

Written evidence from United Nations Association¹ (NSS0008)

Introduction

This submission considers the following questions in corresponding order:

- Whether the NSS/SDSR defines "national security" in sufficiently broad terms and achieves an appropriate balance between military, economic and environmental risks
- Whether the NSS/SDSR is a practical guide to investment choices across Government Departments, to operational priorities and to crisis response
- Whether the links between domestic security and international security are sufficiently developed in the NSS & SDSR 2015
- How the NSS/SDSR compares with similar strategies in other countries, notably the United States and France
- The extent to which the NSS/SDSR 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

It makes the following recommendations:

- The NSS/SDSR should recognise that the UK's own conduct is an important element of pursuing its stated goals, and that it needs to protect universal values at home and abroad to achieve them.
- Public engagement in security is necessary and public information and education should be part of NSS/SDSR implementation.
- The UK should consider adopting a "human security" framework, which sits well with many of the approaches set out in the NSS/SDSR.
- Migration should be presented not only as a risk but as an opportunity that can support UK security, prosperity and influence.
- Recognising that the NSS/SDSR cannot provide detail on all the issues covered, there should be an indication as to which further documents will be needed, with priority given to:
 - A cross-departmental strategy for strengthening the UN
 - An assessment of UK capacity to prevent and respond to mass atrocities
 - An updated UK doctrine note (or similar) on UN peace operations
- In implementing this and future NSS/SDSRs, greater weight should be given to UK leadership and allied action in strengthening the rules-based international order as the most effective means to address the range of current and forthcoming challenges and potential changes to the UK's position in the world.

The following documents may also be of interest: UNA-UK's submission to the 2015 NSS/SDSR consultation, which focussed on the UN, peacekeeping, atrocity prevention and arms control and disarmament, and UNA-UK's response to the NSS/SDSR.²

A. Whether the NSS/SDSR 2015 defines "national security" in sufficiently broad terms

1. The 2015 NSS/SDSR is a positive evolution of its 2010 counterparts. It presents a welcome broadening of the UK's national security approach that recognises that the UK's security depends on collective solutions to a range of challenges that directly and indirectly affect the well-being of UK citizens; and that these challenges have complex causes, many of which arise far from the UK's shores. This is exemplified in the notion that the UK's security does not only depend on "stability" abroad (as per the 2010 NSS), but on wider "stability, security and prosperity" within the context of a well-functioning international system.

¹ UNA-UK is the UK's leading source of independent analysis on the UN and a network of people across the UK who believe that an effective UN is essential to building a safer world (www.una.org.uk, charity no. 1146016). This submission was authored by Natalie Samarasinghe, UNA-UK's Executive Director. She can be contacted on 020 7766 3454 or samarasinghe@una.org.uk.

