

## **Written evidence submitted by International Alert (ISD0028)**

International Alert has worked with partners in conflict prevention and peacebuilding for more than 30 years in over 20 countries and disputed territories around the world. Our work involves addressing the underlying drivers of conflict, while building community, state and international capacity to manage conflict peacefully. It takes a variety of forms, from working on community security; advocating and programming on the gender dimensions of conflict and peace; preventing violent extremism; encouraging greater political inclusion at local and national levels and trust between citizen and the state; climate and security; as well as peaceful management of natural resources and work with the private sector in conflict settings. We work closely with the UK government including the FCO and DFID in various conflict-contexts, including implementing a number of CSSF projects. We also provide research and analysis on policy and operational approaches to promoting peace and security at the global level.

### **1. What is the purpose of a security, defence and foreign policy review?**

#### **Asking the right question**

1. In the face of mounting global insecurity, an eroding international system and intractable conflict in places such as Syria and Iraq, how should the UK position its national security strategy and resources to deliver more durable security outcomes? In short, what gets us to sustainable peace in these contexts?
2. Lasting peace is in the UK's own security interest. Achieving it requires dealing with the root causes of conflict - those that drive both localised dynamics and more structural conflict factors that create an environment for instability and violence.
3. While the 2015 SDSR asserted the importance of addressing root causes as a hypothesis, this did not translate into a more considered strategic approach. The 2020 review needs to look both at the immediate security challenges confronting the UK, while also taking a generational perspective laying the foundations for a more secure world.
4. The current context of the COVID-19 pandemic only amplifies the urgency of this agenda, with increasing evidence of its destabilising impacts at local, national and global levels.
5. Respected military leaders have added their voices to calls for an intensification of effort around tackling underlying drivers of conflict. Just one example is Lt. General John Allen, former leader of the International Coalition against ISIS, who has remarked that if we do not take a root causes approach we are destined to fight ISIS forever.
6. Polling undertaken by International Alert suggests that the UK public has what might be called 'crisis fatigue', and a widespread demand for a 'prevention is better than cure' approach. As such, with the right political leadership, it appears there is fertile ground for a long-term approach to resolving conflict from the electorate.
7. Peacebuilding can provide a unifying framework that straddles defence, diplomatic and development capabilities, in order to deliver lasting impact in addressing the root cause of violence and insecurity across settings.

