



Strategic Defence and Security Review

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Prior to the general election, both the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats committed to undertaking a strategic defence review should they form the next government.

That Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) was subsequently announced shortly after the new Coalition Government took office in May 2010. In contrast to the previous SDR of 1998, this review will be broader in its scope, cross departmental and be overseen by the newly formed National Security Council. It will also stand alongside a new National Security Strategy.

As the SDSR is ongoing, it is difficult to conclude with any certainty what its final recommendations may be. Therefore, this note seeks to identify emerging themes and provides a list of suggested reading material for relevant commentary.

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1 Background

The Strategic Defence Review in 1998 set the general tone for the strategic direction of defence policy under the Labour government. The Defence White Paper in 2003/2004, *Delivering Security in a Changing World*, updated the assumptions made in the SDR and configured them to the post 9/11 world. In the absence of a new defence white paper in the last six years, the UK’s long term strategic priorities, subsequent defence planning assumptions and the capability requirements of each of the Services established in both the SDR and that 2003 paper have therefore provided the current strategic context for defence policy planning.

1.1 SDR Green Paper of the Labour Government

Following a commitment in July 2009 to hold a defence review early in the next Parliament (post 2010), the Labour Government published a Green Paper entitled *Adaptability and Partnership: Issues for the Strategic Defence Review* in February 2010. While acknowledging that Afghanistan remains the priority for the Armed Forces at present, the Green Paper made it clear at the outset that in planning for the future the UK must anticipate a wide range of threats and subsequent requirements. As such, any Strategic Defence Review “must contribute to decisions about the role we want the United Kingdom to play in the world and how much the nation is prepared to pay for security and defence”.¹ While the Green Paper did not attempt to answer those fundamental questions it did identify areas for discussion and set out the Government’s emerging thinking on these issues. Those observations and recommendations were intended to inform the work of a Strategic Defence Review should the Labour party remain in Government after the May 2010 general election.

In tandem with the publication of the Green Paper was a further, complementary document, *The Defence Strategy for Acquisition Reform*, which set out the MOD’s initial thoughts and recommendations on the affordability of the defence equipment programme and possible

¹ Ministry of Defence, *Adaptability and Partnership: Issues for the Strategic Defence Review*, Cm7794, Session 2009-2010

reform of the acquisition framework; two areas that had been identified as crucial to the work of the defence review.

Neither paper made recommendations on personnel numbers, equipment or basing arrangements, although in his statement to the House on 3 February, the then Secretary of State did indicate that unless there is a radical change in strategic thinking the nuclear deterrent would remain critical to the UK's force structure; while at the same time appearing to ring-fence the future carrier project.

The conclusions of both documents are reiterated in some detail in Library Standard Note, SN/IA/5341, *Strategic Defence Review Green Paper: Preliminary Observations*, 11 February 2010 and are, therefore, not repeated here.

2 A Strategic Defence and Security Review under the Coalition Government

Prior to the general election, both the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats committed to undertaking a strategic defence review should they form the next Government. Both parties had openly criticised the length of time that had passed since the SDR in 1998, and in particular the implications of that for the robustness of the foreign policy baseline against which the defence planning assumptions had been established; the pressure on existing force structures and equipment requirements; and the ability to keep Service personnel within established harmony guidelines. The need to address a potential shortfall in the MOD's budget of approximately £37bn over the next ten years amid severe financial constraints on government spending,² merely added fuel to Conservative and Lib Dem calls for a radical re-evaluation of the UK's defence and foreign policies.

2.1 Conservative and Liberal Democrat Election Manifesto Commitments

The Conservatives

The election manifesto of the Conservative Party *Invitation to join the Government of Britain*, repackaged in concise form the ideas and proposals developed under the leadership of David Cameron, since he became leader of the party in 2005. What follows are extracts from the manifesto, drawing extensively on a report published by Chatham House in April 2010, "UK foreign policy statements by the three main political parties".³

Key headline statements included:

A Conservative government will defend our national security and support our brave Armed Forces in everything they do. We will promote our national interest with an active foreign policy. We will work constructively with the EU, but we will not hand over any more areas of power and we will never join the Euro. We will honour our aid commitments and make sure this money works for the poorest nations.⁴

[...] A Conservative government's approach to foreign affairs will be based on liberal Conservative principles. Liberal, because Britain must be open and engaged with the

