

**Written evidence from the Oxford Changing Character of War Centre,
University of Oxford (NSS0003)**

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The Purpose of this Report

The purpose of this report is to offer a concise assessment of the National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review (NSS & SDSR). It is intended for those working on the Parliamentary Select Committee.

The Committee expressed the view that it is particularly interested in receiving assessments which consider:

1. Whether the NSS & SDSR 2015 is a practical guide to investment choices across Government Departments, to operational priorities and to crisis response
2. How the NSS & SDSR 2015 addresses risk and contingency planning
3. Whether the NSS & SDSR 2015 defines "national security" in sufficiently broad terms and achieves an appropriate balance between military, economic and environmental risks
4. Whether the military voice is sufficiently represented
5. The implications of merging the National Security Strategy with the Strategic Defence and Security Review
6. The extent to which the NSS & SDSR 2015 is founded on a realistic assessment of the UK's future goals, position in the world and uncertain future relationships with international organisations and nation states
7. Whether the links between domestic security and international security are sufficiently developed in the NSS & SDSR 2015
8. How the UK NSS & SDSR 2015 compares with similar strategies in other countries, notably the United States and France
9. Whether Joint Force 2025 will meet the strategic requirements set out in the NSS & SDSR 2015

About the CCW Centre and its Research

The Oxford Changing Character of War (CCW) Centre is devoted to the interdisciplinary study of war, strategy and the implications of armed conflict. It is a successful, world class research programme enjoying global influence, and connected to scholars of the highest standing at the University of Oxford, throughout the United Kingdom and around the world. The CCW Centre is the catalyst to critical thinking beyond the academy, and has a strong track record of advice to the government of the United Kingdom and its armed forces, as well as many other countries. The excellence of our comparative work and our ability to blend theoretical and applied understanding are particularly highly valued and meet the exacting standards of the University of Oxford. The CCW Centre convenes the national 'Strategy Forum' which utilises a diverse field of experts to assist the Chief of the Defence Staff. We have a proven track record in the delivery of high quality, high impact events on all aspects of defence and security. We have a close but critical relationship with many defence institutions internationally and we are valued for our ability to generate original thinking.

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Overall Assessment of the NSS & SDSR 2015

1. The NSS & SDSR 2015 (The 'Review') identifies a range of threats and specifies the means to counter them. The **priorities for the government** are concerned with ensuring the UK economy prospers, but from a security and defence perspective, it is the protection of the people that matters the most. The Review gives justifications for its priorities, its spending and its reorganisation.
2. The Review **addresses values but does not specify the defence of our national interests**. These are somewhat scattered through the Review. While the NSS & SDSR does identify clear priorities, the Prime Minister's foreword appears to emphasise the Prosperity of the UK as the most important, whereas the rest of the review suggests that Protection of the People is more significant. This could have implications for our overseas interests.
3. National strategy, while focussed on external affairs, is invariably shaped and sometimes determined by domestic agendas. This is certainly true of this Review. The financial crisis of 2008 rather obscured some structural difficulties within the UK economy which will continue to play out over the next few decades. The 2010 SDSR emphasised the necessity of economising cuts in defence with a rebalancing towards security and counter-terrorism. It is surprising to find that **while protecting our people is a priority in this 2015 Review, protecting our economy is not**. It is given a later section within the review but, based on the assumption that the economy is an asset or an end in itself, its actual 'defence' is under-developed as a set of ideas.
4. There is **insufficient emphasis on the central role played by the United States** in the United Kingdom's defence and security. While there is mention of the intelligence-sharing and joint missions over recent decades, our maritime, land and air security is intimately dependent on the United States, and our space security is totally dependent on this key partner nation. The Review makes more mention of Europe than the United States, but the European Union has proven itself incapable of a coherent defence and security posture, and it remains entirely dependent on NATO led by the United States. In terms of regional counter-terrorism, the United Kingdom (in common with other individual states like France) is a far more important player than the EU as a collective body. Strategically, it would be fair to anticipate greater bilateralism and coalition-building in the future, which the Review almost grasps.
5. The section of the Review on **global influence assumes that influence works in only one direction**, yet one of the consequences of being allied and partnered as densely as the United Kingdom is, is that **obligations on this nation increase**. This may become an acute problem if the United States adopts a more neutral posture towards Europe's defence.
6. Like many defence and security reviews, there is considerably **more emphasis on 'means' rather than 'ways'**. If the 'ends' are broadly: (1) protecting of the people, (2) maintaining influence over others and (3) maintaining the country's leading economic position, then the 'ways' are limited to: (1) 'deterrence', (2) benign 'influence' (or 'soft power' as it is described in the Review), (3) maintaining alliances and partnerships (including financial and economic ones) and (4) better e-security through intelligence and cyber systems. Most of the Review mixes ways and means (especially the chapter on 'Protecting Our People'). The failure to correctly align ends, ways and means, the 'rational calculus' of conflict, can lead to confusion, waste