² Both available at: <http://www.una.org.uk/nss>

2. UNA-UK was particularly pleased by the well-made case for strengthening the rules-based international order, which references both interests and threats. The overarching approach – strengthening institutions so that they remain representative and effective and ensure that others too have a stake in preserving them – is in line with our recommendations to Government. Within this approach, we welcome the emphasis on the UN and the acknowledgement that the UK has a “responsibility” to ensure its effectiveness and legitimacy.
3. In addition, we welcome:
 - The emphasis on addressing instability and on promoting human rights, democracy and good governance, including through global initiatives such as the Sustainable Development Goals and soft-power instruments, such as the BBC and British Council.
 - The commitment to meeting the international development spending target of 0.7% of GDP, and to investing 2% of GDP on defence. Together, these investments should support a comprehensive approach to conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peacebuilding.
 - The inclusion of a wider range of regions and partners than in 2010. This is important given that the pace of global change makes it harder to predict where sources of instability – or opportunity – may emerge. It also supports the broader definition of national security, which necessitates a stronger focus on the UK’s dependencies, particularly those beyond its independent control and including regions that may not have been considered in a traditional security context but which are important from e.g. an environmental security perspective.
4. However, two important areas lack emphasis. First, the NSS/SDSR should state explicitly that the UK’s own conduct is an important factor in protecting its people, projecting its influence and promoting its prosperity. This must include the protection of universal values at home and abroad.³ The UK’s approach to human rights forms part of its reputation and soft power, and perceived failure to live up to the highest international standards is likely to hamper the UK’s ability to further its interests in international fora, and to damage the rules-based international order. One example is the commitment to ensuring that UK armed forces are not subject to “unjustified legal claims”, without a corresponding commitment to ensuring that justified claims will be taken seriously and processed objectively.
5. Second, the NSS/SDSR does not give sufficient weight to the need for public support, not just in terms of responding to hazards or preventing radicalisation (which are mentioned) but in terms of creating buy-in for the vision and policies set out. Over time, public disengagement can become a security risk by leading to polarisation, disaffection or, more simply, widespread public apathy. Conversely, an informed and engaged public is a security asset that can support resilience at the community level and actively participate in decisions put to them on the UK’s future security.
6. UNA-UK therefore recommends that implementation of the NSS/SDSR includes public information campaigns, investment in citizenship education and a pro-active consultative approach to major decisions, which will require adequate resources for outreach by the FCO, MOD and other departments. Discussions on the UK’s future security, from nuclear deterrence to membership of the EU, should feature diverse perspectives, including those of young people, and not just special interest groups.
7. In terms of achieving an appropriate balance of issues, we commend the emphasis placed on climate, energy and health security. It may be useful for the Government to consider a “human security” approach, which the UN defines as a “dynamic and practical policy framework for addressing widespread and cross-cutting threats facing Governments and people”.⁴ This people-centred approach would sit well with much of what is set out in the NSS/SDSR and could help underline the links between domestic and global security, including to the public.
8. One specific issue that would benefit from a people-centred approach is migration, which is presented in terms of risk but not opportunity. Given that immigration consistently features in public surveys on

³ See UNA-UK’s evidence to the Foreign Affairs Committee’s human rights inquiry: <http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/foreign-affairs-committee/the-foreign-and-commonwealth-offices-administration-and-funding-of-its-human-rights-work-overseas/written/28311.html>

⁴ United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security: <http://www.un.org/humansecurity/human-security-unit/human-security-approach>

threats to the UK, the NSS/SDSR could have been used to make a more well-rounded argument that embraces challenges and opportunities in terms of security, prosperity, influence and innovation.

B. Whether the NSS/SDSR is a practical guide to investment choices across Government Departments, to operational priorities and to crisis response

9. The NSS/SDSR encompasses a wide range of risks and mechanisms to address them. This inevitably poses challenges for prioritisation. In some areas, for example DFID's work, there are clear steers, such as the focus on fragile states and funding to build climate and health security. In those listed below, there is less clarity.
10. The NSS/SDSR sets out broad priorities for improving the UN's effectiveness through "political, diplomatic, military and development resources". As a cross-departmental approach will be needed, UNA-UK recommends the elaboration of UN strategy. This should include more detail on improving the functioning of the UN Security Council, the primary body charged with maintaining international peace and security, beyond reform of its membership (which in itself cannot guarantee better results).
11. UNA-UK welcomes the commitment to the "responsibility to protect" (R2P) and the emphasis on tackling instability overseas, which is recognised as posing "an increasingly direct threat to the UK". We endorse the preventive approach contained in the NSS/SDSR, and welcome the inclusion of early warning and horizon scanning in the "Implementation" section. However, the NSS/SDSR does not provide guidance on how decisions will be made as to when and how the UK would consider intervening military in the context of mass atrocities and broader conflict situations.
12. Mass atrocities continue to inform – and often drive – deliberations on whether the UK should intervene militarily in a particular situation. UNA-UK recommends that the Government reviews its capability to prevent and respond to mass atrocities and sets out its strategy for doing so. This should include guidance to inform decision-making when such situations arise.
13. UNA-UK welcomes the commitments to increase practical support to peacekeeping. We recommend that this new Peacekeeping Unit works to elaborate further the rationale for UK participation in UN peace operations, perhaps through a new UK doctrine note⁵ (or similar). This should include an indication of decision-making in relation to deployments, and should address questions not covered in the NSS/SDSR, such as whether peacekeeping be included in force generation, which would enhance the UK's ability to respond to priority missions.
14. The term "human rights" rightly features across the NSS/SDSR. However, it is difficult to get a sense of overall priorities. It is used in the context of "universal values" and "British values", without reference to domestic or international treaties that would serve to clarify these terms. It is sometimes listed alongside specific rights, such as freedom of speech, and sometimes, for example in the standalone section on "Human rights", presented in terms of the most egregious abuses. It is also referenced in relation to many bilateral partners.
15. UNA-UK reiterates its evidence to the Foreign Affairs Committee, namely that human rights must remain a priority if the UK is to tackle the root causes of instability and strengthen the rules-based international order. We recommend that greater clarity on specific priorities be provided, including through fleshing out the FCO's three broad priorities. We also caution that without a central reference point the various agendas drawn up by different government departments in relation to particular bilateral partners may conflict, in terms of arms export and human rights priorities, for example.
16. UNA-UK recognises that the NSS/SDSR cannot go into detail on all the issues it covers and that other documents will do so. In future NSS/SDSRs, and in reporting back on this one, it would be useful to include in the "Implementation" section an indication of what further documents will be produced and when.