#### **The UK as a global lead among states in responding to violent conflict**

8. The COVID-19 crisis creates new opportunities for a bold agenda, reasserting the critical importance of multilateral responses to shared threats and supporting a new global agenda for peace as signalled by UN Secretary General António Guterres call for a global ceasefire.
9. This review should focus in on identifying opportunities for the UK to be a global leader in peace and security diplomacy, policy and practice. There is significant potential for the UK to become a champion for peacebuilding and conflict prevention, delivering long-term durable security.
10. The UK has historically been at the forefront of conflict policy and practice, as highlighted by DFID's Building Stability Framework, the now defunct whole of government Building Stability Overseas Strategy (BSOS), the creation of the Conflict Pool funding and its successor Conflict Security and Stability Fund and Stabilisation Unit. It has also championed the Women, Peace and Security and Preventing Sexual Violence space and initiatives. It continues to hold considerable diplomatic weight as a permanent member of the Security Council. Despite such infrastructure and years of expertise, the UK may be falling behind.
11. Peacebuilding is in many ways still a comparatively latent capability – its potential still not fully realised within the UK national security architecture. While both the FCO and DFID fund peacebuilding there is a question as to whether this kind of work is being delivered with the necessary prioritisation to achieve lasting impacts at scale, to tackle structural and in some cases regional drivers of conflict that cut to the core of contemporary security challenges.
12. Peacebuilding must no longer be seen as an add-on. A strategic prioritisation of a peacebuilding agenda at this time of global crisis can frame the UK's other security, development and diplomatic interventions and ensure their concerted impact and sustainability.
13. It is not just a matter of new resources, although those are greatly needed to scale activities. It is also about surrounding interventions with an appropriate level of strategy that enables a root causes approach to take hold.
14. The US is answering both the questions of scale and strategy through the Global Fragility Act. This bi-partisan Act that passed Congress earlier this year, supported by Republicans and Democrats alike, requires the US Government to come up with strategies to tackle the root causes of conflict in 10 countries over ten years. Those countries will represent those currently experiencing high levels of conflict but also those where conflict prevention is still possible. The bill is underpinned by a set of metrics and accountability mechanisms. Above all though, it joins together the DOD, State Department and USAID as both owners of strategy and delivery. The ten-year time horizon also represents a far more realistic timeframe in which to see progress on generating and sustaining peace. The UK needs to rediscover the source of such innovation that put it out in front of the pack for such an extended period.
15. Funding focused on conflict, with the malleability of blended non-ODA finance is essential. While the CSSF looks impressive, standing at £1.25 billion in 2018-19, 45 percent of this is non-discretionary spending on peacekeeping contributions and MOD operational funds. While both are important spending lines, they do not directly contribute to tackling underlying drivers of conflict. Of the remainder, the CSSF Annual report indicates that £59.3 million is spent on conflict prevention and peacebuilding. We would assess that this figure probably underrepresents the CSSF peacebuilding spend, as activities that tackle underlying drivers of conflict also fall into other areas of expenditure, such as, tackling violent extremism and governance and justice. To this can be added DFID's own peacebuilding spend. Nevertheless, the reach of CSSF indicates how thinly this resource is spread, across 70 countries and 90 projects.
16. The CSSF, FCO, DFID and MOD would benefit from a unified whole-of-government strategy for peacebuilding and conflict prevention. BSOS started to fill this space but was never fully

successful prior to it being defunct, setting a vision but lacking the specificity and accountability framework to drive a more strategic approach that identified and tied together ministries' respective capabilities. A clear and measurable strategy is the first step towards amplifying the UK's peace impact. As noted later in this submission, a strategy is also essential in marking out the specific value-add that each ministry brings. This lack of clarity has in part led to recent discussions about DFID's future which largely overlook the critical role a dedicated international development agency plays in addressing conflict.

17. As much as new resources are needed, there is also a need for the review to examine how we are using existing assets and whether they could be leveraged more effectively. A peacebuilding and conflict prevention strategy would set the scene for this which may include:
- Better integrating peacebuilding outcomes across all aid being delivered in conflict-affected contexts and leveraging partners (multilaterals, INGOs) to do the same (Note: we will address this in our submission to the International Development Committee);
  - Developing clear peacebuilding strategies on a country-by-country basis drawing on existing analysis such as JACS and increasingly more localised external analysis, including from civil society, in order to ensure greater coherence across MOD, FCO and DFID efforts;
  - Pursuing focused diplomacy between the FCO and partner governments, where they fail to address political and economic exclusion that is driving conflict bringing the full suite of levers (aid, trade, defence cooperation) that UK has to bear (Note: this will be addressed in our submission to the Foreign Affairs Committee);
  - Examine MOD's untapped conflict prevention capability in the context of its collaboration with partner forces, moving beyond train and equip functions (see section 3 below).
  - Leverage the UK's role on the UN Security Council to lead a coalition of states to strengthen multilateral responses to conflict including through encouraging increased funding, expertise and capacity in multilateral institutions;
  - Ensure members of collective security arrangements such as NATO match military approaches with complimentary resources for conflict prevention and peacebuilding;
  - Reassess relationships with regimes whose practices at home and abroad directly and indirectly seed violent extremism;
  - Ensuring greater cohesion across government to avoid the worst examples of disjointed action in conflict situations, such as selling arms to one side in the Yemen conflict while supporting humanitarian and mediation efforts;
  - Scale up conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts in countries 'at risk' of instability, not just those in crisis, to deliver a genuine prevention agenda;
  - Pursue a more systematic integration of climate security considerations into broader decision making as well as applying it as a lens in the development of specific country-level strategies.

