

Written evidence submitted by Harlan Ullman, Chairman, The Killowen Group

The Rt. Hon. Tobias Ellwood
Chairman, House of Commons Defence Select Committee
Whitehall, London

March 20th, 2020

Dear Mr. Chairman;

It is a privilege and a distinct honor to present evidence before your select committee on the UK national security, foreign and defense policy review. Attached are my statement and a short piece on a Brains Based Approach to Strategic Thinking.

The key points that follow can be summarized:

-First, UK national security strategy must be directed at protecting the public from dangers and threats whether disruptive acts of man or nature and deter, contain, defend and engage potential adversaries across a broad spectrum in which military force alone cannot achieve needed levels of security but still must not fall below a critical mass discussed below.

-Second, we must move from a largely 20th century industrial model for security to a 21st century information and digitalized foundation realizing two of the greatest strategic weaknesses are the absence of sufficient knowledge and understanding of changing conditions at home and globally and finding a more effective whole of government decision-making process. In particular in Westphalia II noted below, we have moved from a world of Mutual Assured Destruction as the basis for past strategy to one of (Mutual Assured) Disruption.

-Third, China and Russia should not be made enemies simply because we see both as near peer competitors. As noted in the Westphalia II model, disruption may be a greater enemy.

Reviews such as those conducted in America tend to be aspirational and driven more by budget and programs than by strategy. The proposed recommendations call for a 21st century information age based strategy as the foundation for national security and lead specifically to continuing the nuclear deterrent; a Porcupine Defense in Europe; (less so for the UK, a Mobile Maritime Line of Defense in the Pacific); a tailored capability for limited interventions when necessary elsewhere; and a stronger appreciation for other potential non-military disruptions.

Sincerely
Harlan Ullman _____

**EVIDENCE PRESENTED TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS DEFENCE SELECT
COMMITTEE**

**by
Dr. Harlan Ullman**

The Rt. Hon. Chairman Tobias Ellwood and Honorable Colleagues: It is a considerable honor and privilege to present evidence to your committee on national security, foreign and defense policy. Also attached is a short piece on a “Brains Based Approach to Strategic Thinking,” a longer version of which was presented several years ago at the RUSI Land Warfare Conference.

The key conclusions are that we are now in a global environment described below called Westphalia II; that the major dangers include a different form of MAD—Mutual Assured Disruption—in which states such as Russia and China are employing disruption as major tools and vulnerabilities to cyber, pandemics and other transnational threats are assuming more importance in protecting and defending the nation.

In conducting your effort, you should avoid a major flaw in the last U.S. national security review that was largely aspirational and descriptive rather than analytic concluding with often ill-defined strategic aims. Specifically, the U.S. National Defense Strategy calls for “strategic competition” with near peer competitors in which the U.S. military must deter China and Russia (and North Korea and Iran) and if war comes defeat that adversary.

Unfortunately, the definitions for competing, deterring and defeating are unclear. From what are China and Russia to be deterred: war, Belt and Road; militarizing islets in the China Seas; “active measures;” or incursions into neighbors such as Taiwan, Georgia and Ukraine? Further, how to defeat both in war likewise is ill-defined. And weapons systems are not always evaluated for how they contribute to the strategy.

Your review should begin with a crisp and clear definition of what national security means; establishing which components are vital, necessary or discretionary; how strategic, military, diplomatic, economic, financial, social, cyber, climate change, demographics; space, AI and other technologies and education are integrated; and outline the minimal levels of capability and objectives for each of the agencies of government that has national security responsibilities in this disruptive Westphalian II world.

Further, an assessment of the NSC/COBRA national decision-making structure is essential to ensure an effective whole of government approach is in place and the resources used most effectively and efficiently. **This may be the most important conclusion of this review.**

Finally, challenge and “red team” ruthlessly the assumptions that underpin the recommendations for your national security strategy. No strategy or policy can

overcome mistaken or erroneous assumptions as any structure cannot long survive atop a flawed or faulty foundation.

Geostrategic, Political, Economic, Military, Social, Environmental, Technological and Disruptive Challenges of Westphalia II: Chief of Defence, General Sir Nick Carter's annual RUSI lecture last December accurately described key challenges and dangers facing the West. Rather than repeat Sir Nick, let me offer these views.