⁵ The 2011 UK Joint Doctrine Note 5/11 on peacekeeping was replaced with the 2014 NATO Standard AJP-3.4.1: Allied Joint Doctrine For the Military Contribution to Peace Support. UNA-UK believes that the UK should set out its own document to put forward its distinct rationale and approach to UN peace operations.

17. UNA-UK's priorities in this regard are: a strategy for engagement with the UN, an updated UK doctrine note on UN peace operations and an assessment of UK capacity to prevent and respond to mass atrocities.
18. We also believe that diplomatic and development actors could benefit from the sort of vision for "Our people" set out in the section on the armed forces. Given the priority accorded to strengthening international institutions, this should include UK representation within them. UNA-UK commends the UK's decision to re-instate support for the UN's JPO programme,⁶ and we hope it will support similar opportunities.

C. Whether the links between domestic security and international security are sufficiently developed in the NSS/SDSR

19. In specific areas – notably international development – the rationale for UK action, in the context of promoting the well-being of UK citizens, is made robustly. In other areas, such as UN peacekeeping, it is not as clear as it could be.
20. UN peace operations are a tool for achieving UK interests in preventing conflict, sexual violence, mass displacement and extremism; and in building well-governed states and stable, prosperous trading environments. They provide a framework for the UK to make strategic deployments to missions that are: collectively funded and carried out; have the legitimacy of UN authorisation; and address situations of potential risk to UK interests, where unilateral or NATO action is not feasible.
21. UNA-UK hopes that the Government will work with partners to make this case to the public, including by raising awareness of the important work undertaken by British peacekeepers and by recognising this service.
22. UNA-UK also recommends that peacekeeping is recognised as a professional development tool that will produce broader benefits for the armed forces by providing hands-on experience of operating in contexts and with partners that the UK may not otherwise encounter.

D. How the NSS/SDSR compares with similar strategies in other countries, notably the United States and France

23. The US National Security Strategy⁷ sets out a broad approach similar to that in the NSS/SDSR but lacks similar tie-in with the quadrennial defence review. However, the US has a number of other documents that provide further guidance on how particular priorities are to be taken forward. Two examples are the presidential memorandum on UN peace operations⁸ and the strategy on mass atrocities⁹. The UK would benefit from the elaboration of such documents, including in these two areas.
24. The US NSS makes more emphatically the links between its own security and prosperity and the preservation of the rules-based international order, and provides more concrete examples of how it will seek to do so. While it would not be appropriate for the UK to present itself as "leader" in the way the US does, it could adopt the US's "leading by example" approach, which states that its institutions and respect for the rule of law set "an example for democratic governance" and that "when we uphold our values at home, we are better able to promote them in the world. This means safeguarding the civil rights and liberties of our citizens while increasing transparency and accountability. It also means holding ourselves to international norms and standards that we expect other nations to uphold, and admitting when we do not".¹⁰

⁶ UN Junior Professional Officers Programme, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-for-international-organisations/working-for-international-organisations#opportunities-for-young-professionals>

⁷ National Security Strategy, February 2015: <http://nssarchive.us/national-security-strategy-2015/>

⁸ Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies, United States Support to United Nations Peace Operations, 28 Sept. 2015: www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2015peaceoperations.pdf