² Speech by the Secretary of State for Defence, 13 August 2010. The National Audit Office had previously predicted that a shortfall of between £6bn and £36bn was likely over the next decade (National Audit Office, *Major Projects Report 2009*, HC 85-I, Session 2009-2010)

³ Available at: http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk/files/16418_ge2010_pp.pdf

⁴ Conservative Election Manifesto 2010, p. 103

world, supporting human rights and championing the cause of democracy and the rule of law at every opportunity. But Conservative, because our policy must be hard-headed and practical, dealing with the world as it is and not as we wish it were.⁵

[...] We will be positive members of the European Union but we are clear that there should be no further extension of the EU's power over the UK without the British people's consent. We will ensure that by law no future government can hand over areas of power to the EU or join the Euro without a referendum of the British people. We will work to bring back key powers over legal rights, criminal justice and social and employment legislation to the UK.⁶

[...] We no longer inhabit a world in which foreign and defence issues can be separated from domestically-generated threats. Instead, we live in a world in which dangers, events and actions abroad are inter-dependent with threats to our security at home. We must meet the threats we face with a concerted response from the state. That response cannot just come from how we conduct our foreign affairs, or organise our defence and internal security – it must cut across energy, education, community cohesion, health, technology, international development and the environment too.⁷

Key manifesto proposals therefore included:

- establish a new National Security Council, which will produce a new National Security Strategy and co-ordinate a Strategic Defence and Security Review;
- be the only one of the three main parties opposed outright to membership of the Euro;
- propose to “restore democratic control” of the EU by creating a ‘referendum lock’ on any further transfer of power by amending the 1972 European Communities Act, drawing up a UK Sovereignty Bill, and introducing safeguards against ‘ratchet clauses’ in the Lisbon Treaty;
- support continuing EU enlargement, including Turkish accession.
- establish a “new special relationship with India”;
- in favour of “permanent seats on the United Nations Security Council for Japan, India, Germany, Brazil and African representation”;
- propose to “strengthen the Commonwealth as a focus for promoting democratic values and development”;
- “committed to NATO as the ultimate guarantor of Europe’s security”;
- in favour of a two-state solution between Israel and Palestine;
- work with other European countries to “boost global economic growth, fight global poverty, and combat global climate change”;
- commitment to the target of 0.7% GNI by 2013 for aid spending;
- continue to have an independent DFID;

⁵ Ibid., p. 109

⁶ Ibid., p. 113

⁷ Ibid, p. 103

- introduce independent assessment of DFID programmes and in some cases implement 'payment by results';
- improve transparency of aid spending;
- establish a "MyAid Fund" to give UK citizens a voice on aid spending;
- stop UK aid to China and Russia;
- improve integration of post-conflict reconstruction with the military and establish a "new Stabilisation and Reconstruction Force".

On defence specifically, the Conservative manifesto also set out the commitment to:

- Establish a new permanent Military Command for Homeland Defence and Security to provide a more structured military contribution to homeland security.
- Ensure that resources for our Armed Forces are matched to our foreign policy requirements.
- Support the decision to renew Britain's submarine-based nuclear deterrent, based on the Trident missile system.
- Reduce the running costs of the MOD by 25% and release spending on unnecessary and bureaucratic EU defence initiatives, including re-evaluating the UK's position with the European Defence Agency.
- Restore the Military Covenant, including doubling the operational allowance, maximising rest and recuperation leave, ensuring Service personnel are treated in dedicated military wards in hospital, providing university and further education scholarships for the children of Service personnel killed on active duty, piloting a mental health follow-up service for veterans and review the rules regarding the awarding of medals.⁸

The manifesto also stated that:

Given our commitment to carry out a Strategic Defence and Security Review, it would also not be appropriate to make in-year reductions to the existing defence budget in 2010/11. Savings in these protected areas will be channelled back into frontline services.⁹

Many of these points, specifically those relating to the Military Covenant, were also set out in the Conservative *Armed Forces Manifesto 2010*. In addition, that manifesto also committed to introducing a system of regular defence reviews every four to five years, establishing a tri-service Military Covenant, reforming the MOD's procurement processes and improving the assistance given to Service leavers including establishing a new route into the teaching profession for those personnel who have undertaken an active tour of duty and financial assistance for any such personnel who wish to study for a first degree.

