

The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the Committee's inquiry web page at www.parliament.uk/defcom. FUT numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

- 1 Child Soldiers International ([FUT0001](#))
- 2 DefenceSynergia ([FUT0002](#))
- 3 Oxford Research Group ([FUT0004](#))
- 4 Human Security Centre ([FUT0005](#))
- 5 Ministry of Defence ([FUT0006](#))
- 6 Professor Andrew M Dorman ([FUT0008](#))
- 7 Professor Philip Sabin ([FUT0009](#))
- 8 Professor Paul Cornish ([FUT0012](#))
- 9 Dr Harlan Ullman ([FUT0013](#))
- 10 Peter Roberts ([FUT0014](#))
- 11 Anthony King ([FUT0016](#))
- 12 Dr Mark Campbell-Roddis ([FUT0017](#))
- 13 Ministry of Defence ([FUT0018](#))
- 14 DefenceSynergia ([FUT0019](#))
- 15 Ministry of Defence ([FUT0020](#))

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Session

All publications from the Committee are available on the Committee's website at www.parliament.uk/defcom.

The reference number of the Government's response to each Report is printed in brackets after the HC printing number.

Session 2014–15

First Report	The Ministry of Defence Main Estimates 2014–15	HC 469 (HC 681)
Second Report and First Joint Report	Scrutiny of Arms Export and Arms Controls (2014) First Joint Report of the Business, Innovation and Skills, Defence, Foreign Affairs and International Development Committees of Session 2014–15	HC 186 (Cm 8935)
Third Report	Towards the next Defence and Security Review Part Two: NATO	HC 358 (HC 755)
Fourth Report	The Armed Forces Covenant in Action Part 5: Military Casualties, a review of progress	HC 527 (HC 953)
Fifth Report	Armed Forces (Service Complaints and Financial Assistance) Bill	HC 508 (HC 900)
Sixth Report	Pre-appointment hearing for the Service Complaints Commissioner	HC 832
Seventh Report	The situation in Iraq and Syria and the response to al-Dawla al-Islamiya fi al-Iraq al-Sham (DAESH)	HC 690
Eighth Report	Ministry of Defence Annual Report and Accounts 2013-14	HC 896
Ninth Report and First Joint Report	Scrutiny of Arms Export and Arms Controls (2015) First Joint Report of the Business, Innovation and Skills, Defence, Foreign Affairs and International Development Committees of Session 2014–15	HC 186