

## Written evidence submitted by Hew Strachan (INR0049)

### **Covid-19 and national security**

Covid-19 is a national security, not just a health, issue. The possibility of a major pandemic was highlighted in the very first National Security Strategy in 2010, and the 2015 National Security Risk Register rated 'a major human health crisis' a tier 1 risk. And yet, a decade after their inception, neither the National Security Strategy nor the National Security Council had prompted sufficient preparation for a pandemic.

The adoption of both the NSS and the NSC in 2010 were, in part, responses to the realisation that international terrorism in particular had made the distinction between 'home' and 'away' no longer valid. That is also true of disease, as Covid-19 has shown. However, the tendency of departments to think in terms of one or other, and not to bridge the divide, has proved persistent. The only sustained discussion in the 2015 NSS of 'a major human health crisis' came in the chapter on 'projecting our global influence', not in that on 'protecting our people'. It presumed that Britain might have to battle disease elsewhere in the world (as it did with Ebola) in order to buttress international order, not that the same disease could devastate the UK. Presumably we shall not get it so wrong next time, but as we focus on our problems in 2020, we are in danger of repeating the same error, only in reverse. In putting our efforts into a domestic crisis, we are in danger of neglecting how Covid-19 will affect the global order, and what Britain's contribution to its stabilisation should be.

the NSS and the NSC were also intended to develop cross-departmental working in government. Here too, in the case of Covid-19, they have failed. This pandemic affects – to name only the most obvious and to do so in alphabetical order - the economy, education, food security, social care and transport, as well of course as health. These are not the responsibilities of the

'outward-facing' departments, the FCO and Defence, but all of them are dependent on the interconnection between 'home' and 'away', from the reliance on 'just-in time' logistics to universities' dependence on foreign students, from the procurement of PPE to the transmission of infection.

The roles of the NSS and NSC go further: they are there to shape 'security strategy'. The implication is that they address the present, perhaps in ways that are informed by the past, but with a view to creating a connection with the future. Public reporting on the crisis suggests that the NSC itself has not discussed the Covid-19 pandemic. Instead the preferred forum has been COBRA. The distinction is not entirely artificial: COBRA is convened solely to address an immediate crisis, although the decisions it takes can have long-term consequences, whereas the NSC is designed to adopt a more consequentialist approach. In this crisis, both past and future appear to have been at a discount. Much earlier planning for the possibility of a pandemic did not form the basis for governmental decision-making, and consideration of how to emerge from the lock-down and then how to address its longer-term ramifications were not apparent in the decision-making process.

These are negative, if instructive, points about the implications for national security of Covid-19. However, there are some positives, and they too have implications. The response to Covid-19 has depended not only on the relationship between government and health experts, but also on their joint engagement with the public. Popular engagement and participation have been central to the 'security strategy'. Every citizen is individually tasked with responsibility for his or her own health. All need to remain economically active if they can, but from their own homes; parents have to ensure their children are being educated; and communities are checking on the well-being of the vulnerable. It is hard to see the government initiating such an approach if the crisis had arisen in any other area of national security, including foreign policy and defence. But there are lessons here for both the latter – and like Covid-19 they blur the distinction between 'home' and 'away'.

## **The context of the recent past**

Recent prime ministers, particularly Tony Blair and David Cameron, tended to evoke the Second World War or the threat of 'existential conflict' when addressing the public on the use of armed force. After the 9/11 attacks in 2001, there was a mismatch between the rhetoric of major war and the sorts of wars in which Britain actually engaged. They did not in fact require national mobilisation; instead they were expeditionary campaigns, fought at considerable distance from the United Kingdom, and with limited resources. The British armed forces which have been engaged in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and elsewhere since 9/11 have been small and professional, and so have fewer connections with their parent society than if they were large, conscripted and fighting close to, or even on, the nation's frontiers. For the public, these have become not wars of 'necessity' (as would have been the case for an 'existential conflict'), but wars of choice.