First, a new era of international politics is upon us. I call this Westphalia II. From 1648 and the Treaty of Westphalia, until 1991, international politics was dominated by states and state-centric interactions. The combination of the implosion of the Soviet Union and the effects and consequences of the diffusion of power and globalization eroded and diminished the Westphalian state-dominated system. **One effect has been to raise the strategic imperative of preventing and containing disruption in assuring national security.**

Individuals and non-state actors became empowered at the expense of traditional states. Osama bin Laden, al Qaeda, the Islamic State as well as large numbers of other organizations including well-known hackers illustrated this empowerment and the disruption that could be brought to bear for ill or for good. September 11th catalyzed this "new" disruptive threat, and the war on terror began as the Westphalian System seemed to break down under these attacks.

But China and Russia were not dormant. China's economy grew to the second largest in the world and an engine and source for international growth. Meanwhile, China was building a modern military as well as leading in many technologies that will change the 21st century.

Under Vladimir Putin, Russia re-established itself as a major power through actions and foreign policies that were clever, exploitive and made best use of minimal resources. The annexation of Crimea in 2014 marked a turning point as Western insistence on the rule of law and respect for national borders was directly challenged. And Russia modernized its military linking it conventional forces with so-called "information and hybrid war" with the power to disrupt.

The result has been a resurrection of the old state-centric Westphalian system with several profound exceptions. Irrespective of size or power, many states and transnational dangers now have the power to disrupt. Afghanistan, Iran, India, Iraq, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, North Korea, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey and Ukraine have become more important in international politics entangled in the still undefined "competition" and rivalries between and among the United States and China and Russia. And each is a possible "flash point" for conflict or crisis and for the potential to disrupt much of the international order.

In Westphalia II, interdependence links virtually every state and not merely at the speed of light. Trade, finance, media, disease, and social interactions have

almost ubiquitous access to most societies, even relatively closed ones such as China and Saudi Arabia. This means any successful national security strategy must incorporate these global interactions with dangers and challenges that produce mutual assured disruption, the latter graphically underscored by the spread of Covid-19. Among this assessment, cyber and climate change could be the next Covid-19 and require collective and not just individual action if the positive aspects of interdependence are to be maintained.

National Security and Defense: First and most importantly, national security must rest on as complete knowledge and understanding as is humanly possible to obtain of the national security environments and circumstances. The U.S. failed in that regard in Vietnam and then in Afghanistan and Iraq in 2003. Knowledge and understanding of China and Russia likewise have often been distorted by undue analytical emphasis on potential military threats. As a result, one of the most disruptive dangers for China and Russia - - political internal implosions - - has been overlooked. Neither is the USSR. But both have major issues and problems.

China has many such problems. A shadow banking system; excessive real estate; and underclass of almost half a billion; and a history of peasant revolts and revolutions. Russia too has huge demographic, succession, social and economic problems we often ignore.

Regarding Russia, Putin has no intention of invading west. The Russian order of battle is concentrated in the south west in which the Black Sea is probably strategically more important than the Baltics. Further if the Russian army were to move west, it would have to do so by invading and marching through Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova first or Norway in the north.

Soviet and Russian strategic doctrine has never separated nuclear from conventional weapons. During the Cold War, its war plans called for early use of nuclear weapons. The probability is high that this thinking has not changed.

China's "Belt and Road" and Russian "active measures" present far greater challenges than a possible military confrontation in the various Chinese coastal seas, Taiwan or in the Baltics. China is betting its future economic growth on "Belt and Road" to provide access to resources and most importantly to larger markets for Chinese goods and services. But spending potentially trillions of RMB's on Belt and Road means less money for domestic improvements particularly to raise standards of living for hundreds of millions of Chinese and modernizing infrastructure, already grounds for discontent and criticism at home.

Russian "active measures" are aimed to disrupt and extend beyond propaganda, cyber, mis and disinformation and interference in domestic affairs of other states. Putin has made Russia far more influential abroad. The interventions in Syria and Libya; improved relations with Israel and Saudi Arabia; sales of S-400 missiles to Turkey; Nordstream II to make Europe more dependent on Russian energy; and efforts to break

NATO's cohesion present more immediate challenges and tests than does its military, a military that is far smaller than that possessed by the entirety of NATO.