and defeat. That said, flexibility by avoiding too detailed a prescription, and adaptation are crucial to success. The Review **would have benefited from a greater emphasis on flexibility and adaptability through innovation and thinking.**

7. **Counter-terrorism will be a priority for intelligence services and law enforcement agencies, but less of a priority for defence and the armed services.** The government has an important role to play in reassurance, clear statement of principles and intent, and resolve against terrorism, especially when it is generated from within the UK.
8. Although the European Union is mentioned, the government has argued that leaving the EU would increase the risk of attacks on the UK mainland, but there is no evidence in the Review to support such a claim. Indeed, **the Review implies that, regardless of EU membership, the UK faces a major terrorist threat which the government regards as a priority.**
9. Most surprising is the **absence of detailed references to cybercrime**, even though it costs the UK £24 billion every year. This **represents the equivalent of two thirds of the defence budget**, a vast sum, and surely one that merits greater detail in the Review.
10. The relative value and effectiveness of ‘soft power’ is vaunted in the Review, but influence has a tendency to fail just when its effect is needed most and is no substitute for a firm alliance. **The gap that might develop between the Europeans and the United States, which would have the most profound and serious strategic consequences for the UK. Consequently, the commitment to interoperability with the United States, as a priority over other nations, is welcomed.**
11. The commitment to the UN is important, but **doubling the numbers of personnel involved in UN peacekeeping is unlikely to fulfil UK policy intentions of greater influence.**
12. The most significant development in the Review was the **clear statement of Russia’s threatening stance.** The illegal annexation of Crimea from Ukraine and fostering of the conflict in the Donbass region, in contravention of the international law which, as a member of the UN Security Council, Russia is supposed to uphold, was rightly identified as an important new factor for the NSS and SDSR 2015. The Review’s assessment of threats and challenges was comprehensive.
13. The Review notes the importance of the **Critical National Infrastructure, but little is specified about how it is to be defended** and there is only reference to ‘resilience’ and not ‘regeneration’. **There is a distinct need to engage the public in their defence and security**, potentially through a scheme of civil defence appropriate to the twenty-first century.
14. The Review states that the **UK will treat a cyber attack on the UK as seriously as a conventional attack. Currently, that would be difficult to justify** under the existing Law of Armed Conflict or principles of *Jus ad Bellum* and much more detail would be required. The announcement of a **new Cyber Security Strategy is much needed.** Private sector co-operation and public consent will be vital to its implementation. The criticality of our and our allies’ **space assets** is given some attention in the Review but its protection requires further research and development.
15. **An area for clarification is the response to the threat to our overseas territories** especially the Falklands.