The public's support for the armed forces has remained resiliently high, and on a par with that for doctors. Its doubts relate to the uses to which the armed forces have been put, and as the post 9/11 wars have become protracted and indecisive it has come to see them as 'victims', not 'victors'. The cumulative effect on politicians' perceptions of public opinion has prompted a change in strategic approach. Since 2014, and the cessation of offensive operations in Afghanistan, Britain has restricted its troops largely to training and assisting indigenous forces, so holding back from putting 'boots on the ground'. Active operations are undertaken by manned and unmanned aircraft and by special forces, whose profile remains low. In 2020 the British public is largely unaware that British troops are engaged in its name in many parts of the world, including in Iraq and Afghanistan. This is not just a defence issue. It is also a matter of foreign policy. The news cycle has become relentlessly domestic. There is therefore only limited appreciation of the context in which Britain might want to find itself using armed force.

## National security and the people

From the perspective of Whitehall or Westminster, the public's uncertainty with regard to national security can be seen as the result of some inherent fault in democracy, attributable to the fickleness of the electorate or the ignorance of the masses. It is not. The biggest swings in opinion on international security are manifestations of elite divisions, and in particular of responses from the political opposition. Democratic government by its nature promotes debate and difference, particularly among politicians and other opinion formers. In this market for ideas, public views are slow to change, remarkably consistent and for the most part entirely rational. According to Bruce Russett, opinion polling during the Cold War showed that 'most Americans are neither hawks nor doves, but ... owls'.<sup>1</sup>

The same is true of Britain today. If the public is confused on British policy in relation to the use of armed conflict over the last two decades, it has done no more than reflect a more fundamental problem: the confused and confusing strategies pursued by different governments in the same period. Take Afghanistan. Britain, as a loyal ally of the United States, delivered the second largest contribution to a war endorsed by both sides of the House. Despite that commitment, the government has expressed no clear interest in a peace process which looks fundamentally flawed, and which – even if it holds – is likely to jeopardise many of the gains made in that country.<sup>2</sup> There has been no effort to explain to those who fought, killed and died there what they were doing, let alone to set out to the wider public the contours of current British policy.

In such circumstances, the public ought to be confused. Surprisingly, it is much less so than might be expected. Most British citizens recognise the legal and moral objections to war in the abstract and the practical difficulties of delivering on its objectives, but they 'rally round the flag' when British troops are committed. Moreover, they have a clear grasp of the international

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<sup>1</sup> Bruce Russett, *Controlling the sword: the democratic governance of national security* (Cambridge Mass, 1990), pp 2, 85, 92-3, 157

<sup>2</sup> David Petraeus and Vance Serchuk, 'Can America trust the Taliban to prevent another 9/11?', *Foreign Affairs*, 1 April 2020

dimensions of national security. Recent opinion polling in Britain, conducted by YouGov for the Ministry of Defence in 2018-19, showed that 76 per cent of a poll of 1,900 people supported the proposition that the world needs NATO to ensure an enduring peace, with only 3 per cent disagreeing, and 73 per cent supported the proposal that the United Kingdom should use its armed forces to help a NATO ally if it were attacked, with 5 per cent disagreeing. A similar proportion – 76 per cent – endorsed the statement that the UK needs strong armed forces; 72 per cent believed that they keep Britain safe at home and abroad, 70 per cent that they help counter terrorism around the world, 68 per cent that they are doing a good job, and 67 per cent that they contribute to peace across the world. The percentages disagreeing with any of these propositions are small: respectively 8, 7, 8, 6 and 11 per cent.

The levels of endorsement are high for both major war and the use of the armed forces in support of humanitarian operations (66 per cent in the latter case). They also endorse the commitment to collective defence; indeed, they do so with more enthusiasm than that for national self-defence (perhaps because an external attack on the UK is seen as less probable). In other words, the public is not locked in a single conception of war, and appreciates the varied reasons for which British armed forces might be used.

Perhaps more challenging for the public is the foreign policy that underpins the use of force, rather than the use of force itself. The latter is much better reported than the former, as newspapers and broadcasters chase daily headlines rather than persistent and ongoing stories. Significantly 74 per cent of those polled knew little or nothing of the work of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.<sup>3</sup>

### **The democratic deficit**

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<sup>3</sup> YouGov polling for the Ministry of Defence, February 2019: fieldwork dates 31 May 2018 to 27 February 2019.

When Athens went to war with Sparta in 432 BC those citizens who took the decision knew that they themselves would do the fighting. Athens had a participatory democracy. Some states still do and use referendums even for defence-related issues: Switzerland is a case in point. Although Britain has twice recently used referendums, in 2014 and 2016, both over issues with national security implications, it has no constitutional provision for them. Britain's democracy – like that of most largish states – is representative, not participatory.

