

## Call for Evidence: UK - US - NATO

**Personal Introduction.** *37 years Army experience: 12 years infantry service; 25 years Royal Military Police, of which 4 years at the CBRN Defence centre (Winterbourne Gunner); 2 years UNFICYP as senior UN policeman/investigator; having worked with many UK & overseas police forces, including Met Police (former CT Branch, Royalty & Diplomatic Protection Branch, & at GT operations). 6 years NATO (SHAPE), two as CBRN policy adviser & four as nuclear policy adviser.*

**Opening Comments.** The Call for Evidence straddles a spectrum of political & military shocks. Continuing hurt resonates from the EU's machinations against the UK, the US government's dismal behaviour regarding the abrupt decision to give up on Afghanistan (AFG) & a variable POTUS; the solidarity between traditional allies has been dented.

1. The EU Commission's (EU) intransigence over the Galileo system, the N. Ireland Protocol, AZ vaccine, Gibraltar & the refusal to accept the UK's continuance in the Lugano Treaty have developed an unhelpful, even poisonous, level of mistrust amidst growing global threats & extreme challenges; these undoubtedly strengthen the resolve of others who would wish to do us harm.
2. The US withdrawal of forces from AFG & Syria, with little forewarning, & their diminished European footprint, reverberates around NATO with a sense of decoupling from Europe. The Taliban's dramatic seizure of Kabul was a shock & poses added uncertainty over Pakistan's future intentions.
3. The Euro-Atlantic region is our near abroad & should be our predominant focus, with a progressive but growing international involvement. The AUKUS pact strengthens 5 Eyes & the tilt to the Far East, having antagonised the EU - especially France.
4. Our revived Indo-Pacific interest has germinated seeds, with positive trade & diplomatic opportunities with like-minded states. CSG21 illustrates the re-emergence of the UK as a sovereign nation with a willingness to develop a broad international role. Ironically, this has been a positive outcome compared to that of the EU.
5. The US Global Posture Review is likely to realign American effort to the Indo-Pacific to counter the ever-increasing Chinese challenge to US power & influence. There will be an undoubted thrust at Europe to undertake a robust stance against an increasingly malicious Putin-Russia, possibly accepting more EU military cohesion.
6. The strategic implications in the aftermath of the AFG withdrawal provides opportunities for neighbouring states to advance their own agenda at an inevitable cost to the West & others in the Far East. DPRK's recent cruise missile demonstration has generated deep concern & given cause for Japan to review her strategic status, amidst the ongoing Taiwan tension.
7. The scheduled European elections & various regional upheavals will generate change & uncertainty, giving the Russia-Iran hooligans room to generate further tension.

**The Integrated Review (IR).** The IR did not generate an anticipated deep fusion of governance, especially foreign, defence & security (ForDefSy) policy, which will face undeniable challenges beyond the limited horizon of politics. The AFG debacle generated pronounced hurt & strategic upset, questioning the traditional Anglo-American-NATO relationship. Nonetheless, the Anglo-American relationship, & NATO, should remain as the bedrock upon which our fundamental defence posture is based.

8. A much-needed fusion between the Defence Command Paper (DCP) & the IR did not materialise. New advanced systems are unlikely to be operational & available in sufficient numbers within this decade, whilst maritime & many other key defence shortfalls have been ignored & may force further pragmatic change, especially when the DCP deployments occur: what forces will patrol/protect the EEZ? The challenges & threats referred to in the IR (& DCP) are likely to present themselves sooner rather than later, with premature reductions across the Armed Forces causing stress to existing shortfalls & changing commitments.
9. The IR made passing mention of the scarcity, location & critical importance of natural resources: rare earths; potable water & the need to preserve it; desertification; the all-too evident geological phenomena will aggravate global food shortages, not forgetting 'mad weather'. Collectively these factors will generate mass migration without any suggestion being proffered for strategic planning & preparation being made; cross-Channel illegal migration has been all too evident & bitterly resented.
10. There was reference to inter-government developments, achievements & successes - fair enough. This loudly trumpeted & long-awaited review was anticipated to set a long-term vision to deeply fuse UK governance & identify the nation's future global posture, taking account of enduring challenges that will cause upset: mixed messaging emanating from the White House adds uncertainty to UK-US relations.

