

British AF are recognised by their unique characteristics, generating disproportionate outcomes to their manpower & platforms.

Opening statement. The purpose of the RN is broadly referred to in the Integrated Review (IR) embracing sound reasoning for Britain's global outlook. Being an island nation reliant upon sea-borne trade & commerce for over a millennium, the maritime posture & potency of the UK remains fundamental to our safety, security & the promotion of UK plc. The 2018 NCSR refers to the Fusion Doctrine, though there has been scant evidence of its effective use throughout government departments, especially within a key triumvirate based around the MoD, FCDO & Treasury. Inter-Service rivalry has been evident for decades, with Service chiefs seeking justifiable roles & platforms best suited to well-made politicised arguments. The post-Cold War era generated diverse challenges that necessitated adjustments to cope with the novelty of the lengthy Iraq & Afghanistan campaigns; in the meantime, the political focus was on health & welfare with austerity bearing down on the MoD & elsewhere.

The exhaustive IR should have taken a multi-decade perspective of global concerns & threats that would undoubtedly affect the complexity of strategic needs facing our country & peoples, from which the MoD should have been given time to refine its priorities & parameters, with a clearly set defence budget. The Defence Command Paper (DCP) provides a broad list of aspirations with an all too limited & barely resilient capability; it had been reported that a small Cabinet Office cell developed the IR without the invaluable fusion & knowledge that could have been provided by Select Committees. Now, with the increased posturing & menacing behaviour of Russian forces on the Ukraine border, the reported naval encroachments in UK waters & the reopening of former Soviet Arctic bases, the emerging threats are pronounced & clear compared to the last few decades; unnervingly, most of the RN's effective capacity is deploying to the far side of the world, leaving little operational capability in our EEZ.

It is worth adding, the British people rarely take much interest in military matters, let alone international issues which increasingly test & challenge the nation's long-term safety & security. There remains too little political effort to keep the population abreast of international developments, the invaluable role that the RN provides in concert with the FCDO, through the provision of soft & hard power projection. It is easy to imagine the hue & cry should welfare & other popular civil programmes come to nought - nevertheless, with the increasing evidence & scale of aggression & hostility in the near & far abroad it would be impossible to acquire suitable military capability within a timely period - it has been, ever thus.

What is the UK's ambition for the RN's role over the next 20 years? The IR sets the strategic framework to 2025, seemingly unaware of the DCP's intention to retire key capabilities prior to the acceptance of suitable replacements, thus repeating the earlier fiascos, such as Nimrod & Harrier GR9 aircraft: are lessons honestly learned & taken to heart? The weak recruitment & retention of servicemen/women has yet to be resolved, thus experienced personnel leave prematurely causing additional uncertainty & an inability to effectively man all vessels & establishments. There has been a catalogue of funding issues, countless delayed systems & a slothful replacement effort for future surface/sub-surface vessels; the problem has been exacerbated with insufficient & unreliable Type 45's.

The IR recognises that Russia remains the most acute & immediate regional threat to our security, with China being a systemic competitor. There is little difference to earlier defence reviews, though Russia's hybrid aggression is now used by the increasingly powerful Chinese forces, with a new level of defiance that ignores/circumvents international law. The deployment of the QEII CSG, with a predominant USMC F35 contingent, will remove a significant UK defence capability from the ever-fractious NATO region, during another challenging period. The overt tension in the Far East, addressed by China's *wolf diplomacy*, is likely to result in a challenging sea passage for the CSG.

The IR states that "The Royal Navy will remain active in the UK's territorial sea & Exclusive Economic Zone ... We will work with South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, Ethiopia & Ghana in particular ... The UK has strong, historic bilateral ties in the Middle East and North Africa - such as Jordan and Oman ..." - all of which has validity but with what suitable maritime resources? The DCP asserts a desire to station OPVs to far flung territories, leaving too few RN vessels to manage any new expediencies in the EEZ & the NATO area of operations. When considering the 'rule of four', as used to argue for a credible CASD, there are woefully insufficient OPVs or suitable RN assets to patrol our EEZ (one of the largest in the world), not forgetting our increased reliance on off-shore power generators, submarine cables, fishery protection requirements & counter-smuggling patrols.

The DCP has plenty to commend it but a hollowness exists in terms of maritime capability, with an insufficiency of political reality/awareness that recognises such limitations - there was a comparable echo to the over optimistic hyperbole that surrounded SDSR 15. The intention to procure future classes of high-cost destroyers/frigates will strain the DCP's aspirations by ignoring the realities of timeliness, affordability, capacity & competing MoD priorities.

