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What is the purpose of a security, defence and foreign policy review?

A security, defence and foreign policy review helps to realise what approach the UK – government, parliament, civil society – should take collectively rather than have individual security-related organisations pursue individual reviews. Such a review should work on the start of detailed horizon scanning—an examination of what the future threats and challenges are, how the UK will be affected, what role may it play globally in the future.

How often should a review be scheduled and how should different aspects be sequenced?

There ideally should be a security-related review every few years but the exact timing is up to the government of the day, and after each major general election seems appropriate. As the title of the last two reviews – Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) – and this Integrated Review goes, it should always encompass not just the MOD but also all security-related organisations such as a) the FCO b) DFID c) Home Office BEIS, DEFRA c) the Security Services. A defence-only review was appropriate back in 1997-98, however, the scope of UK security rests far beyond just the MOD and armed forces.¹

What leadership, personnel and decision-making structures are required to ensure a review is effective?

In 2010, the Coalition government created the National Security Council (NSC) and a National Security Adviser (NSA). In late 2018, then PM Theresa May combined the positions of NSA and Cabinet Secretary together under one individual. Ideally, the Integrated Review should be led by a NSA, not a Cabinet Secretary², with strong input from a) the Permanent Secretaries of the MOD, FCO and DFID ; b) the Chief of the Defence Staff or any service chief, should they have a strong argument c) other senior leaders from other relevant departments. These top leaders should ideally form teams focused solely on the Integrated Review within their departments and agencies. The single and separate NSA should coordinate actions, including preventing duplicate proposals or approaches and provide security-related discussions.³ A single Cabinet Secretary should also be involved in the

¹ The MOD's publication, 'The Good Operation' is an excellent publication indicating drawing on the Chilcot enquiry and how UK defence-related organisations need to work together, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/674545/TheGoodOperation_WEB.PDF I made this point in my written evidence to the previous Defence Committee <http://data.parliament.uk/WrittenEvidence/CommitteeEvidence.svc/EvidenceDocument/Defence/Modernising%20Defence%20Programme/written/80078.html>

² There has been criticism of the merger of the NSA and Cabinet Secretary posts. See <https://www.ft.com/content/41f6abc8-d868-11e8-ab8e-6be0dcf18713> and <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2019-09-04/debates/7AF7CEF5-18F4-4F12-9A05-C3960955C5A1/NationalSecurityAdviser>

³ As per the National Security Capability Review (NSCR), the Fusion Doctrine was announced to ensure close coordination within government departments and public services and the NSC, through its Secretariat is a key body to ensure the

process, also drawing in the security themes from other government departments and organisations.

The previous Defence Committee was critical of the NSA and the joint NSA and Cabinet Secretary mainly because there appeared to be a preference for cyber and intelligence themes rather than military and the armed forces. This perspective is narrow-minded and must not be taken further. As noted, UK security or general defence does not just rely solely on the MOD and armed forces, but rather the joint approach of all security-related groups, as showed by conflicts such as Op Telic, Herrick, Shader and the Salisbury chemical attacks. Both UK NSC and NSA are therefore critical in any security review and other groups besides the MOD play a crucial role in UK defence and security.

What is the purpose, and appropriate scope, for cross-Government collaboration in the review process? What is the best way to ensure it is effective?

As stated, cross-government collaboration ensures that all security-related organisations work in effective coordination to ensure that the UK can sufficiently address future threats. An approach to follow would be the Fusion Doctrine as the baseline for any collaboration. The best way for ensuring strong collaboration would be to have an independent group to monitor the collaboration, perhaps akin to the Independent Commission for Aid Impact.⁴

What methodology and analytical capability is required to ensure that assessments of threats and risks to the UK are future-proofed? How should such an assessment be communicated and to whom?

SDSRs or Integrated Review are not ‘crystal balls’; they cannot accurately depict what future threats the UK may face. The 2010⁵ and 2015 SDSR and National Security Strategy (NSS)⁶ formed National Security Risk Assessments (NSRA).⁷ Both SDSRs provided updates regarding the progress in relation to the changing global environment. The Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre (DCDC) produces many papers on the future global political and military environment, such as the Global Strategic Trends (GST), the Regional Survey and Future Operating Environment series.⁸ All these form an appropriate framework for assessing future threats, but cannot accurately predict the future. This should be communicated to the intelligence agencies and National Security Secretariat in order to revise reviews and approaches.

How should existing and in-development defence capabilities be reviewed? Do assessments of equipment, non-equipment and personnel require different approaches?

Existing and in-development capabilities must be measured based on their a) relevance in future threats; b) their imminent out-of-service (OSD); c) initial operating capability (IOC);

⁴ <https://icai.independent.gov.uk/>

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https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/62482/strategic-defence-security-review.pdf p.41

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https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/61936/national-security-strategy.pdf pp. 25-26

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https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/478936/52309_Cm_9161_NSS_SD_Review_PRINT_only.pdf pp.85

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/development-concepts-and-doctrine-centre> DCDC GST series is a futuristic outlook of the global environment and currently in its sixth edition.

and d) full operational capability (FOC). There should be an acceptance that some legacy hardware may have to be retired or removed, inasmuch as they adversely affect morale across the wider population.⁹ The government must be transparent to parliament and wider society if they have to forgo some capabilities in place of others. Such actions should be continuously explained less there be negative morale in the forces, media and society. Ideally, there should be a delicate balance of all necessary conventional and asymmetric warfare capabilities along with a very minimum nuclear deterrent.