16. Announcements on the **new equipment for the UK Armed Forces is to be welcomed**. To augment the reserves, further adjustment will be needed to fit the UK labour market.
17. The Review rightly endorses the **upgrading and modernisation of our independent nuclear deterrent**.
18. There needs to be clarification about precisely how defence and security enhance the results of the prosperity agenda. The Building Stability Overseas strategy and budget needs careful review to be certain of its effectiveness.
19. **For implementation of the NSS, there will need to be careful synchronisation to avoid unnecessary duplication** of the work of the various committees and sub-structures, including the JIC. There needs to be close co-operation between those focussed on domestic and overseas security issues, but that should not mean any blending of security and defence organisations. **What the UK needs is synchronised responses**.

Assessment of 1 Vision, Values and Approach

20. According to the Review, the ‘ends’ of the United Kingdom’s Defence and Security are broadly: (1) protection of the people, (2) maintaining influence over others globally and (3) maintaining the country’s leading economic position.
21. **The Review places more emphasis on ‘means’ rather than ‘ways’.** The ‘ways’ are limited to: (1) ‘deterrence’, (2) benign ‘influence’ (or ‘soft power’ as it is described in the Review), (3) maintaining alliances and partnerships (including financial and economic ones) and (4) better e-security through intelligence and cyber systems.
22. Most of the Review mixes ways and means. For example, paragraph 1.3 places the means, the armed forces and intelligence agencies, alongside ways such as ‘soft power’ but does not mention deterrence.
23. **The Review’s ‘vision’ sometimes spells out and at other times infers that terrorism is the priority.** Annex A reinforces this assessment by correlating level of threat (impact) to probability of occurrence (likelihood). The methodology of such an assessment is deeply flawed. While terrorist attacks may be likely, their impact may be over-emphasised, especially in economic terms. The damage of terrorism is invariably disproportionate and costly, but it is less damaging and costly than an international conflict. **Counter-terrorism will be a priority for intelligence services and law enforcement agencies, but less of a priority for defence and the armed services.**
24. The rules-based international order is listed correctly under our vision and values. There is mention, later in the Review, of the need to engage developing nations that have overlooked the rules-based order, and the need to continue to work closely with major states, like Russia, which have recently acted unilaterally and in defiance of the established international system. **The full implications for our defence and national security of the erosion of the international rules-based order are not spelled out, but should have been included in the Review.** The UK armed forces will potentially have to operate in environments where norms and standards are not applied by others, and yet they are subject to them themselves. The armed forces require guidance on how they are to operate under such conditions and the government needs to be clear on its thresholds against existential threats and other forms of expeditionary strategy.
25. There is a **great deal of rhetoric** that may reassure, fulfilling one of the secondary purposes of a security and defence review, but these rarely offer much that can be actioned. One phrase will serve as an example: in paragraph 1.8, p. 10, the Review claims that the United Kingdom will ‘work ever more closely with allies and partners overseas’, and yet the first mention of the United States, the UK’s most strategically important ally is not mentioned until chapter 2 on page 14. The phrase ‘ever more closely’ can easily be associated with the phrase ‘ever closer union’ which the Prime Minister has rejected with regard to the future of the European Union. In this, critics of the government, or of the Review, will sense a contradiction. Moreover, would the ‘ever more closely’ apply equally to allies and partners such as Jordan, Oman and Saudi Arabia, or to our NATO ally Turkey, all of which find themselves on the front line against the so-called Islamic State movement, or Russia, or both? And if so, how would this be manifest? **It implies that the UK is seeking to increase its international influence, perhaps even project its power, without acknowledging the obligations and commitments this might suggest.** In short, a deployable

division, two aircraft carriers, and two extra squadrons of Typhoons might not be enough to fulfil this new global commitment.