History offers a lesson in thinking about Westphalia II. In Vietnam, Afghanistan and the second Iraq War, the United States had air, sea and land dominance. Initially in Vietnam and in Afghanistan and Iraq after 2003, the enemy had no army, navy or air force. Yet, the U.S. and its allies could not "win." **What is needed is an "unconventional" approach to countering Russia (and China) to reverse the cost exchange ratio in our favor strategically and militarily and to protect and defend against disruptive events.**

Towards a British National Security and Defence Policy and Strategy: The primary task of UK national security strategy is **protection of the nation through the ability and will to deter, contain, defend and engage potential adversaries and to address non- military dangers across all of government in which force alone is not the sole solution.**

Deterrence must be the overriding consideration as war and indeed a nuclear war could destroy society as we know it. Hence, continuation of the nuclear deterrent as well as maintaining a credible non-nuclear force is essential if the UK is to remain a major power. But next generation missiles should be capable of surface firings in port and with air independent propulsion, diesel submarines could replace the very expensive nuclear-powered boats. A certain level of military power is required to fill a "critical mass" of credibility. An Army of less than 60,000 soldiers or so may prove too small along with further cuts to the RN and RAF.

Containing is vital particularly vis a vis Russia and China both to their borders and from destabilizing or disruptive interference with our interests. This can be done diplomatically and with allies not merely in Europe. As noted below, the UK has the opportunity to fashion a de facto alliance with Commonwealth and other Asian partners.

Defending means having a credible, ready and capable force no matter its size. While this could lead to a significant change in force structure, assessment and examination of a Porcupine Defense in Europe and a Mobile Maritime Defense in the Pacific with the aim to contain China to the first island chain to make any initial attack by either so costly that deterrence is reinforced should be undertaken. Given obvious resource constraints, the UK should focus on Europe but address Asia in terms of new partnerships rather than on military solutions alone.

Both Porcupine and Maritime Defenses are predicated on finishing the transformation of a largely 20th century industrial base military to a 21st century information-based structure. One reason is to outflank Russian (and Chinese) "conventional" and industrial based capabilities with unmanned systems; long range strike; electronic and information warfare; standoff weapons; deception;

decoys; diesel submarines; and other pain imposing capabilities to blunt any potential attack reversing the cost exchange ratio to our favor.

The amalgamation of 77 and ISR Brigade and the creation of Strategic Command are important steps in moving to a 21st century information-based strategy. To that end, a “strategic innovation command” reporting to CDS might be created to experiment with new concepts and using current systems in new ways in table-top and computer war games and then with small units in the field. The intent here is to use experimentation as the means of moving to somewhat different force on a timeline to ensure continuity.

For example, consider a “virtual” company or battalion sized force equipped with thousands of inexpensive drones; long range missiles; upgraded Stinger and Javelin missiles; new electronic and information warfare systems for deception, mis and dis-information; lighter than air and aerostats as well as Low Earth Orbiters for reconnaissance and C3I; and IED’s with 20,000 pound of explosive to block potential points of advance on the ground. Another is to re-purpose the two aircraft carriers possibly as missile platforms; mobile logistics bases; for C3I and ISR; and other possible tasking while awaiting delivery of F-35’s.

The military purpose of the Porcupine Defense is to disrupt any initial Russian military attack by targeting obvious command and control and other weaknesses with quickly deployable forces to NATO. Further, these capabilities are exportable to other states and through arms sales.

That said, the UK must maintain a capability for intervention for up to two brigades. This could be part of the Porcupine Defense to reinforce NATO’s northern, central and southern flanks. Having served in the Royal Navy, warships had small Royal Marine detachments. This combination of forces should extend across the Joint Force. The case study for this is Sierra Leone and how with a tiny force and a single frigate, then Brigadier David Richards was able to defeat not only the insurgency but restore a stable government.

Finally, engagement is vital. The tariff wars with China were unnecessary and costly. If China is to be contained or deterred, the West has no alternative except to rely on friends and allies. Already, many Asian states whose trade with China is far larger than with the U.S. are turning to China and away from America and America First policies. That in turn will require a new or altered system of alliances, responsibilities and divisions of labor among the United States and its global partners if contain, deter, defend and engage are to work.

Robert Lord Salisbury has an innovative idea of connecting Asian members of the Commonwealth and other states with links to Britain in a confederation to deal with China economically and politically. This idea should be incorporated in your strategy.

Obviously, militaries must be prepared to fight. However, setting China and Russia as “enemies” that dominate planning risks becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy. Further,

regarding NATO, the aim of spending 2% of GDP on defense is a false figure. The central issue is ensuring spending is done smartly and actually enhances the alliance's as opposed to individual member's military capacity and capability. The UK can take the lead in this effort through the National Security Review.