Since 1789 most European states, like Athens in the Peloponnesian War, have developed a strong relationship between citizenship and military service. Political rights carried the obligation to serve the state in time of need. Those who were free men understood the values for which they were fighting. With the end of the Cold War, many European states – recognising that the immediate danger to their own security had diminished but that the possibility of expeditionary warfare had increased – modified the idea of 'the nation in arms' and moved towards professionalisation. Many now regret that decision, and since 2014 states closer to Russia have begun to reverse the trend.

National service creates a public ownership of national security unfamiliar to Britain. Being an island, Britain depended in the past on its navy, not its army, for national defence, and the state demanded that its citizens put they put their hands in their pockets, more than their lives on the line. Income tax was first introduced as a war tax in 1799, meant that the voter had a direct financial interest in decisions regarding war and peace. Since 1945, as expenditure on health, education and social welfare has outstripped that on defence, so the opportunity which the defence estimates provided for parliament to have meaningful public discussion on the armed forces and their purpose has declined. Without debate, the opportunities to create deeper understanding are curtailed, and the public sense of ownership is diminished.

Those states with more extensive experience of conscription have developed a pattern of civil-military relations which the American political scientist, Samuel Huntington, called 'subjective military control'. He argued that, if the soldier was also a citizen, he would reflect the values of the

society from which he came and which he would be called to defend. In the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the young American republic had followed this model by putting its faith in the militia and by endorsing the right to bear arms. However, after the end of the Second World War Huntington argued for a different approach. As the Cold War set in, the United States maintained large forces in peacetime. The danger now was that a professional officer corps would want to lobby for its own interests and so intervene in politics. Huntington therefore prioritised what he called 'objective military control', which was designed to regulate the relationship between the armed forces and their government, not that between the armed forces and their parent society. It also expected professional armed services to be apolitical, despite the fact that they remained enfranchised citizens of a democratic state. The historical inspiration for this went back to Britain in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, when many parliamentarians saw standing armies under the control of the monarch as a threat to the constitution. Since 1945, in a reverse flow, Britain has reimported 'objective military control' from the United States, and so both denied the armed forces a public voice and contributed to their distancing from the society which they serve.

All three norms, those concerning conscription, the funding of defence, and civil-military relations, are now proving counter-productive. The British public cannot understand the workings or purpose of a body which is effectively silenced and with which they have little contact. In a democracy, this is counter-intuitive, but it is more than that: it is dangerous. The government, the armed forces and the electorate need to have a common understanding of the utility of defence and national security. Together they make up more than a series of bilateral relationships; ideally the bond is triangular, where each speaks to the others in the same register, so that its components have mutually reinforcing effects.

#### **Four unifying concepts**

What follow are four themes under which this triangular relationship can flourish and which can bring direct benefit to national security: resilience; deterrence; hybrid warfare; and, more controversially, strategic risk.

## **Resilience**

Covid-19 provides an ideal route into greater public ownership of national security through the idea of resilience. In the last two years biosecurity has twice been threatened, albeit in two different ways: by hostile intent in Salisbury in March 2018 and by disease in March 2020. Both have required public cooperation with first responders, emergency services and the armed forces. Flood response has been the other area in which societal resilience and government measures have interacted.

These developments are recent. The old term for the use of the armed forces in a domestic context, 'military aid to the civil power', implied that the domestic functions of the armed forces were to provide support to the police in maintaining public order. In 1977, the last time that the armed forces were mobilised at levels comparable with those in the Covid-19 crisis, they provided cover during the firemen's strike and so could be seen, at least indirectly, as strike breakers. The 2010 coalition government was reluctant to call out the armed forces. It did not do so in August 2011, when riots, which began in Croydon and spread to other parts of the country, put the emergency services under major strain; it was slow to use troops when the security arrangements for the 2012 London Olympics began to unravel; and it was still reluctant during the Somerset floods in the winter of 2013-14. That stance changed with the 2015 NSS, and it was embodied in a policy paper on what was now called 'military aid to the civilian authorities', published in August 2016.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/2015-to-2020-government-policy-military-aid-to-the-civil-authorities-for-activities-in-the-uk/2015-to-2020-government-policy-military-aid-to-the-civil-authorities-for-activities-in-the-uk>

Cybersecurity is another aspect of societal resilience which cannot just be left to government. The pervasive role of IT means that this form of security is an individual as well as collective responsibility, and the advent of 5G is going to intensify these issues. The private sector and the wider public have to temper the pursuit of profit with the elevation of security, and realise that the neglect of the latter could itself erode the former.