26. It is right to spell out **our national values** (1.6) **but there should be a reference to our national interests**, and even some sense of our limits and constraints as well as opportunities. If, for example, the United Kingdom stands for the ‘equality of opportunity’, there should be a statement of realism about some of our allies and partners who fall short of this standard, and perhaps reassurance that the United Kingdom would not seek to impose but set an example in how such standards increase prosperity and strengthen democracy through diversity, opportunity and innovation. Specifying our national interests would reassure some of our partners and allies, and the Review did at least mention France, Germany, the United States and Japan in this regard.
27. The **national security objectives** as stated in paragraphs 1.11-1.15 are **prioritised differently** in the Prime Minister’s Foreword (pp. 5-7). The Prime Minister emphasises prosperity as the means and ways to ensure protection, by enabling greater spending on defence and security. The Review’s objectives instead imply that the priority is to protect the people. However, it is striking that the first bullet point-paragraph of this section (1.11) on ‘Protecting Our People’ refers not to an objective, but to government spending. Indeed, this is also true of the first bullet point in the second objective (Project our Global Influence, 1.13) which spells out what has been spent and allocated.
28. What this reveals is that the purpose of the Review was, in part, the government’s desire to persuade the MOD and the armed forces that cuts had been necessary in 2010 but that this review was sufficiently resourcing defence and security for the next five years. The government cut £500 million from defence in 2015, the year of the Review, and analysts state that defence spending will increase for the first time in over five years in 2016. **The Review does not detail the breakdown of spending on defence**, currently at £34 billion, but there has been an expectation that efficiency savings will account for a further 1.3 % of a cut in real terms in 2016.
29. Taken together, neither objective 1 nor objective 2 give any indication that, if implemented, they would have prevented **mass casualty terrorist attacks on UK nationals** that occurred in Tunisia, 26 June 2015; or Paris, 7 January and 13 November 2015. Although the European Union is mentioned, the government has argued that leaving the EU would increase the risk of attacks on the UK mainland, but there is no evidence in the Review to support such a claim. Indeed, the Review implies that, regardless of EU membership, the UK faces a major terrorist threat which the government regards as a priority.
30. Objective 3 identifies the desire to ‘promote our prosperity’ but the outline is a disappointingly vague reference to what industry and commerce do every day. There is no reference to how UK commerce and industry is to be ‘promoted’ in the context of defence and security, except that idea that the government would ‘work closely’ with various sectors. Most surprising is the **absence of detailed references here to cybercrime**, even though elsewhere in the Review (3.13) there is a reference to a staggering cost of £24 billion to the UK every year. This **represents the equivalent of two thirds of the defence budget**, a staggering sum, and surely one that merits greater detail in the Review.

31. The failure to correctly align ends, ways and means, the ‘rational calculus’ of conflict, can lead to confusion, waste and defeat. That said, flexibility by avoiding too detailed a prescription, and adaptation are crucial to success. The Review **would have benefited from a greater emphasis on flexibility and adaptability through innovation, the structure of the armed forces and intelligence services, and the agility of our thinking.** While it is commendable to have references to deployable forces, influence and financial power, the confusion of ways and means and **the relative absence of some important issues – deterrence and cyber security- in the list of national priorities is to be regretted.**

Assessment of 2 UK: Strong, Influential, Global

32. Chapter 2 which assesses the United Kingdom’s strengths implies rather than specifies some strategic opportunities.
33. Paragraph 2.7 makes reference to ‘soft power’, a term coined by Professor Joseph Nye to differentiate the application of force as ‘hard power’. **The relative value and effectiveness of ‘soft power’ is much disputed. Influence has a tendency to fail just when its effect is needed most.** It cannot substitute for firm and constantly maintained alliances. To illustrate the point, one may take the example of the Scandinavian and Baltic states. Troubled by the aggressive posture of Russia, they look to the United Kingdom to provide not soft power but a firm commitment to assist should there be an international incident with Moscow.
34. On the other hand, soft power influence has been vital in changing the perception of the UK as a colonial power to a modernising country, embracing actively the tools and values of modernity. The **diplomatic challenge** is to present both continuity, in commitment, to our partners in the Gulf and member states of the Commonwealth, and that modernising change. In more conservative countries, Britain’s modernity is seen as frivolous and regrettable, but there is great respect for the institutions of parliament, free speech, free association, the legal system and respect for privacy and property.
35. What the Review does not mention here are the structural problems with the UK economy or the opportunities that could be developed as strengths. The relative weakness of UK manufacturing and exports, in global terms, could be addressed by higher productivity which, in turn, could be achieved through greater automation. The influx of cheap labour, which has been the default process, has not addressed the fundamental problem. **Greater automation** could lead to a renaissance of UK manufacturing, a healthier balance of payments, a reduction in the deficit and reproduce the economic take off associated with the first British-led industrial revolution. In the nineteenth century, it was automation of the textile industry and the mechanisation of other industries, for example, that generated wealth for these islands. Automation in the defence and security sector is underway. Moreover, while an ageing population is frequently cited as a financial burden, embracing the elder parts of society as future IT operators, including financial specialists, would halt the endless extension of the pension age and the costs of support. The service sector, while identified rightly as a major strength of the UK economy today, cannot be assumed to continue in its dominant position in the future, but **enrolling the ‘third**