Moving to a Porcupine Defense can achieve these aims and at a lower cost to national treasuries. Greater emphasis must be placed on less expensive technologies in a "high-low mix" construct where the UK and allies can focus on the lower end and the U.S. the upper. In parallel, the implications for space, cyber, AI, machine learning, gnomes, quantum and other potential game changing technologies must be part of this review.

What Else Is Needed and What Else Must Be Done: First, a zero-based, clean sheet, start from scratch review is essential in which the aims and priorities of the strategy must be specifically defined in simple and unambiguous English. This may prove difficult given the pressure to substitute aspirations for strategy.

After setting assumptions and developing alternative strategic options, all must be ruthlessly challenged and "red-teamed." This assessment including costs and benefits is essential. Here are three possible national security options:

Option 1 is more of the same but more efficiently and effectively organized. This means marginal change. But it is least disruptive. The downside is that this model is unlikely to be affordable for the long term and may have less value and utility vis a vis the Westphalia II world.

Option 2 emphasizes the "contain and engage" aspects of the strategy relegating "defend" more to nuclear deterrence with less emphasis on military force and more on the non-kinetic means to assure security relying on a whole of government strategy to deal with disruption. This option is likely to be less resource demanding at the cost of military capability.

Option 3 embraces the outlines of the Porcupine Defense (and to a lesser degree the Mobile Maritime Defense) in moving towards a 21st century information age force and force structure. In essence this strategy will yield a more agile and deployable military force along with enhanced capacity for dealing with adversarial political, i.e. "active measures" and non-kinetic threats as well as transnational disruptions from cyber, climate change, forced migration and other challenges of the Westphalian II world in order to protect the public and to deter, contain, engage and defend potential adversaries.

Given the critical importance of knowledge and understanding, a stem to stern review of how people in government and in civil society are educated on national security is also warranted. The most formidable weapon any state has is the space between the ears of its people. The mind and intelligence are far more important in protecting national security than any single weapon.

While the military has a formal educational structure, the same is not true of other arms of government. And military education should be evaluated to determine how well not only the foundations for sound strategic thinking and analysis are laid but also how continuous pursuit of knowledge, learning and understanding is inculcated. Similar approaches are needed in all the relevant ministries.

Public education remains vital. The better a public understands its government and its policies the safer the nation will be. Perhaps less glamorous than studying military campaigns and history, this must be part of any national security strategy. In the 21st century information age, messaging and optics may be as important as traditional reliance on armies, navies, air forces and police. This should not be forgotten.

Last, innovation, invention and imagination are crucial. As ascribed to Churchill, 'now that we have run out of money, we must engage our brains.' Melding this into any strategy is difficult. Yet in the world of Westphalia II, when more knowledge is being created on a rapid basis than existed throughout history, brains and intellect will reign. **In sum, the best defense is a smarter defense. Money, no matter how important, need not be the only vital ingredient. And as noted in the attachment, the aim of strategy must be to affect, influence and control of the will and perception of friends, allies, non-committed and potential adversaries.**

Once the review is completed, the crucial issue is how to gain approval from Number Ten and then Parliament. As you know, your committee is not as powerful or authoritative as those in the U.S. House and Senate. **Hence, a strong and convincing narrative and indeed "lobbying" operation are vital. As suggested to your chairman, perhaps a joint effort with the Lords may be one way of implementing the findings.**

I look forward to your questions, comments and reactions.

Harlan Ullman_____

Attached: A Brains Based Approach to Strategic Thinking

A BRAINS BASED APPROACH TO STRATEGIC THINKING:

First to be effective, any strategy must be knowledge based to allow and facilitate as complete an understanding of all conditions as possible from basic aims to intimate analysis of the adversary, various courses of actions and assumptions underlying each, and the consequences including the resource implications, costs, the objective calculation of affordability in blood and treasure and a implementing a process of continuous learning and pursuit of knowledge.

Second, this approach must have a 21st century mindset based on an understanding of conditions especially the challenges of the Westphalian II system of international politics described above and the need for a 21st century information and digitized based national security strategy in which the new MAD is Mutual Assured Disruption that underscores the dangers of terror, cyber, environmental catastrophe, especially Covid-19 and other challenges such as climate change that now confront national security by destabilizing international and domestic orders.

Third, the aim must be affecting, influencing and controlling the will and perception in order to get friends, allies, adversaries and others to do what we wish or to stop taking actions that are detrimental to our national security in part by greater innovation, ingenuity and inventiveness often called out of the box thinking. Indeed, we need to dismiss the notion of any box or constraints on our thinking.