Assessments of non-equipment can be an essential area to review. At present, the UK can deploy for a short term, without allied assistance, a carrier-centred maritime task group, a medium land force and aerial component. The review should evaluate force structures such as growing a US-style maritime task group. It should evaluate whether the Strike brigades should be mixed with tracked and armoured vehicles.¹⁰ It should also evaluate if Air Command should have control over carrier strike, bearing in fixed-wing pilot strength.

Personnel strength is critical and more initiatives are definitely needed to draw all services to full desired strength. Even without considering cuts from previous reviews, the services have never reached desired strength.¹¹ Simultaneously, senior commanders have increased in size in proportion to the junior ranks and policies should be enacting to present a more balance structure.¹²

How can Government ensure capability decisions reflect financial realities?

The UK should understand that national security arises from a stable budget or economy as well as strong and sufficient security and defence force will secure the UK. The UK might wish to examine Singapore's longstanding Total Defence policy, which covers five other areas of defence besides military defence—civil, economic, social, psychological and digital.¹³ Economic defence indicates a strong economy that can be prepared for economic and asymmetric shocks such as global viral outbreaks. Financial realities and capability decisions are two sides of the same coin, both contributing to overall UK defence. Security reviews such as this one cannot be purely a 'shopping list' for the military but must also work with HM Treasury policies and the budgets of other security-related departments.

Which external stakeholders should be engaged in the review process? How?

The following – not an exhaustive list – should be engaged during the process: a) academics– not just defence-related academics, but those covering international relations or even

⁹ A non-exhaustive example of critical hardware that should be immediately addressed include: the Fuchs Counter-Chemical Biological Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) vehicle, replacement for the FV432 Bulldog and Alvis Stormer, R1 Sentinel, the Warrior Capability Sustainment Programme (WCSP), Challenger 2 Life Extension Programme and Multi Role Vehicle Protected Programme. Other non-exhaustive programmes that require evaluation include the armament of the MK41 VLS for the Type 26 frigate, the armament of the Type 31 frigate, the FSS order and replacements for other RFA and navy vessels, aerial refuelling capability for Merlin Mk4 Chinook Helicopters and the second electronic warfare regiment, 13th Signal Regiment.

¹⁰ See <https://www.thinkdefence.co.uk/boxer-armoured-vehicle/> and <https://www.thinkdefence.co.uk/british-army-medium-weight-capability/> for reviews on the Strike Brigade vehicles and the debate regarding mixing tracked and wheeled platforms in the Strike units

¹¹ The previous two SDSRs and the 1998 SDR set each service to various targets yet none of the three services, including the Royal Marines have reached the desired targets.

¹² Navy Command is already enacting a process to reduce the number of Commodore and Rear-Admirals within its command to allocate them to frontline fighting commands. Army, Air and Strategic Command should follow suit but balance this across top level budget holders (TLB).

¹³ https://www.mindef.gov.sg/oms/imindef/mindef_websites/topics/totaldefence/index.html

economics; b) think tank analysts including pacifists and anti-nuclear deterrent or anti-nuclear analysts c) former military officials for example, former chiefs of the defence staffs, former service chiefs and heads of police; d) former senior Whitehall officials such as former National Security Advisers. The government should take oral and written evidence from these stakeholders and they should be informed of stages and approaches of the Integrated Review and the final outcome, as well as annual reports of the review.

What role should international allies and multinational alliances play?

International allies and alliances should always be consulted during such reviews and provided the full unclassified version. These allies and alliances should include: a) the US; b) NATO; c) key non-NATO European states; d) non-NATO allies such as African, South Asian, Middle Eastern States especially Israel, e) Asia-Pacific alliances such as the Five Power Defence Arrangements, allies such as Japan, South Korea, Australia and Singapore. The UK should increase its presence at each Shangri-La Dialogue (SLD)¹⁴, improve participation in the Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS) and the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus).

What level of detail should be provided to Parliament and the public once the review is completed?

A full report, less the intelligence-related topics, should be publicised on gov.uk under the Cabinet Office. Topics pertaining to individual government departments including the MOD, FCO, DFID should be published on their individual websites. Military and social services such as the police should also update their websites to reflect the relevant proposals in the Integrated Review. This will allow full transparency to parliament and the public and reduce the number of oral written questions in parliamentary debates as well as Freedom of Information requests. The Intelligence and Security Committee (ISC) can be informed of the intelligence-related matters.

What is required to ensure that the findings and outcomes of a review are implemented?

The NSC or a sub-committee of the NSC, should be regularly convened afterwards to evaluate the findings and outcomes, with support from the NSC Secretariat and the separate NSA. A separate and single Cabinet Secretary should also monitor other departments¹⁵ and services to ensure that the outcomes or proposals of the Integrated Review is being met. Parliamentary select committees should monitor the NSC's and Cabinet Secretary's evaluation and convene inquiries if there are shortcomings.

22 March 2020

¹⁴ The annual SLD hosted by IISS Asia in Singapore draws a wide range of academics, defence officials, journalists to discuss Asia-Pacific and global defence issues. The UK only recently has sent top defence officials – VCDS – to the SLD and should continue to participate in it improve the delegation's seniority.

¹⁵ As in other departments besides the MOD, FCO and DFID.