11. UK ForDefSy policy has not been sufficiently integrated across government departments, & there is no strategic concept looking beyond parliamentary cycles. Only cross-party consensus can ensure longevity, funding & sustainability of broad commitments - this is common-sense. We are already experiencing a disorderly century. Covid-19 proved the lack of strategic preparation & a future pandemic will undoubtedly occur, not to mention the evidence of great power competition & the experience of mad weather.
12. National policy documents are long-winded & resource intensive. The adoption of a format similar to that of a NATO Fact Sheet, with details being classified, would gift less to those with malign intentions; few British people read these documents, which questions who they are designed for.

**NATO, in general.** The alliance had been successful but reliant upon US power to deter the Soviet Russian threat. Hybrid aggression & grey zone antics have shown how those with malign intentions ignore international law, & progressively destabilise peaceful co-existence. Putin-Russia, though weak in many respects, has invested considerable resources to develop a formidable military capability, coupled with a smug pleasure to cause particular upset to Europe & NATO. CCP-China promotes strategic pressure points with an added determination to leech technical knowledge from the West, applying a veneer of generosity to impoverished states & developing strong links with Putin-Russia; these factors stir a persistent threat to the international rules-based order. NATO is fragile.

13. The alliance remains credible only with demonstrable US involvement, irrespective of the Anglo-French nuclear forces. UK defence has been aligned to the US for decades, though future policy may need to be more measured: one lesson should be etched in political memories - "nothing is, or can be, guaranteed". The Iraq-AFG invasions are testament to a failure of grand strategy, added to which was the veneer of political depth once Pandora's Box had been opened.
14. The AFG legacy is testimony to political arrogance & failed politico-military synchronisation. Alliance members did not project a capacity for protracted action; too few were able & willing to do the heavy lifting. NATO failed & it was either ignored or forgotten that the alliance is not configured for nation building.
15. The EU has a clear determination to create its own military force (Mozambique demonstrates this intent), thereby dissipating existing multi-hatted alliance capabilities. Europe's only effective defence capability resides in the Anglo-French relationship which is suffering from increased anti-British noise emanating from the continent; it is unpalatable, serving to strengthen Putin-Russia & sow further discord.
16. NATO moves at a glacial pace; change is dependent upon consensus with an inevitable dilution of outcome.
17. The UK's bridging capacity (US-Europe) is in decline whilst the Franco-German political & economic manoeuvrings could dissipate NATO cohesion. NATO, only with US inclusiveness, can deter Putin-Russia. The growing political-military relationship between Putin-Russia & CCP-China should be a sufficient & powerful justification for the US to reinforce the Euro-Atlantic relationship, rather than diminish it. The increasingly ice-free Northern Seas will allow the Chinese leviathan to project trade & military forces, for the first time, across the Northern hemisphere.
18. The AUKUS pact has generated deep concern & anger in France, with a distinct & separate EU military concept under consideration, albeit many member states remain unconvinced of such a future.

**UK's information-led force.** The DCP has much to commend it, but at the expense of diminishing manpower, fewer platforms & the lack of resilience. Neither Putin-Russia, nor CCP-China's huge military investment & growth, linked to its aggression & relentless espionage effort, can be deterred by a UK information-led refinement of capability which seems more akin to a 21<sup>st</sup> century Sparta. The DCP does not allow for a sufficiency of mass to meet omnidirectional challenges & threats - the reality of which will occur. There is a powerful argument & need to retain a suitable scale of effort; mass cannot be replaced by technical wizardry.

19. The UK has aligned her defence strategy through an operational marriage with the US & is primarily configured for the European region. SDR15 aspirations were an illusion; DCP removes a serious all arms manoeuvre capability. Other than limited unilateral commitments, the UK will be reliant upon allies. NATO (Europe) has limited political appetite to project armed force & lacks investment.
20. UK defence industries, in particular, are a shadow of their former selves, with many owned by overseas investors. This remains a political blind spot, ignored by ministers who have been oblivious of the need to retain defence industrial resilience – especially in niche & highly regarded technical/scientific capabilities.
21. Politicians are oblivious to the lessons of history &, as an island trading nation, we have a deep reliance upon maritime trade to grow & prosper.
22. The DCP is rightly, though not exclusively, focused on Sino-Russian developments; they possess significant advantages of mass & advanced technology, against which the UK cannot unilaterally respond. There is little

value in possessing knowledge without a sufficiency of conventional deterrence & the means to prosecute a robust response, with a resilience to sustain it.