#### **Draw in the lessons from Chilcot**

18. It is important that the review reflect on how decisions on national security policy are made from the NSC down, the type of information that informs such decisions and the questions that

are asked. In this respect, while the Chilcot inquiry centred around Iraq it holds much broader lessons.

19. These are best captured in the Ministry of Defence's 'The Good Operation' guidance that responded to the recommendations of the report vis a vis decision points and analysis. While it is unclear whether this guidance is being applied it still puts the MOD ahead of other ministries in that it publicly sets out a very clear series of actions that could be taken to enhance the UK's national security decision-making process.
20. Understanding the potential downstream impact of UK interventions (military or otherwise) will help safeguard against investing in tactical success for strategic failure. This approach is particularly pertinent to Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) and Counter Terrorism interventions.
21. Where the review considers future military deployments, it should seek to investigate if and how these lessons and guidance can be more systematically applied.

### **Tackle shared security challenges**

22. The review should also apply a shared security lens to the priorities it sets. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought the deep interconnection of the modern world into sharp relief.
23. The impact of the Ebola crisis with increased intercommunal tension, violence against medical workers and increased violence by armed groups, may foreshadow what is to come as the COVID-19 pandemic increasingly reaches into conflict-affected regions.
24. Globally, the intelligence community is paying greater attention to shared security challenges. In the US it has, for several years, highlighted the need for action on climate change as it relates to compounding drivers of conflict, most recently in their 2019 World Wide Threat Assessment and in more detail in their 2016 memorandum on 'Implications for US National Security of Anticipated Climate Change'.
25. In 2015 the UK and Germany commissioned a report for the G7 from a consortium of organisations that included International Alert on climate and security (*A new climate for peace*). This report identified seven compound climate-fragility risks that pose serious threats to the stability of states and societies in the decades ahead. It recommended that the G7 take concrete action, both as individual members and jointly, to tackle climate-fragility risks and increase the resilience of states and societies to them. It is important to emphasise that we are seeing risks associated with the climate-security nexus materialise. They are not something of the future but of the now and therefore it will be essential that climate feature as a key dimension of the review and subsequent strategies.
26. Other shared challenges which warrant attention and the application of this lens include migration, violent extremism (including the rise of the far-right), Cyber conflict and rapid growth in inequality. The last, in particular, will make states more vulnerable to shocks. A doubling of global wheat prices in 2011 and a tripling of bread prices in Egypt compounded the dynamics that led to revolution in that state.

### **Mark out the intersection between government agencies**

27. It is important the review mark-out the comparative advantages as well as complementarities of the FCO, DFID and MOD. (Note: Annex 1 sets out a table of indicative complimentary

functions. We will articulate these in respective submissions and as a whole in any overall call for submissions from those leading the Integrated Review)

28. We note the absence of DFID from the list of internal stakeholders who would drive the Review. This risks a weaker, less joined-up approach by failing to draw on DFID's considerable experience in responding to conflict.
29. It is important to understand government aid programmes as not purely altruistic or just a technical delivery mechanism. Aid programmes generate influence and develop what are in effect diplomatic relationships with partner ministers and ministries such as, ministries of Finance, Interior, service delivery agencies and the judicial system. They often help ride-out difficulties within broader bilateral relationships through keeping channels of communication open. In many contexts aid agencies are a symbol of this seriousness with which donors are taking partner government agendas, which in the vast majority of developing country contexts rank poverty alleviation in their top tier priorities.

### **Advance gender peace and security commitments**

30. In the year of the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women Peace and Security the review should ensure it pays adequate attention to how the UK is operationalising its commitments to this agenda specifically, and the Gender Peace and Security agenda more broadly. The latter relates to how associated gender norms and other identities interact to either prevent or promote violence.
31. To this end it is essential that the review be underpinned by rigorous gender analysis, taking into account the complex and nuanced ways in which conflict and gender intersect and the adverse effect of conflict on women and girls and other minority groups as well as on men and norms of masculinity.
32. Fundamental to this analysis is meaningful consultation with those most affected. We strongly encourage that any review of security policies and strategies, must include a meaningful process of engagement with women's organisations working in FCAS, Women Human Rights Defenders, survivors of GBV and CRSV and broader civil society both nationally and in fragile and conflict-affected states working to implement the WPS agenda.
33. We would encourage the review team to seek out perspectives from within other parts for government including Gender advisors in the FCO, DFID, CSSF and the cross-Whitehall Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, as well as the civil society representative body in the UK, the Gender Action for Peace and Security Network (GAPS).