Although not explicitly stated in its manifesto, the Conservatives also outlined that any wholesale assessment of the MOD's forward equipment plan as part of the strategic defence and security review would not include the Trident replacement programme.

⁸ Ibid, p.105-107

⁹ Conservative Election Manifesto 2010, p.9

It is also worth noting some of the points made in the Conservative Party document [A Resilient Nation: National Security the Conservative Approach](#), which was published in January 2010. With respect to the likely shape of the SDSR that document commented:

As we peer into the future, two things are certain: that money will be exceptionally tight, and that our country must continue to be defended properly in a dangerous world.

The Strategic Defence and Security Review will need to be forward-looking and face up to some very tough decisions that have been put off for too long. Equipment programmes cannot be based on wish-lists or the fantasy world of what we would like to do if resources were unlimited. It will need to harness our national strengths – our willingness to play a part far beyond our borders, strong public support for our Armed Forces, the character of our fighting men and women, the strength of our defence industry and technologies – to an overall strategy which makes the most effective use of them rather than putting them in a state of permanent overstretch. It must meet the challenges of a turbulent international context and help to reduce our vulnerability at home to threats and hazards.

That means calibrating our role and our capabilities to the sort of conflicts which are most likely to arise in the next twenty years not the last twenty. It means being smarter in using what we can afford. It means deciding what capabilities the UK must itself have as well as how to complement the capabilities of our Allies, especially the US. It means bringing together more effectively soft and hard power. And it means drastic improvements in our defence equipment acquisition process to avoid the delay, confusion and cost overruns which have become all too familiar. A Conservative government will therefore engage industry in a sustained dialogue on strategy and policy development.¹⁰

The Liberal Democrats

The Liberal Democrats election manifesto *Change that works for you. Building a fairer Britain*, contained the following key headline statements, most of which are also drawn from the Chatham House report of April 2010:¹¹

Britain must work together with our partners abroad if we are to have the best hope of meeting the challenges the world faces. We believe in freedom, justice, prosperity and human rights for all and will do all we can to work towards a world where these hopes become reality. Above all, climate change is the greatest challenge facing this generation.¹²

Liberal Democrats believe that European co-operation is the best way for Britain to be strong, safe and influential in the future. We will ensure that Britain maximises its influence through a strong and positive commitment.¹³

Elsewhere, the manifesto said that the Liberal Democrats believed that working through the EU is the best means of “managing the impacts of globalisation”, and that they were wary of the implications of a “subservient relationship with the United States”.¹⁴

Manifesto proposals included:

¹⁰ Conservative Party, *A Resilient Nation*, January 2010, p.4-5

¹¹ See footnote 1

¹² Liberal Democrat Election Manifesto 2010, p. 56

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 66, 63

- committed to “an in/out referendum the next time a British government signs up for fundamental change in the relationship between the UK and the EU”;
- advocate a referendum on membership of the Euro, which is regarded as in Britain’s “long-term interest”;
- support reform of the EU budget;
- support efforts to create an International Arms Trade Treaty;
- will establish a ‘code of conduct’ for arms brokers;
- propose a “full judicial inquiry into allegations of British complicity in torture and state kidnapping”;
- the only party to rule out military action in Iran, instead placing an emphasis on diplomatic engagement, including targeted sanctions if necessary;
- committed to the two-state solution for Israel-Palestine, and acting through the EU to “put pressure on Israel and Egypt to end the blockade of Gaza”;
- committed to the target of 0.7% GNI by 2013 for aid spending;
- support a “global fund for social protection”;

On defence and the Armed Forces specifically, the Liberal Democrats committed to:

- Review all major defence procurement projects through a strategic security and defence review to ensure money is being spent effectively. Tranche 3B of Eurofighter would be cancelled.
- Rule out the like-for-like replacement of Trident and pursue alternatives.¹⁵
- Reinvigorate Franco-British and wider European defence co-operation to ensure procurement costs are kept low.
- Put Armed Forces welfare first, including giving a pay rise to the lower ranks so that their pay is brought into line with the starting salary of the emergency services and doubling the rate of modernisation of forces’ family homes.
- Reduce the number of civilian staff in the MOD and reduce the number of top brass officers.¹⁶

While Iraq and Afghanistan were discussed, foreign policy did not feature particularly prominently during the three leaders’ debates or as part of the wider election campaign.

