

## Introduction

1. UNA-UK is Britain's only charity dedicated to building support for an effective United Nations. Over the past 70 years we have built a network of members, local branches, youth groups and partner organisations in all four nations of the UK. In 2015 UNA-UK was one of the most active civil society supporters of the NSS/SDSR process, generating around 10% of submissions received to the public consultation as a result of our outreach and communication with the public
2. In 2015 UNA-UK welcomed the analysis of the NSS/SDSR inextricably linking Britain's security to the health of the rules-based international system and identifying the need to "help strengthen the rules-based international order and its institution". We also feel there is a powerful self-interest argument for multilateralism. Challenges such as climate change, extremism and cyberwarfare do not respect borders and require international cooperation. We hope to see this commitment to multilateralism and our global system reflected in future defence and security strategies.
3. To this end we have been campaigning since 2017 for a new NSS/SDSR process, given that the changes to our position in the world as a context of the decision to leave the European Union render the 2015 strategy out of date. We were critical of the superficiality, and lack of public engagement with respect to the "National Security Capability Review",<sup>1</sup> and even more so with respect to the "Modernising Defence Programme". However, we were delighted to hear the Government's plans for an Integrated Review, and in due course hope to submit our ideas to it in a number of areas, including multilateralism. UN peacekeeping, Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems, and Nuclear Non-proliferation.
4. This submission however will concentrate narrowly on two interlinked questions from your call for evidence: "What is the purpose of a security, defence and foreign policy review?" and "Which external stakeholders should be engaged in the review process? How?"
5. We believe the process by which the UK conducts this review is almost as important as what it decides. A Rethinking Security comparative study of various nations' security strategies<sup>2</sup> demonstrated that other nations have taken a much more holistic view of security. This starts with the concept of human security and thus proceeds on the basis that the security strategy of a democracy is a security strategy of the people. It therefore must be developed alongside and with those people. After all, the ownership of the strategy by the people, and the integration of the peoples dreams and needs into the strategy, itself represents a strong element of national security.
6. It is therefore absolutely vital that there be a comprehensive and open process of consulting with civil society and the general public. Our fear is that the shortened timeline makes this unlikely. In 2015 we were concerned that the consultation was tokenistic and that rather than genuinely influencing the drafting process, submissions merely provide post facto justifications for some of the decisions made. Given the pressures under which this much more ambitious review will take place, and the even shorter timeframe in which it is expected to proceed, our concern is that the consultative elements of this review will be equally tokenistic.
7. Our concerns over the timeframe are compounded by the pressure that the Coronavirus pandemic will place both on government resources and Civil Society's ability to participate in any process. Further, various key assumptions which will underlie the strategy the review establishes, are currently unknowable. These include: the nature of our relationship with

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<sup>1</sup> <http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/national-security-strategy-committee/national-security-capability-review-a-changing-security-environment/written/78224.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://rethinkingsecurityorguk.files.wordpress.com/2018/03/contrasting-narratives-march-2018.pdf>

Europe after trade deals conclude, the size of our economy in the aftermath of the Coronavirus pandemic and the end of transitional trade arrangements, and the likely political posture of the United States following its 2020 electoral cycle.

8. On 3 March 2020, we wrote to the Prime Minister, to make the following recommendations with respect to the conduct of the review. We copied this letter to Chairs of relevant select committees. We would also like to reproduce the letter's recommendations here and commend them to the inquiry.
  - The consultation should be public and be open to all (rather than an exclusive group of Government-identified "best minds").
  - Citizens' assemblies and other representative feed-in mechanisms should be considered to ensure marginalized communities are included in the process.
  - The consultation should be launched with sufficient time for the inputs to be given meaningful consideration by those drafting the document.
  - The consultation should be transparent and accountable with clarity over how submissions from the public are used.
  - The Government should spearhead a national conversation to raise awareness for the consultation and foster a nationwide debate around the major threats facing the UK.
  - The consultation must address the disconnect that can arise where Government actions do not live up to the commitments made on paper in national security doctrines. It should examine how the UK's own conduct has run counter to the 2015 NSS/SDSR, for example when it comes to examining the erosion of the rules-based international system.
  - Domestic actions can have an equal, and sometimes greater, effect on the perceptions that underpin Britain's diplomatic weight. The Review announcement emphasises foreign policy, but the Review itself should have a cross-governmental scope and incorporate (for example) the Home Office, Department of Justice, Department of Education, Department of Health, as well as outward-facing departments.
  - The outcome of the Review should command cross-party support and so the consultation should involve Parliamentary Select Committees as a key partner, and include the views of parliamentarians from all parties and both Houses.
  - The Review should challenge outdated presumptions about security including the narrow, often militaristic, definitions used by the UK (and many other states). It should consider the adoption of a more modern, holistic "whole-of-society" lens. Rethinking Security's comparative study of 20 nations' security strategies shows that there are viable alternatives to the UK's approach.
  - Rather than the light-touch, and incompletely implemented, annual reporting and rebranding exercises we saw following the 2015 NSS/SDSR, the Review should consider regular opportunities to strengthen the document more frequently. This should include opportunities for public reflection and appraisal of the UK's performance against the agreed-upon strategy.

*19 March 2020*