age’ generation in the ‘prosperity agenda’, and, indeed, in cyber security, could be a significant advantage if incentivised.

36. An omission from the Review, but a potential strength, is the **role of the people in civil defence appropriate to the twenty-first century**. Unlike the mobilisations of the twentieth century, which often required a significant transformation of employment, civil defence in this century may be much more closely aligned to current roles because of the advent of electronic communications and social media. Volunteer support to the emergency services, security services and in defence of our critical national infrastructure could be achieved through a simple process of recognition of that role. Such a development would close the gap between the public and recent overseas security and defence missions. The professionalization of our armed forces and the specialist work of government in tackling overseas threats and keeping the public safe has had the inadvertent effect of creating greater distance between them. A new approach to civil defence could give the public a stake in their security, help them to appreciate the important work of counter-terrorism, and, enable to contribute to the national defence and security effort. Schemes in Finland have already proven a success and are being considered in Sweden, but the UK could lead in this important area.

Assessment of 3 The National Security Context

37. The chapter on the national security context is an accurate assessment of threats. The greatest emphasis of the NSS and SDSR 2015 is on terrorism which is problematic. There is also a recurrent theme of the consequences of state instability, and subsequent sections on organised crime and pandemics.
38. The most significant development however was the clear statement of **Russia’s threatening stance in eastern Europe and subsequently in Syria**. The illegal annexation of Crimea from Ukraine and fostering of the conflict in the Donbass region, in contravention of the international law which, as a member of the UN Security Council, Russia is supposed to uphold, was rightly identified as an important new factor for the NSS and SDSR 2015.
39. Each of the challenges and threats identified is accompanied with a brief explanation of the counter-measures being used. In the case of Russia, reference is made to NATO’s task forces, economic sanctions and dialogue at the United Nations. Each of the challenges listed appears to be accurate, and implies that the UK faces a wide variety of threats which require modularised defences and investment in security.

Assessment of 4 Protecting Our People

40. While the majority of this chapter is sound and welcome, **some of the statements that appear seem inconsistent and require clarification**. Paragraph 4.135 notes the importance of the Critical National Infrastructure, but little is specified about how it is to be defended and there is only reference to ‘resilience’ and not ‘regeneration’.
41. In another example, paragraph 4.10 states that the **UK will treat a cyber attack on the UK as seriously as a conventional attack. Currently, that would be difficult to**

justify under the existing Law of Armed Conflict or principles of *Jus ad Bellum* and much more detail would be required: would the same standard apply if it was a NATO ally? What means of retaliation would be deemed appropriate for a cyber attack that inflicted the same degree of damage as a terrorist outrage, but did not amount to a full scale attack in the conventional sense?