## **2. What methodology and analytical capability is required to ensure that assessments of threats and risks to the UK are future-proofed?**

34. In undertaking the review, it will be important to consider not just threats, but also sources of resilience, in line with a greater focus on peacebuilding and conflict prevention, rather than assuming that the challenge is related to managing risk around a decline in security only.
35. Whether or not the fusion doctrine will be migrated to the IR is an open question. But if it does, it should not do so wholesale. It omitted one cross cutting capability, namely peacebuilding. Peacebuilding is about dealing with the reasons why people fight in the first place and supporting societies to manage conflict peacefully. This means it doesn't squarely fit with the FCO (political) or DFID (development). It also underplays the potential for MOD to play a greater role in conflict prevention (see section 3. below). It is a capability but not one wholly owned by any one institution.

### **3. How should existing and in-development defence capabilities be reviewed?**

36. The review should also look beyond existing and developing capabilities. There is a significant untapped opportunity, in the form of the UK's defence diplomacy and partner engagement, for the MOD to make a contribution to conflict prevention.
37. The UNDP's seminal 2017 piece of analysis 'Journeys to extremism in Africa' found that the majority of those inspired to join violent extremist groups did so as a result of abuses of the state. This finding triangulates with analysis and experience in specific settings such as Mali (see *If victims become perpetrators*, International Alert 2018).
38. As such, shaping the way that partner forces interact with the local population is key to achieving durable security outcomes. To date though the emphasis has been on operational capability and train and equip, which while important, is not enough to shift behaviors. Defence engagement, augmented with appropriate expertise and analysis, can play a role in shaping internal incentives and accountabilities of security forces, while senior level peer to peer engagement can also play a role in conjunction with FCO in shaping the 'politics of security'. These two lines of operation take into consideration that security forces in conflict-affected states often play a role in national politics in a way that simply does not happen in the UK.

### **4. Which external stakeholders should be engaged in the review process? How?**

39. We encourage a diversity of actors to be involved in the process to capture the full range of expertise within the UK peace and security community. It also represents an opportunity to build public engagement in advancing a new vision of UK peacebuilding leadership.
40. We would, in particular, encourage the engagement of peacebuilding organisations. These organisations, often in partnership with UK government agencies, work across a range of geographies of deep interest to the UK's national security agenda. They have the capacity to add to discussions around what actually works on the ground. Many are also actively engaged at the global thematic policy level on issues ranging from Preventing Violent Extremism through to Climate and Security.
41. People living in the midst of conflict, particularly in contexts of special significance to the UK, should not be overlooked as a source to inform the Review's deliberations. They can offer a unique and practical perspective on how UK security capability is either currently or could in the future best be applied. UK peacebuilding organisations are placed to facilitate such evidence.

### **5. What role should international allies and multinational alliances play? (EU)**

42. As alluded to earlier, there is a role for the UK in shaping and leveraging multilateral partners such as the UN, World Bank and NATO in advancing priorities around peacebuilding and conflict prevention. The UK should redouble its efforts to strengthen the multilateral system and global norms that are the foundation of international peace and security and champion institutions showing a genuine investment in scaling their work around conflict prevention and resolution. A recent example is the World Bank's move to put in place a whole of Bank Group strategy on Fragility, Conflict and Violence – a sea change, given where the institution was 15 years ago.
43. At the same time, the UK needs to be cognisant of the constraints of, in particular, the UN system. The Security Council continues to be constrained by the politics of sovereignty, prioritising responding to impending crises rather than upstream conflict prevention. This gap in action is increasingly being filled by regional organisations and thus the UK must be prepared to

collaborate with and work through regional organisations more fully where the UN is unwilling or unable to do so. Lessons from Libya suggest that ad-hoc coalitions should be approached cautiously, particularly where little investment is made in assessing the downstream impact of interventions.