Resilience is not to be understood solely in relation to domestic policy. Covid-19 has revealed its international dimensions. The FCO was unable to respond in a timely or coherent way to the needs of British citizens caught overseas; its consular services proved inadequate by comparison with (say) those of Germany, and its advice, when it was forthcoming, was inconsistent. For both the FCO and the security services, Covid-19 provides a further challenge which affects domestic security: its mobilisation as a tool for religious fundamentalism, with its capacity to feed international terrorism, and its use by states, including both China and the United States, in ways that foment domestic division. The pandemic demands not a withdrawal from international cooperation in the pursuit national objectives, but its intensification.

## **Deterrence**

The 2015 NSS addressed deterrence directly but failed to achieve public buy-in. This is one reason why resilience should come first, but the two are linked. The effect of ignoring domestic resilience is to undermine deterrence. As with resilience, societal ownership strengthens deterrence. If the public does not understand what they are interested in defending or what they will fight for, then an enemy will assume that the democratic state will pursue every policy option short of war, but not war itself. The Argentinians made that assumption in 1982; Saddam Hussein did so twice over, in 1990 and 2003; and Putin continues to do so in Russia's 'near abroad'. Being forced to go to war because deterrence has failed may reinforce deterrence in the future but at the significant price of deterrence failure in the short term.

The public debate on deterrence has collapsed since the end of the Cold War, and not just in Britain. Academics, who originally drove expert thinking, have moved on to other areas of study, notably terrorism and now the international dimensions of pandemics, and governments have become wary of encouraging debate on an issue which has a capacity to divide opinion. Although Russia's re-emergence as a threat since 2013–14 has prompted recognition that deterrence has a part to play, the nervousness around its association with nuclear weapons has constrained the ways in which it has been articulated. Conventional deterrence is not a whole answer: it is part of wider deterrence, which includes nuclear weapons. Britain struggles to produce coherent deterrence because it is reluctant to think through the strategic links between conventional and nuclear capabilities. They support each other in making deterrence credible and in clarifying the steps of escalation within it. The regional pressure for Britain to lead on this will only increase with the demise of the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) agreement. Now that the United States has confirmed its withdrawal from the INF agreement, its European partners will be forced to confront their own conceptions of regional nuclear deterrence (as President Macron has begun to do for France), and the place of their conventional forces within it.

### **Hybrid warfare**

'Hybrid war' is conceptually important because it highlights the role of popular opinion in shaping national strategy. In 2014 the phrase 'hybrid war', coined in the United States for use in a very different context, acquired new force thanks to its association with the Russian attack on eastern Ukraine. In the frenzy that followed, much of it stoked by NATO itself, the press and public were presented with the Russians, not the Americans, as the progenitors of hybrid war. In practice, Russia's use of subversion and its readiness to attack public opinion were not new. They were widely employed by all sides in the two world wars and especially in the Cold War. However, the means for

waging such 'wars' are much more sophisticated than they were 25 years ago. 'Hybrid war' as it is now construed is less about 'real war' than about political influence as a substitute for war.

In addition, 'hybrid war' has become a prism through which the west can examine its own vulnerabilities rather than a statement about the character of contemporary war. NATO worries about populism within its own borders and about the influence of hostile online media in shaping opinion and disseminating fake news. For Britain specifically the 'external' threat posed by Russian military action is geographically remote. What matters is the use of the web and of influence operations as part of hybrid warfare for the promotion of messages which divide British society against itself. The reason for concern is that these divisions are already present, and they can therefore be easily exploited by malign and covert actors. Britain's demonisation of 'hybrid war' rests on an implicit recognition of its own weaknesses, although they are themselves the product of a free society

### **Strategic risk**

The 2010 NSS and its successors have been predicated on a new tool, the National Security Risk Register. In the case of Covid-19, the prioritisation of a pandemic as a tier 1 risk has not been of much obvious benefit. But there is a broader issue. The risk register institutionalises the tendency to see risk in one way only – as a threat, and one to be countered. Risk, particularly in armed conflict, is also about opportunity and recognising the need to seize it. Our collective failure to see the role of risk-taking, as opposed to risk-avoidance, in the making of strategy has weakened our responses. We have come to see the word 'crisis' in similar terms: not as a moment in time, which might have either a positive or a negative outcome (as in the Cuban missile crisis in 1962), but simply as a threat to our stability.