42. Another **area for clarification is the threat to our overseas territories** (4.17). The nature of these threats are very varied, from a significant conventional or hybrid threat to the Falklands to narcotics trafficking in the Caribbean. Paragraph 4.20 suggests that conventional armed forces are the lead element in countering these threats, but no mention is made of our security services or joint working between security and defence organisations.
43. On border security (4.23), the Review notes that since the UK is not part of the Schengen area it retains control of its borders and of the migration surge of 2014-16. However, the EU has been pressing for the UK to accept more migrants as well as the quota of refugees direct from the Middle East and Levant. Screening of the migrants by EU members has been haphazard or non-existent, and several EU countries have ignored the responsibility to hold migrants at the first country they arrive in. This undermines the Review's implicit faith in the EU as a responsible partner in the UK's defence and security. The deduction must be that the **UK's borders are not as secure as is claimed, especially against the developing 'insider threat'**.
44. The development of a Joint Force 2025 is to be welcomed, as is the increase in defence spending, expansion of the security services personnel and budget (4.38).
45. The announcement that the **Royal Navy will get new lighter class frigates** is especially good news since there was a danger that the development of two carrier groups would deprive the navy of the flexibility it needed, especially for operations in littorals (4.47).
46. The **British Army's deployable Division** with additional assets for other operations is welcomed (4.48). The army needs to focus its energies on warfighting, while the new and emerging tasks of information warfare, aside from its own integral Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) force, would be best placed in entirely separate and dedicated formations.
47. The **RAF's mixed fleet of Typhoon strike squadrons, new remotely piloted systems, and modernised lift** are also warmly welcomed (4.49).
48. It is not yet clear where the bulk of the UK's cyber effort (4.103) will be concentrated, but a layered defence, distributed across the entire spectrum of services and agencies, with strong private sector involvement, is the ideal. The announcement of a **new Cyber Security Strategy is to be welcomed**. Private sector co-operation and public consent will be vital to its implementation.
49. Protection of our and our allies' **space assets** is given some attention in the Review (4.150), and it is a strategically critical element in our entire economic, defence and security apparatus. This requires further research and development.
50. The **involvement of the Reserves is now vital, but there must be a constant effort to align defence employment arrangements to the needs of the UK workforce and industry** (4.56). The Reservists could form the nucleus of a new civil defence programme and help identify occupations required in the case of a national emergency that required the defence or regeneration of our critical national infrastructure.

51. It is particularly reassuring to find that the Review endorses the **upgrading and modernisation of our independent nuclear deterrent** (4.63). The cost has been spread over the next two decades which is a sensible move. Close co-operation with our allies would create an economy of scale and should be explored.
52. The counter terrorism strategy (4.80) (CONTEST: prevent, pursue, protect) remains extant, but ‘prevent’ has often attracted media criticism and charges of ineffectiveness. **The government has an important role to play in reassurance, clear statement of principles and intent, and resolve against terrorism, especially when it is generated from within the UK.** Public dissatisfaction with failure to deal with extremist propagandists, failed deportations, and legal challenges from the EU have eroded faith in the effectiveness of CONTEST.
53. The inclusion of serious and organised crime is primarily a security services and law enforcement issue (4.117). There is a risk of ‘securitising’ all challenges and thereby diluting the specific strengths of the armed forces and security services. **There does need to be close co-operation between those focussed on domestic and overseas security issues, but that should not mean any blending of security and defence organisations. What the UK needs is synchronised responses.**