⁹ Comprehensive Strategy and New Tools to Prevent and Respond to Atrocities, 23 April 2012: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/04/23/fact-sheet-comprehensive-strategy-and-new-tools-prevent-and-respond-atro>

¹⁰ National Security Strategy 2015, p. 3

25. France’s White Paper on Defence and National Security¹¹ is also broadly similar in scope to the NSS/SDSR. Like the US document, it sets out how France sees its role – as a “European power with global influence”¹², from which its priorities and priority partners are derived. Such clarity may not be beneficial to the UK, which positions itself a country with “global reach and global influence”, but the UK could benefit from a greater degree of specificity in setting out its particular capabilities and priorities in relation to the wide range of partners and fora listed in the NSS/SDSR.
26. France’s commitment to multilateral nuclear disarmament is framed in the context of furthering its obligation to disarm under Article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty¹³. Like the UK, it makes the case for maintaining its nuclear weapons system, but it also gives more weight to its disarmament efforts (when, arguably, the UK is ahead of France in this respect).
27. France places considerable emphasis on public engagement, noting that “the nation’s support” for national security policies is “crucial to justify the efforts they entail” and that it is of “vital importance to maintain and develop, among our citizens, a defence and security mindset”.¹⁴ It refers to the need to raise “children’s awareness during their schooling” in the context of broader “global civil education”.¹⁵
28. Germany’s Defence Policy Guidelines¹⁶ include some useful language on the need for collective action, recognising that “Germany’s security objectives and interests can only be pursued in cooperation with its partners”, and on the decreasing importance of the “traditional distinction between external and internal security”.¹⁷ It also sets out in detail why Germany seeks to support the UN and how it plans to do so, e.g. through earmarking personnel for particular peacekeeping missions.¹⁸
29. Norway’s White Paper¹⁹ on strengthening the UN is grounded in its “fundamental interest in a well-functioning global legal order” and its recognition that “the UN system plays a key role in upholding” this order but that its “role cannot be taken for granted”.²⁰ The paper sets out a “coherent and predictable UN policy”,²¹ encompassing Norway’s vision for the UN, its particular interests, its reform priorities and how it will achieve them, and how these efforts will be evaluated and funded.
- E. The extent to which the NSS/SDSR 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**
30. The NSS/SDSR presents a more positive and confident take on Britain’s role in the world that moves away from the narrative of decline often discernible in references to Britain punching above its weight.
31. Global power distribution has changed considerably in the past decades, but so too has our definition of power, which now encompasses energy, technology, outreach and other soft power assets as well as economic and military ones. By most of these measures, Britain is still a powerful country. The NSS/SDSR therefore rightly alludes to the UK’s global reach and influence, and – we would add – responsibilities. It also correctly assesses the need to strengthen the rules-based international order, which has delivered security and prosperity for the UK and which has preserved its seat at the global top table even as the shifts in power have occurred.
32. In a rapidly-changing world, this area needs to be given increasing weight. The UK cannot itself, or through individual partnerships, address the full range of challenges that will arise. Nor does it have

¹¹ French White Paper: Defence and National Security, 29 April 2013: <http://www.rpfrance-otan.org/White-Paper-on-defence-and>

¹² *ibid*, p. 13

¹³ *ibid*, p. 73

¹⁴ *ibid*, p. 115

¹⁵ *ibid*, p. 116

¹⁶ German Ministry of Defence, [Defence Policy Guidelines: Safeguarding National Interests, Assuming International Responsibility, Shaping Security Together](#), 18 May 2011: www.bmvg.de

¹⁷ *ibid*, p. 5

¹⁸ *ibid*, p. 11

¹⁹ Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Meld. St. 33 (2011-12), Report to the Storting: Norway and the United Nations: Common Future, Common Solutions: <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumenter/meld.-st.-33-20112012/id699416/>

²⁰ *ibid*, p. 10

²¹ *ibid*, p. 80

unlimited capacity to give priority to the host of areas and mechanisms included in the NSS/SDSR. A multilateral approach, focussed on international institutions, would share the burden, costs and benefits of action. At present the UK is in a position to provide leadership on strengthening the international system, so that it is effective, representative and reflective of the needs of less powerful countries. As the UK's position changes, its reliance on this system will increase. Concerted action now is an investment in future security.