Operating with other maritime states has become important in developing mutual training & demonstrating a willingness to exert greater unity of effort with like-minded nations. The deployment of the CSG's integrated capabilities provides other maritime forces the opportunity to sharpen skills & advertise their nation's willingness to act in unison. Such integration, though welcome, can never be guaranteed & must not be taken for granted, more so when national requirements need UK-only capabilities i.e. the Falklands.

What naval forces are required to combat these threats and to deliver these standing commitments? The IR identified, rather re-stated, the primary threat to the UK as being that of Russia, though there are a series of other states continuing to cause friction, necessitating deployments to the Middle East region & beyond. The challenges & aspirations in the DCP are well known but, without maritime sufficiency, there is the reality of spreading too little too thinly & with limited military assets; much has been *double counted*. To generate & maintain a resilient naval capability needs a *defence-wide* application, with a sustainable but progressive rebalancing programme; the late Armilla Patrol comprised three frigates, allowing at least one to remain on station at any one time. The RN has insufficient resources & is over-matched with diverse challenges, before the weighty DCP aspirations take effect.

Real fusion of defence needs broad political support, not dilution. The original 0.7% of GDP allocated to overseas aid (OA), along with the EU subscription monies, should be partially reallocated to generate a genuine national fusion of political & maritime aspirations, achieving a scale of resilience & demonstrable global connectivity.

Firstly. Generate an effective *coastal force*: integrate Border Force vessels & suitable police vessels, fishery protection vessels & other inshore patrol boats to monitor/patrol the EEZ, GIUK gap & BOTs. Redirected money from the EU/OA funds would provide a number of corvettes to be progressively reintroduced to the fleet, as a flexible dual-capable vessel suited to extended missions: based on former sales to Oman. Such an initiative would improve shipbuilding capacity, provide sales' opportunities & much needed investment in our coastal regions. Corvettes, along with other RN vessels, should be developed with modular configurations to complement a broad defence, security & humanitarian value - the OPV could be replaced once *at the end of life*, in favour of a multi-purpose corvette.

Secondly. Generate an *oceanic medical group* to provide medical/humanitarian aid to BOTs/Commonwealth countries, maintained & operated by the MoD (RFA), with joint medical staff from the NHS/Armed Forces; an opportunity may evolve for young people to be involved as a re-modelled Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO). The re-purposing of civilian vessels would provide an initial operating capability & an invaluable addition to national resilience in times of emergency. Such a novel approach would be relatively inexpensive, offer an attractive style of *national service* & provide a novel demonstration of the UK's international visibility & interaction with key friends/allies. Meanwhile, UK shipyards could develop options for the design of future 'medical/hospital' vessels.

These ideas could be explored to generate further concepts with Commonwealth/Five Eyes communities, developing novel maritime ventures to promote & enhance the broad appeal & values of the rules-based order - the focus should be directed at the BOTs & needy Commonwealth countries.

Are naval procurement and support plans delivering the capabilities required for this role? The points referred to in the *call for evidence* illustrate the endemic weaknesses/shortcomings that have been evident for decades in the MoD; it should be remembered that the Civil Service provides continuity of experience beyond that of Ministers & uniformed personnel. The RN retains a mindset for high-end & eye watering expensive vessels; within a competitive defence budget this is an unaffordable luxury. Mass & capability needs to be achieved with affordable multi-purpose vessels, with advanced hulls, hybrid power systems & an array of modular manned/unmanned capabilities.

What is the logic & more importantly the need for a specific destroyer & various frigate designs? Each has a unique cost & an inevitable litany of post-delivery failures - this has been a weakness for decades. The RN's fundamental requirement is to possess a sufficiency of modern capable assets to provide effective surface, sub-surface & aerial systems to respond to threats & sustain multiple short-term or extended operations.

The underlying inter-Service rivalry needs resolution. The technically & visually impressive carriers, along with the eye watering expensive F35 programme, have insufficient escorts & RFA vessels - the CSG has & continues to absorb a disproportionate part of MoD funding. Each Service brings particular key defence elements to generate an overall effect, but there is a reluctance to fuse *total defence needs* with logic. Too much capability rests in what has been seen as traditional fields of responsibility e.g. helicopters predominantly support land operations or maritime protection requirements, but ... why is the RAF responsible for owning medium & heavy lift helicopters?