Assessment of 5 Project Our Global Influence

54. Much of the UK’s soft power is distinct from defence and security, but defence engagement is an important task. It cannot, however, simply be categorised as a general understanding and influence mission. Each engagement should accord with a strategic plan for a country or region and be tailored accordingly and planned over the long term. The proposed expansion of partnerships requires financial and personnel investment. Education, a key enabler of influence, is given relatively little attention (scholarships only appear in 5.6). **The Review makes no mention of the duration of commitments required to constitute ‘influence’ or how a short term approach could, in fact, be counter-productive.**
55. The media is given specific attention in the Review (5.17), but it is worth noting how **particular stories and narratives have damaged the UK’s reputation over the last two decades in international eyes.** These are rather negative influences unless the government is able to demonstrate that wrong-doing is investigated thoroughly and its perpetrators punished, regardless of their status.
56. Under the section ‘Partners and Allies’ (5.18) there is a description of a ‘Euro-Atlantic area’ in addition to NATO. That is an indication of the **gap that might develop between the Europeans and the United States, which would have the most profound and serious strategic consequences for the UK.** NATO is identified at the heart of the UK’s defence policy, but it is an alliance led by the United States. The UK’s intelligence and defence relationship is strong but cannot be taken for granted. The UK depends on its commercial relationship with the United States for its own prosperity. **The commitment to interoperability with the United States, as a priority over other nations, is welcomed.**
57. France is the only other European power with comparable forces to the UK, while other countries such as Poland, Germany, Estonia and Turkey have specialisms of

particular value to UK defence. Mention is made of partner nations beyond Europe, including the Commonwealth, regional collaborations in the Gulf, Middle East and Africa, Latin America and Asia. **The commitment to engage closely with these partners is positive.** Caveats over China are understandable, but the primary means of agreement is to be diplomacy and international law.

58. The commitment to the UN is important, but **doubling the numbers of personnel involved in UN peacekeeping is unlikely to fulfil UK policy intentions of greater influence** (5.92), especially when other nations can make more substantial commitments in terms of numbers of troops. The UK would be better suited to using its specialist expertise in Security Sector Reform (SSR) and long experience of various regions for greater effect.
59. Upholding the international rules-based order through financial institutions, international law, and counter-proliferation reinforces UK defence and security objectives, but it **will be less effective in tackling the symptoms and by-products of war**, such as sexual violence, than its well-meaning announcements would suggest (5.115). For all its announcements, the UK government has been unable to stem the increase of atrocities committed during the civil war in Syria, for example. It is a reminder that UK defence policy must be realisable and not just aspirational.
60. **Realism is also needed to redress the assumptions made by the ‘Building Stability Overseas’ project** (5.116). While an increase of funding sounds commendable, it is unclear from the Review exactly what the evidence base is for its effectiveness. It is unclear if Stability Funding could prevent a separatist conflict for example, or deter an outbreak of terrorism. Among the identified drivers of instability (5.122) is corruption, a problem that can be fuelled by external funding and which generates the very instability the government seeks to prevent.

Assessment of 6 Promote Our Prosperity

61. In chapter 5, there is an announcement that an extra £1.3 billion by 2019-20 will constitute the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (5.118), while in chapter 6, this same money is described as a Prosperity Fund to be disbursed ‘over the next five years’. Yet the purpose of the funding is not entirely clear when there are optimistic claims of substantial world economic growth (6.11, 6.13 and 6.14). Most economic analysts identify a shift in the global economy with some regions doing well, and others facing moderate to acute economic pressures. **It is unclear how defence contributes to this global growth**, since paragraphs 6.2 onwards refer only to economic changes. For the UK economy, rather than the global one, there are references to the benefits for national defence industries (6.49 onwards), research and development (6.39-40), external developments (6.41) and the need for specialist groups to foster innovation, in partnership with universities and the private sector. There is **acknowledgement of the skills gaps in defence** and the need for investment in this area (6.63-67).