2.2 The Strategic Defence and Security Review

In contrast to the previous SDR of 1998, this review will be a defence and security review that is cross departmental and overseen by the newly formed National Security Council, chaired by the Prime Minister. It will also stand alongside a new National Security Strategy. The background note to the Queens Speech on 25 May stated:

¹⁵ The Lib Dems called the decision by both Labour and the Conservatives to exclude Trident from any SDSR “illogical” and “a complete mockery of the whole exercise” (“Liberal Democrats call for immediate review of UK Trident policy”, *The Guardian*, 2 April 2010)

¹⁶ Liberal Democrat Election Manifesto 2010, p.63-65

The Government believes that its primary responsibility is to ensure national security.

This requires a clear, coherent leadership to ensure our armed forces, security services, stabilisation experts and others at home and abroad, are united behind the goal of protecting Britain and its interests.

The new National Security Council has commenced work on a National Security Strategy and a wide ranging Strategic Defence and Security Review. This will be one of the top priorities for this Government and will be overseen by the new National Security Advisor.

The combination of a Strategic Defence and Security Review and a National Security Strategy will provide a coherent approach to security across Government and will ensure that we have the right balance of recourses to meet our commitments.

The approach which has been agreed by the National Security Committee involves a radically different element – analysis of national security policy and capability across departments. This will require strong leadership from the centre, Cabinet Office working with the Treasury.

The Ministry of Defence, for example, has been preparing for its own Strategic Defence Review. But defence capabilities and resources will need to be considered alongside all other security capabilities in order to measure the relative cost effectiveness of each.

This will produce a genuinely strategic and cross cutting process and will enable Ministers to consider relative priorities across all national security capabilities.

A fundamental objective of these reviews will be to ensure that the brave men and women on the front line will have all the tools they need to do the vital work we ask of them.¹⁷

As the SDSR is ongoing, it is difficult to conclude with any certainty what its final recommendations may be. While it is widely expected that the conclusions and recommendations of the February 2010 Green Paper will go some way to informing the thinking of the SDSR, there were areas of that paper which the Conservative Party, while in opposition, disagreed with. Most notable was the assumption that the UK would always operate as part of a coalition or an alliance.¹⁸ Neither the Conservative Party nor the Liberal Democrats disagreed, however, with the fundamental premise of the Green Paper: that the forward defence programme is simply unaffordable against likely future resources and that significant changes therefore need to be implemented.

As the election manifesto commitments of both parties also reveal: while both parties of the Coalition government agree on a majority of areas for reform, including armed forces welfare and cutting the number of civilians and senior officers within the MOD; their positions also differed on European defence integration and significantly, the replacement of the strategic nuclear deterrent.

What follows, therefore, is a summary of the statements and proposals that have been put forward by the Government in the last few months on the strategic thinking behind the SDSR and some of the main areas for reform.

¹⁷ Cabinet Office Press Office, *Background Note – Non-Legislative Item: Strategic Defence and Security Review*, 25 May 2010

¹⁸ Dr Liam Fox MP, "The Strategic Defence and Security Review: a Conservative view of defence and future challenges", RUSI, 8 February 2010: <http://www.rusi.org/events/ref:E4B62C2FEC5252>

Foreign Policy Baseline

The initial post-election agreement between the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats to form a Coalition Government said relatively little about foreign policy. However, the final document, called “[Our Programme for Government](#)” had this to say about foreign policy, international development and national security:

15. FOREIGN AFFAIRS

The Government believes that Britain must always be an active member of the global community, promoting our national interests while standing up for the values of freedom, fairness and responsibility. This means working as a constructive member of the United Nations, NATO and other multilateral organisations including the Commonwealth; working to promote stability and security; and pushing for reform of global institutions to ensure that they reflect the modern world.

- We will take forward our shared resolve to safeguard the UK’s national security and support our Armed Forces in Afghanistan and elsewhere.
- We will push for peace in the Middle East, with a secure and universally recognised Israel living alongside a sovereign and viable Palestinian state.
- We will work to establish a new ‘special relationship’ with India and seek closer engagement with China, while standing firm on human rights in all our bilateral relationships.
- We will maintain a strong, close and frank relationship with the United States.
- We want to strengthen the Commonwealth as a focus for promoting democratic values and development.
- We will work to promote stability in the Western Balkans.
- We will support concerted international efforts to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon.
- We support reform of the UN Security Council, including permanent seats for Japan, India, Germany, Brazil and African representation.
- We will work to intensify our cultural, educational, commercial and diplomatic links with many nations beyond Europe and North America to strengthen the UK’s relations with the fastest-growing areas of the world economy.
- We will never condone the use of torture.

18. INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Government believes that even in these difficult economic times, the UK has a moral responsibility to help the poorest people in the world. We will honour our aid commitments, but at the same time will ensure much greater transparency and scrutiny of aid spending to deliver value for money for British taxpayers and to maximise the impact of our aid budget.

- We will honour our commitment to spend 0.7% of GNI on overseas aid from 2013, and to enshrine this commitment in law.
- We will encourage other countries to fulfil their aid commitments.

- We will support actions to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. In particular, we will prioritise aid spending on programmes to ensure that everyone has access to clean water, sanitation, healthcare and education; to reduce maternal and infant mortality; and to restrict the spread of major diseases like HIV/ AIDS, TB and malaria. We will recognise the vital role of women in development, promote gender equality and focus on the rights of women, children and disabled people to access services.
- We will use the aid budget to support the development of local democratic institutions, civil society groups, the media and enterprise; and support efforts to tackle corruption.
- We will introduce full transparency in aid and publish details of all UK aid spending online. We will push for similarly high levels of transparency internationally.
- We will create new mechanisms to give British people a direct say in how an element of the aid budget is spent.
- We will keep aid untied from commercial interests, and will maintain DfID as an independent department focused on poverty reduction.
- We will stick to the rules laid down by the OECD about what spending counts as aid.
- We will push hard in 2010 to make greater progress in tackling maternal and infant mortality.
- We will work to accelerate the process of relieving Heavily Indebted Poor Countries of their debt.
- We will support efforts to establish an International Arms Trade Treaty to limit the sales of arms to dangerous regimes.
- We will support pro-development trade deals, including the proposed Pan-African Free Trade Area.
- We will support innovative and effective smaller British non-governmental organisations that are committed to tackling poverty.
- We will explore ways of helping the very poorest developing countries to take part in international climate change negotiations.
- We will ensure that UK Trade and Investment and the Export Credits Guarantee Department become champions for British companies that develop and export innovative green technologies around the world, instead of supporting investment in dirty fossil-fuel energy production.
- We will provide a more integrated approach to post-conflict reconstruction where the British military is involved – building on the Stabilisation Unit in Whitehall and creating a new Stabilisation and Reconstruction Force to bridge the gap between the military and the reconstruction effort.
- We will review what action can be taken against ‘vulture funds’.
- We will support reform of global financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in order to increase the involvement of developing nations.

21. NATIONAL SECURITY

The Government believes that its primary responsibility is to ensure national security. We need a coherent approach to national security issues across government, and we will take action to tackle terrorism, and its causes, at home and abroad.

- We have established a National Security Council and appointed a National Security Adviser.
- We have commenced a Strategic Defence and Security Review, commissioned and overseen by the National Security Council, with strong Treasury involvement. We will also develop and publish a new National Security Strategy.
- We will urgently review Control Orders, as part of a wider review of counter-terrorist legislation, measures and programmes. We will seek to find a practical way to allow the use of intercept evidence in court.
- We will deny public funds to any group that has recently espoused or incited violence or hatred. We will proscribe such organisations, subject to the advice of the police and security and intelligence agencies.
- We believe that Britain should be able to deport foreign nationals who threaten our security to countries where there are verifiable guarantees that they will not be tortured. We will seek to extend these guarantees to more countries.

The [foreign policy priorities](#) of the new Coalition Government are currently summarised on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office website:

Our priority is to promote Britain's enlightened national interest in a changing world [...] We will pursue an active and activist foreign policy, working with other countries and strengthening the rules-based international system in support of the following **three** objectives:

1. **Safeguard Britain's national security** by countering terrorism and weapons proliferation, and working to reduce conflict.
2. **Build Britain's prosperity** by increasing exports and investment, opening markets, ensuring access to resources, and promoting sustainable global growth.
3. **Support British citizens** around the world through modern and efficient consular services.