23. The EU's decision to deny UK participation in the Galileo project was political gamesmanship, betraying decades of investment, technical knowledge & trust. The OneWeb constellation of satellites is intended to provide national coherence & technical resilience, whilst simultaneously weakening European cohesion.

**MoD procurement challenges.** MoD procurement has suffered embarrassing failures over decades. There has been a myopia, ignoring the need for timely upgrades to retain effective in-service systems, affording sound decision-making, investment & time to field suitable replacements. The decision to discard capabilities prior to their replacement is being repeated by the DCP - a serious & imprudent gambol: "Nimrod" & GR9 aircraft being earlier examples.

24. The alienation of a resilient national defence industry remains as a strategic oversight, subjecting the Armed Forces to the vagaries & expense of exchange rate fluctuation & a lack of control & capacity.
25. AJAX is one of many project failures/scandals having had a 20-year gestation period. The Army has too many legacy systems, along with UORs bought piecemeal - many of which are unsuited to the DCP's aspirations & the acknowledged Putin-Russia threat.
26. There has been no grand strategic concept stating clear military requirements, with primary & designated alternative operational requirements; neither the desert (Iraq) nor extreme geography (AFG) featured in earlier defence reviews. Without political clarity, & with limited defence budgets, planning, logistics & procurement opportunities need to be tailored to suit 'the priority'. Should government decide to deploy forces to regions where topographical & climate extremes are evident, UORs add expense to an unbudgeted defence vote, causing delay & a pronounced logistical burden.
27. There remains an insufficient depth of procurement experience in the MoD, whereas industry has an inbuilt strength & a business-oriented DNA. The civil service should have a strong & rigorous procurement competence to manage this complex & long-term commitment; uniformed officers lack experience, longevity in-post & such appointments detract from their core business.
28. The tortuous & lengthy process of developing an operational requirement needs to be refined. The MoD needs a qualified group of sharp but experienced experts to manage projects &, once the outcome has been stated, to allow maturation. The military should set the requirement & operational parameters, thereafter, leaving the detail to the in-house experts.
29. The DCP should have focused on *potency, agility, commonality & deployability*, not forgetting the retention & sufficiency of mass; much seems to have been sacrificed to fund new advanced systems. The understandable need for advanced capabilities smacks of trying to achieve too much too quickly, focusing on narrow operational parameters that had been ignored for too long.
30. The RN remains convinced of the need to operate varied surface escort vessels, each being larger than their forebears. Operational requirements, capabilities & value could be better achieved by adapting a single surface escort hull rather than expensive & different designs - the necessary weapons systems to complement the role.
31. Air defence (AD) systems remain insufficient to protect deployed forces & UK key sites' defence. Tempest/ Taranis & HVM/Sceptre have undoubted capacity to meet these needs & should be enhanced to complement the land & maritime domain requirements.
32. Deployable medical support remains critically low. To overcome this, & to support the FCDO, an Oceanic Medical Group (OMG) should be generated with vessels taken from trade (funded by former EU payments/ NHS/MoD & personnel found from a coalition of NHS/Armed Forces/volunteers); compliance with the OECD would be achieved - the OMG should support the Armed Forces on operations.

**NATO 2030.** Alliance (European) members' defence expenditure remains below the endorsed minimum levels - a source of understandable frustration for the US, which is likely to be referred to in the US Global Posture Review. European political deceit, however shrouded, illustrates a reluctance to take defence responsibilities seriously.

33. NATO summit communiqués are long-winded & bear similarities to earlier ones. The aggression demonstrated by Putin-Russia, along with the malevolence of CCP-China, should be used by the UK to galvanise European members to adhere to their agreed investments & deepen NATO (European) resilience.
34. The deployment of a joint flotilla by alliance members would provide a powerful demonstration of unity, posture & intent, displaying global awareness & interest. CSG21 provides a powerful display of NATO/ European unity; similar deployments should be planned.