Such an approach is totally inadequate as the post-1945 multilateral institutions unravel. Their principal author, the United States, in a trend reinforced more than initiated by its current president, has directly attacked the United Nations, NATO and most recently the World Health

Organisation. Within Europe, the European Union has struggled to respond collectively to the challenge of Covid-19, with northern states resisting community-wide responses which would benefit Italy and Spain in particular. Britain, having made its own contribution to the unravelling of the EU, has stressed its commitment to NATO as the most effective provider of multilateral security. That may be justified, but at the NATO leaders' meeting in Watford on 3-4 December 2019 Turkey prioritised its Syrian border, France southern Europe and migration from North Africa, and the United States the rise of China.

Britain's own message is mixed, precisely because it is hedging its bets, but it therefore creates confusion – and at elite levels as well as for the public. Does it see China as the United States does, as a potential adversary, or is it a future major trading partner? How does Britain respond to the implication of the US's position, which is to focus on the Pacific, not the North Atlantic? The deployment of HMS *Queen Elizabeth* to the South China Sea in 2021 provides one indication, which is to follow the US, but that sits uneasily with the government's decision on Huawei and 5G, which flouts it. What is the level of Britain's commitment to a regional security architecture within Europe, especially if France and Germany are its main drivers? Brexit creates ambiguity, particularly when the distinction between the political and the economic dimensions of a future relationship remain unclear, and when the security downsides of Brexit are glossed over. It was these, after all, which David Cameron made a centrepiece of his campaign for a vote to remain in 2016.

Over the course of the last decade, successive NSSs have resisted statements on the United Kingdom's national interests in terms which are concrete and specific, preferring the vague or aspirational. Britain's most recent wars, those fought since 9/11, have been fought out of its desire to be a loyal ally to the US, and so have effectively made the maintenance of that alliance its primary national interest. But it has never explicitly said so. Making choices carries risks and opportunity costs, but cleaving to general statements about a rules-based international order is not sufficient in

itself to explain to the British public what Britain's foreign policy is. It also scatters, rather than focuses, resource. This is the first order question for a national security review. It is hard to decide on ways and means without knowing the ends. Clarity here will provide a framework around which government, experts and the public can cohere.

### **Specific recommendations**

**A national security strategy is a public document, and yet the level of public response to the release of previous NSSs, particularly to that of 2015, has not been high. If the Integrated Review fails to trigger a national debate which can engage public opinion, and so enhance public understanding, it will fail more generally. That engagement should begin at the review's preparatory stages, not just through engagement with outside experts (although that should happen), but also through wider and more open debate so that there is a *national* response to its publication.** Advance consideration of its process, aims and content by the relevant parliamentary committees can contribute to that result, especially if governmental replies to any reports are explicit and to the point. Regional forums – perhaps through the Resilience Committees – could harvest some of the lessons from Covid-19 and break the London-centric focus of the process. The Labour government's Strategic Defence Review in 1997-8 incorporated some of these elements and showed that preliminary discussion can contribute to a national consensus and a shared understanding. Actual publication needs to lead with the big ideas, not with the detail; in 2015 the press focused on equipment and on defence specifics, and so lost the wider context, into which much thought had gone but which was largely overlooked. A different approach can help put the national security strategy on a new footing.