The Foreign Secretary, William Hague, provided a more detailed insight into the Coalition Government's thinking in two recent keynote speeches, which will be part of a series of four.

The first speech, given on 1 July, was called "[Britain's foreign policy in a networked world](#)". Talking about the series of four speeches that he will be making, he said:

In them I will set out how we will deliver a distinctive British Foreign policy that extends our global reach and influence, that is agile and energetic in a networked world, that uses diplomacy to secure our prosperity, that builds up significantly strengthened bilateral relations for Britain, that harnesses the appeal of our culture and heritage to promote our values, and that sets out to make the most of the abundant opportunities of the 21st century systematically and for the long-term. So for the first time in years in my view Britain will have a foreign policy that is clear, focused and effective.

He added:

I returned to frontbench politics five years ago expressly to shadow Foreign Affairs and obviously hoping to occupy the office I now hold. During that time in Opposition it became increasingly apparent to me that the previous Government had neglected to lift its eyes to the wider strategic needs of this country, to take stock of British interests, and to determine in a systematic fashion what we must do as a nation if we are to secure our international influence and earn our living in a world that is rapidly changing. My coalition colleagues and I are utterly determined to supply that leadership. The Prime Minister has signalled our intention to chart a clear way forward by launching a strategic review of our defence and security needs, led by the requirements of foreign policy as well inevitable financial constraints, and that review will conclude by the autumn. It will be a fundamental reappraisal of Britain's place in the world and how we operate within it as well as of the capabilities we need to protect our security.

Today I will set out why we believe such a reappraisal is necessary, the new approach we intend to pursue and the steps we have already taken.

Put simply, the world has changed and if we do not change with it Britain's role is set to decline with all that that means for our influence in world affairs, for our national security and for our economy. Achieving our foreign policy objectives has become harder and will become more so unless we are prepared to act differently.

Hague went on to discuss four "well known" changes: the shift in economic power and opportunity "to the countries of the East and South"; the widening and increasingly multilateral character of "the circle of international decision-making"; the growing complexity of the challenge of protecting UK security "in the face of new threats"; and the changing nature of conflict. On this count, he said:

Our Armed Forces are currently involved in fighting insurgencies or wars-amongst-the-people rather than state on state conflict, they are involved in counter-piracy operations rather than sea battles, the projection of force overseas rather than homeland-based defence. And security threats themselves are more widely dispersed in parts of the world which are often difficult to access, lawless and in some cases failing, where the absence of governance feeds into a cycle of conflict and danger that we have yet to learn to arrest but are likely to face more often.

Hague then discussed in depth a less well-known change that is nonetheless the "most striking change of all": "the emergence of a networked world", claiming:

Today, influence increasingly lies with networks of states with fluid and dynamic patterns of allegiance, alliance and connections, including the informal, which act as vital channels of influence and decision-making and require new forms of engagement from Britain [...] Relations between states are now no longer monopolised by Foreign Secretaries or Prime Ministers. There is now a mass of connections between individuals, civil society, businesses, pressure groups and charitable organisations which are also part of the relations between nations and which are being rapidly accelerated by the internet [...] So if the increasingly multipolar world already means that we have more governments to influence and that we must become more active, the ever accelerating development of human networks means that we have to use many more channels to do so, seeking to carry our arguments in courts of public opinion around the world as well as around international negotiating tables.

Hague referred to the advantages enjoyed by the UK in seeking to reap the benefits of the "networked world":

The case for the UK embracing the opportunities of the networked world is very strong. We are richly endowed with the attributes for success. We are a member of one of the world's longstanding global networks - the Commonwealth – which spans continents and world religions, contains six of the fastest growing economies and is underpinned by an agreed framework of common values. The previous Government in my view appeared oblivious to this aspect of the value of the Commonwealth, not even mentioning it a strategic plan published for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in 2009. We are also the world's sixth largest trading nation even though we comprise just 1% of the world's population; second only to the USA in the amount of money we invest abroad and always outward looking and intrepid in nature. One in ten British citizens now lives permanently overseas. We have unrivalled human links with some of the fastest growing countries of the world, whether it is the millions of our own citizens who boast Indian, Pakistani or Bangladeshi heritage, our close links with Africa, or the 85,000 Chinese students currently being educated in Britain or at UK campuses in China. This is giving rise to a new generation with contact with the UK, with its language, culture and norms, and growing networks that we should cherish and build on. The English language gives us the ability to share ideas with millions – perhaps billions - of people in the biggest emerging economies and – if we so choose – to build networks across the world. It is staggering that in India 250 million school and university-aged students – four times the entire population of the United Kingdom – are now learning English. This underlines the essential importance of the work of the British Council and the BBC World Service, which give Britain an unrivalled platform for the projection of the appeal of our culture and the sharing of our values.