44. The UK's future relationship with the EU merits particular consideration. It will be important to maintain the UK's legacy. The UK worked hard to get peacebuilding and conflict prevention on the EU's agenda, particularly during the establishment of the European External Action Service. While integrated in the EU's global strategy, that legacy at risk. There is a growing gap between rhetoric and action as illustrated by the merger of peacebuilding and conflict prevention funding into a generic instrument under the new EU multi-annual budget, contrasted with the emergence of a proposed European 'Peace' Facility which would allow the EU to support the lethal force capability for foreign militaries.
45. While the UK has been working to increase its presence and engagement in contexts that it had, to a certain degree, delegated to the EU, it is still unlikely to match the scale of effort from the Commission in these regions (for example, Eastern Europe, the Balkans, Caucasus and Central Asia). It is vital that in the context of the UK's NATO membership, that it ensures that military efforts are adequately matched civilian interventions.
46. The UK also has a vested interest in developing channels for continuing policy dialogue and cooperation while retaining some form of UK influence over EU conflict prevention and peacebuilding strategies globally and in the conflict-countries where the EU works.
47. To this end, a UK-EU flagship partnership on peacebuilding and conflict prevention could be a highly effective platform for addressing these issues.
48. It will also help keep the UK at the table in certain conflict country contexts. Both Canada and Australia understand what it's like to be on the outside of in-country EU diplomatic and development policy coordination mechanisms. Complimentary to this would be remaining open to participation in EU Civilian Common Security and Defence Policy Missions, which are in part, currently supported by the CSSF.
49. Recognising that the UK will have competing priorities at this time, it could be funded with resources that would have otherwise been provided to the European Development Fund and help to leverage broader EU resources. The fund could also be a matching mechanism for some multilateral contributions, for example to the UN's Peacebuilding Fund. It would enable the continued use of EU delivery systems which have received consistently high ratings by DFID in its Multilateral assessments.

## **6. What is required to ensure that the findings and outcomes of a review are implemented?**

50. Unlike other areas of the UK's overseas efforts, there are no reporting or accountability requirements around the UK's contribution to sustainable peace and security outcomes. For example, there is no statement to parliament or regular review by parliamentary committees of what impact the UK is having. While there are some indicators embedded within individual ministries there is no comprehensive picture of what might be termed the UK's collective 'peace impact'. As a case in point, while DFID has committed to spend 50% of its budget in fragile and conflict affected states, it is unclear to what extent this is contributing to building peace or whether it is business as usual.
51. The Review can help set the stage for greater accountability by articulating clearly what impact looks like when it comes to achieving durable security outcomes. Setting specific benchmarks

that would inform a quadrennial review could go a long way to maximising impact and informing national security policy.

*10 April 2020*



## Annex 1. Critical interventions in responding to and preventing violent conflict

This is a non-exhaustive list of activities undertaken across government that gives a basic flavour of the intersection at policy and operational levels. Where functions align this should not be interpreted as duplication but rather a reflection of unique individual contributions to those interventions.

In particular, it highlights the need for joined-up coherent strategies at both the strategic and operational level.

	DFID	FCO	MOD
Mass forced displacement and conflict sensitive humanitarian response	•		
Preventative diplomacy		•	
Civilian Protection	•	•	•
Promotion of Human Rights and application of standards	•	•	•
Peacekeeping operations and multi-mandate missions		•	•
Security Sector Governance	•		•
Local conflict resolution	•		
National and regional conflict resolution	•	•	•
Inclusive politics and effective governance	•	•	
Anti-corruption	•	•	•
Economic inclusion	•		
Gender Peace and Security	•	•	•
Climate risk mitigation	•		
Equitable access to services delivered in a conflict sensitive manner	•		
Stabilisation operations	•	•	•
Access to justice	•		
Security provision and community security	•		•
Arms control and stockpile management	•		•