62. Assessment of Implementation

63. The creation of a NSC Committee is to be welcomed as long as it is genuinely focussed on the long term and strategic, rather than short term and micro issues. There is a tendency for committees to seek to manage every detail and to demand more and more information, especially when it is designed to take a ‘whole of government’ approach (7.7). **There will need to be careful synchronisation to avoid unnecessary duplication** of the work of the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC). Most government units survive only where there are budgets and permanent staff and where there is no overlap of tasks and responsibilities.
64. The NSC currently lists six sub structures but while some will be enduring issues, others appear to be short term. One of these is ‘Syria and Iraq’ but in five years it will have either been abolished or replaced with one or more new areas, perhaps Northern Ireland, the Falklands or the Baltic. **To avoid a proliferation of these NSC sub-structures, it would be far better to have a sub-committee to address emerging regional problems, while the other remain thematic.**
65. Several new ‘Joint Units’ will be established to furnish specialist support to policy. This is commendable but it remains to be seen how well they will complement, or conversely confuse, policy-formulation. The government is keen to develop a diverse network of specialisms, which is much needed and a virtual **National Security Academy**. However, pooling expertise requires physical meetings as much as on-line fora. **Developing existing institutions, rather than attempting to create new ones from scratch, is a more certain way to create pedigree.**
66. It is not clear when each initiative, identified in the NSS and SDSR 2015, are to be implemented and by what standards one can measure their achievement. Some of the intentions are open to interpretation. **A clear strategy should conclude with a statement of ends, a summary of ways and categorisation of means so that the reader, regardless of their background, understands the context, purpose and role they are to play as part of the UK’s defence and security.**

The Committees Questions addressed:

- 1. Whether the NSS & SDSR 2015 is a practical guide to investment choices across Government Departments, to operational priorities and to crisis response.**

Partially. While some costings are given and justified, the breakdown of budgets is not available and it is unclear whether investments are balanced given the areas of emphasis in the Review (towards counter-terrorism and advancing prosperity).

- 2. How the NSS & SDSR 2015 addresses risk and contingency planning**

There is a fair assessment of risks and challenges, but too little emphasis is given to two areas which are vital: the regeneration of disabled Critical National Infrastructure and the vulnerability of our space assets. There is too great an emphasis on terrorism at the expense of more threatening states.

- 3. Whether the NSS & SDSR 2015 defines "national security" in sufficiently broad terms and achieves an appropriate balance between military, economic and environmental risks.**

The evaluation of risk is generally accurate but imbalanced. There remains an important distinction between security and defence.

- 4. Whether the military voice is sufficiently represented**

When the Review places so much emphasis on prosperity and on counter-terrorism, the responses to these questions will naturally tend towards security and law enforcement. Yet a significant threat to the British Overseas Territories in the South Atlantic, for example, would completely overturn the findings of this review and implies that the military voice was insufficiently represented.

- 5. The implications of merging the National Security Strategy with the Strategic Defence and Security Review**

While some threats overlap, many do not. While the armed forces, especially the Royal Navy and RAF, can contribute to 'economic warfare' for example, they are not the key actors in it. Equally, while our intelligence services can create a clearer picture of a conflict they cannot resolve it as efficiently as the diplomatic service or the armed forces.

- 6. The extent to which the NSS & SDSR 2015 is founded on a realistic assessment of the UK's future goals, position in the world and uncertain future relationships with international organisations and nation states**

The Review underestimates the countervailing strategic and military power of our rivals and threats, and overestimates 'soft power'.

- 7. Whether the links between domestic security and international security are sufficiently developed in the NSS & SDSR 2015**

The links are established to some extent, but it is unclear how the armed forces would tackle terrorism overseas, for example; or how the diplomatic service, Building

Stability Overseas budget, or cyber strategy are synchronized against this common threat.

8. How the UK NSS & SDSR 2015 compares with similar strategies in other countries, notably the United States and France

The US and France have incomparable systems through quite distinct situations, threats and organisations. It is however noticeable that France has relatively few institutions of state to deal with a relatively few challenges, which produces synchronisation, while the United States, with a much wider variety of threats and challenges of greater magnitude, has a very plural system of agencies and organisations, including military ones.

9. Whether Joint Force 2025 will meet the strategic requirements set out in the NSS & SDSR 2015

The JF2025 will meet only some of the strategic requirements set out in the Review, since the intention is to utilise a wide spectrum of means and ways to achieve the ends. Nevertheless, the assumption of the Review is that Tier 1 threats in 2015 will continue to be the same Tier 1 threats in 2025. This may not be the case at all. A more flexible system of future threat assessment is overdue, from which a modularised set of responses can be designed accordingly.