To summarise areas for consideration, so as to enhance & generate a resilient maritime force, the following suggestions are made; these could be further translated into a *dynamic new-look* Armed Forces for the 21st Century.

1. Select Committees have proven cross-party collaboration; greater use should be mandated to develop a long-term vision for foreign, defence, counter-crime resilience policies & more. The IR should be modified to gauge the concerns & threats to our country & peoples well beyond the next decade.
2. The MoD budget needs stability: a minimum annual budget should be granted for each parliamentary period.
3. Generate a potent *coastal force*; to provide depth in surveillance & security in/beyond the EEZ. Corvettes should be constructed to ultimately replace the OPV: partial use of former EU & OA funds.
4. Taranis/Raptor/drone systems provide choice/flexibility/affordability compared to the F35 programme: greater commonality of systems & needs should be made by each of the Services, wherever plausible.
5. UK submarines have a questionable guarantee of survivability. Nevertheless, the retention of SSN/SLBM may be feasible as an integrated hull/dual-capable design, thereby reducing costs & the possibility of procuring more boats: the updated warhead may deserve review as a horizontal launched system. Joint crewing with like-minded Five Eyes partners may be worthy of consideration & broaden the deterrent posture.
6. The P8 was procured for maritime/coastal use & should be transferred to the RN: costs & crews included.
7. There is no irrevocable justification for destroyer/frigate variants when such vessels *have grown in size*; a standard hull design should be adapted to suit modular/hybrid capabilities, providing a degree of uncertainty to an aggressor as to a vessel's capabilities - design savings may promote more orders & reduced logistics.
8. Op KIPEON & similar commitments to be enhanced by use of multi-purpose vessels & unmanned systems.
9. An *oceanic medical group* (re-purposed civil vessels) to provide novel UK resilience, humanitarian support/aid: funds from original OA funds/MoD (RFA) owned & supported by NHS/Armed Forces medical personnel - potential re-emergence of VSO.
10. UK-wide maritime construction/repair yards need more investment: procure/maintain all MoD vessels.
11. Design/procure hybrid/multi-purpose vessels with modular capabilities to enhance maritime effort.

Summary. The IR provides political aspirations & a renewed approach to international affairs; it does not appear to have been fused to the DCP. The DCP aspirations seem to be at odds to MoD capabilities, without the resilience for an effective global footprint, & aggravated by the intent to retire platforms prematurely. The RN is too small & lacks sufficient operational vessels to meet the well intentioned DCP aspirations. The desire to procure the traditional array of shockingly expensive surface vessels will not improve the existing shortfalls which will be subjected to future government changes or priorities; modularity & multi-purpose designs would overcome some procurement limitations & be more likely to meet future requirements.

The desire by the Services to procure class beating systems cannot be achieved within the context of the DCP & the uncertainty of future MoD funding. SDSR15 was & remains unrealistic with the subsequent reductions to manpower, systems & imposed funding cuts. The Armed Forces have too many legacy systems that do not compare favourably to the many advanced & abundant Russian systems.

Final Statement of need. Whether it be acknowledged or not, we are engaged in a *conflict-continuum*; that of persistent aggressive-coercive behaviour designed to undermine our way of life. There is a pressing need for a deep & systemic reappraisal of how the UK should generate a dynamic but inclusive defence & broad security process, creating an integrated approach with some cross-party fusion.

The IR & DCP failed to look well beyond a limited horizon. The Armed Forces need to be developed into a *mutually supporting* & more unified configuration rather than continuing the current inter-Services power-play - every aspect of maritime, air & land capability needs a genuine fusion with capabilities matching needs. There should be a hard-nosed review to develop military capability, using our world beating characteristics (*UK servicemen/women make our Armed Forces unique*) to generate UK Defence for the 21st Century; *the Blitzkrieg was a devastatingly effective fusion of inter-operability: this concept should be developed into a potent & unified defence effort*. The DCP's aspirations ignore the seismic changes needed to best unify our defence/security effort to achieve a more logical re-rolling of the traditional elements of the Services, thus simplifying procurement & to attain advanced systems with resilience & sufficiency.

“The Business of War” by General Sir John Kennedy, DMO (1938-45)

In the epilogue Gen Kennedy writes: *“We began with an army which was trying, through no fault of its own, to expand too late, & with a nation which was rousing itself from a deep sleep as the lava began to flow. All through the war we were still paying the price for the belatedness of our preparations. It was like trying to spread new & untried canvas in a gale; sail after sail blew into tatters as soon as it was set. The miracle was that, despite all our buffeting, we were able to keep on course.”*