**It will not stay on that footing if there are no other changes in behaviour. Some changes follow from ideas already present in official thinking on national security.** On 23 January 2018 the government announced the creation of the **National Security Communications Unit**, to tackle

disinformation produced by external state actors and others. The National Security Capability Review described it as ‘an enhanced capability’ to give senior officials ‘access to a broad cross-government group of communications professionals who can work centrally or alongside them to achieve communications objectives as an integrated part of the government’s approach to national security’.<sup>5</sup> This approach accords with the **Fusion Doctrine**, which has become the shaping concept for British national security and is focused on integrating the activities of different government departments. Sir Mark Sedwill, in his capacity as the National Security Advisor, said that the Communications Unit would focus its efforts on people outside, not within, the UK.<sup>6</sup> It should do both. The Fusion Doctrine uses senior responsible officers (SROs) to deliver components of the government’s package for national security which reach across departments. **The Integrated Review should nominate an SRO to deliver on the aim of public engagement in national security.**

**The SRO, while coordinating, will also need to delegate, decentralise and democratise communications on national security, defence and foreign affairs.** It is now impossible to control the narrative centrally, and by trying to do so government communications in these areas have become slow, reactive and anodyne. Of course, openness must be compatible with national security, but far too much that is given a security classification could be more effectively deployed as open source information. The communications of both the FCO and the Ministry of Defence need to be decentralised so that those who are the experts and the deliverers, not anonymous spokespersons, do the talking. They should be trusted to use social media and similar platforms in responsible ways. They should be able to speak directly to the press and should receive training to do so. If soldiers are trusted to use lethal force, they should be regarded as responsible enough to explain why they have done so. Even before the Covid-19 crisis, the public put more faith in professional experts than in politicians; that trend has now intensified. If the government is ready to allow the Chief Medical Officer to speak to the BBC about epidemiology, or senior police officers about knife crime, why is it

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<sup>5</sup> HM Government. 2018. *National Security Capability Review*. London: Cabinet Office, 4

<sup>6</sup> evidence to the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy on 28 January 2019

reluctant to allow an ambassador to explain the thinking of a country to which he or she is accredited, the Chief of the Defence Staff to speak about strategy, or a commanding officer to explain why somebody in his or her unit was killed?

The Armed Forces Covenant was set up specifically to address the relationships between the armed forces, the people and the government. It has done so in many ways, but it has failed to create genuine empathy: high levels of support for the armed services are not matched by comparable levels of understanding. The emphasis has been on getting the armed forces out of their bases to the public, but current serving personnel are too few in number and too concentrated geographically for this to work across the UK, a point reflected in the regional differences in knowledge concerning the armed forces. The flow has to be the other way around. The public should be brought to the armed forces. The Armed Forces Covenant Fund should be used to promote understanding of today's armed forces through forms of direct public engagement about current commitments. It has become disproportionately concerned with the past (especially with veterans and the two world wars), rather than with the present and future. According to opinion polls, 65 per cent of the British public know little or nothing of the armed forces, and 68 per cent say that of the Ministry of Defence specifically.<sup>7</sup>

**Britain needs to break its near-universal and almost impermeable consensus against discussing national service.** Other countries have done or are doing so. In Denmark basic conscription is four months and mostly focused on broad national service, with this service providing a recruitment pool for military service. In France, President Macron, reflecting a growing French concern about some of the same issues which face Britain, has opened a debate about national service broadly defined (not just confined to the armed forces) and with a limited commitment. Some states, notably Sweden and Lithuania, have been readier to return directly to conscription, and

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<sup>7</sup> YouGov polling for the Ministry of Defence, February 2019: fieldwork dates 31 May 2018 to 27 February 2019.

its existence – for example in Norway and Estonia – has made the debate on defence much more national. Not to discuss national service is to limit the debate artificially.

**British strategy needs to be explicit about the capabilities for which its armed forces are configured.** The decision for war is rarely a binary choice between war and peace, as recent British practice makes clear. The Chief of Defence Staff talks about an era of ‘constant competition’, and current military doctrine is reluctant to use the word ‘victory’, with its battlefield connotations and expectation of a clear-cut result. Diplomacy may offer the better route forward, especially given a hope to avoid armed conflict entirely or to contain it if it is employed. Britain cannot fight a major war on its own, and there is little point in politicians using the vocabulary of such conflicts to explain the very different sorts of war which Britain is equipped to undertake today.<sup>8</sup> The public needs to understand that. The 2010 and 2015 National Security Strategies suggested that Britain has a narrative about itself, which embraces the sorts of situations in which it is more likely to act and in which its sense of its own identity is bound up. Narratives which explain how, why and where Britain might use armed force, and which capabilities it might use, are therefore possible. Although necessarily constructed around hypothetical situations, they can make more explicit what might otherwise seem abstract, and so deepen public understanding.

***May 2020***

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