35. UK NATO membership is critical, providing backbone to European defence. The DCP dilutes an already diminished capability, reducing such resources by deploying them beyond the NATO region & sending mixed messages to friends & foes.

**Summary.** NATO remains the bedrock of UK defence policy, but it would be a hollow alliance without the continuing full involvement of the US. The UK has anchored its defence policy around US capabilities with the oft repeated assumption that American power will provide the depth to an otherwise weakening national capability.

36. The IR sets out international aspirations which are at odds to an already diminished defence capability. The DCP focus is on technological improvements, complementing the Integrated Operational Capability concept, but at the expense of reduced manpower, the premature retirement of key systems & it ignores the deficiencies in deployable medical capabilities & air defence systems.
37. Government & most MPs retain an illusion that the Armed Forces can deal with any contingency, ignoring limitations imposed by a lack of suitable resources & an insufficiency of trained manpower to deter, or respond to, omnidirectional threats or new commitments, in a timely manner.
38. Politicians need to realise that the MoD should be configured & resourced for pre-arranged & anticipated political requirements. Since SDR97, too many deployments to extreme regions have been politically ordained without sufficient time & preparation, denuding our NATO capabilities; funding, preparation & the necessary resources need to complement operational commitments.
39. There is insufficient fusion of governance. There is an insufficiency of suitable Armed Forces to achieve the aspirations set by the IR & DCP, not forgetting aid to the civil authorities. Once a trained & postured military capability has been lost, it is an illusion to believe one could be generated to counter the immediacy & speed of a 21<sup>st</sup> century threat.
40. There remains a lack of political appreciation & understanding for the need to properly fuse a ForDefSy concept to ensure the Armed Forces can undertake novel operations & standing commitments, not forgetting the continuing need to support the civil authorities.
41. Unanticipated shocks are increasingly prevalent, more so with weather madness, the growth of technology & global travel. Various shocks have been writ large since the UK voted-out of the EU, namely: the pandemic, AFG, EU friction & the growing challenges & enduring threats posed by Putin-Russia & CCP-China.

**Recommendations for UK government.** The following are made:

42. Foreign policy needs a succinct grand strategy (*long-term ForDefSy*), stating critical needs/requirements, with guaranteed funding to generate/maintain a sufficiency of capabilities.
43. Generate an Oceanic Medical Group (OMG): support FCDO (aid) & military operations.
44. Allocate more funds to military-security R&D, promoting novel innovative systems.
45. The primary military focus should be invested in the Euro-Atlantic region; global interests being secondary.
46. Limit policy documents' length by adopting Fact Sheet brevity; key & sensitive details to be classified.
47. The MoD should remodel & strengthen its procurement processes & minimise uniformed involvement.
48. Remodel the Armed Services into a deeply fused & pragmatic 21<sup>st</sup> century defence structure.
49. Potency, agility, commonality & deployability should be the predominant MoD focus, ensuring a confluence between design & sustainment.
50. Remodel the Services to a suit a 21<sup>st</sup> century defence-wide posture - *stop disruptive inter-Service rivalry*.
- RN to focus on a single escort hull, enabling a larger fleet & improved logistics.
  - Create a Coastal Force (CF) to operate in the EEZ-Atlantic. *All* OPVs/patrol vessels with crews to amalgamate, funded with former EU monies to generate this critical shortfall. CF to progressively grow & adopt a UK-designed/constructed corvette, with fast agile vessels to undertake counter-smuggling patrols, off-shore facility protection, fishery zone duties & disaster relief to support FCDO.
  - Army/RM reconfigure into powerful regiments, composed of several battalions, sub-divided into combat teams, with integrated potency & support, commanded by a Colonel. This would enhance operational integrity, roulement (Mali-style deployments) & littoral groups; strengthen regional affiliation.
  - Centralise land-support aircraft & crews within the Army (re-form the Royal Flying Corps).
  - RAF realign to support strategic defence commitments: intelligence/space domain; aviation defence & UK fixed site defence (aircraft/drone/missile); logistics (transport/aeromedical evacuation/air-to-air refuelling); defence-wide pilot training.