But he then gave this warning:

In the world I have described our approach to foreign affairs cannot be, to borrow the arguments of a former Conservative Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary Lord Salisbury, to “float lazily downstream, occasionally putting out a diplomatic boat hook to avoid collisions.” The country that is purely reactive in foreign affairs is in decline. So we must understand these changes around us and adapt to meet them.

Moving on to the concrete steps that the Coalition Government would take to reflect the importance of this “networked world”, the Foreign Secretary said:

Our starting point is the belief that government in Britain is not currently as well-equipped as it needs to be to pursue this ambitious approach. We are well placed to make the most of the opportunities of a networked world, but we are not yet organised or orientated to do so effectively.

First, we inherited a structure of government that had no effective mechanism for bringing together strategic decisions about foreign affairs, security, defence and development or to align national objectives in these areas. We therefore immediately established a true, a heavyweight National Security Council and launched the Strategic Defence and Security Review I have mentioned, which will ensure that we have the right capabilities to minimise risks to British citizens and look for the positive trends in the world, since our security requires seizing opportunity as well as mitigating risk.

Second, many domestic departments of Government have an increasingly international aspect to their work and have staff posted in UK Embassies around the world. But this work is not as coherently brought together as it could be. For example we have already undertaken an audit of the Government's relations with up to 30 of the world's emerging economies and discovered that there is no effective cross-Whitehall strategy for building political and economic relations with half of these countries. It is our intention to transform this, using the National Security Council where appropriate to bring together all the Departments of Government in the pursuit of national objectives,

so that foreign policy runs through the veins of the entire administration and so that it is possible to elevate entire relationships with individual countries in a systematic fashion – not just in diplomacy but in education, health, civil society, commerce and where appropriate in defence [...]

[...] Third, we believe that we must achieve a stronger focus on using our national strengths and advantages across the board to help build these strong bilateral relations for the United Kingdom as well as complement the efforts of our allies, whether it is the appeal of our world class education system, the standing of our Armed Forces and defence diplomacy or the quality of our Intelligence Services and GCHQ which are unique in the world and of inestimable value to the UK.

Fourth, it was clear to us that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office itself has not been encouraged to be ambitious enough in articulating and leading Britain's efforts overseas and foreign policy thinking across Government. I consider it part of my responsibilities as Foreign Secretary to foster a Foreign Office that is a strong institution for the future, continuing to attract the most talented entrants from diverse backgrounds and in future years placing a greater emphasis on geographic expertise, expertise in counter-terrorism and counter-proliferation, experience of working in difficult countries overseas as well as management and leadership ability [...]

[...] And fifth, we are determined as a Government to give due weight to Britain's membership of the EU and other multilateral institutions. It is mystifying to us that the previous Government failed to give due weight to the development of British influence in the EU. They neglected to ensure that sufficient numbers of bright British officials entered EU institutions, and so we are now facing a generation gap developing in the British presence in parts of the EU where early decisions and early drafting take place. [...] Consoling themselves with the illusion that agreeing to institutional changes desired by others gave an appearance of British centrality in the EU, they neglected to launch any new initiative to work with smaller nations and presided over a decline in the holding of key European positions by British personnel. As a new Government we are determined to put this right.

Finally, Hague discussed the thorny issue of the UK's "national resources":

Some will argue that our constrained national resources cannot possibly support such an ambitious approach to Foreign Policy or to the Foreign Office. It is true that like other Departments the Foreign Office will on many occasions have to do more with less and find savings wherever possible and that because of the economic situation we inherited from the previous Government the resources Britain has available for the projection of its influence overseas are constrained. But we will not secure our recovery or our future security and prosperity without looking beyond our shores for new opportunities and new partners. No country or groups of countries will increase the level of support or protection they offer to us and no-one else will champion the economic opportunity of the British citizen if we do not. We must recognise the virtuous circle between foreign policy and prosperity. Our foreign policy helps create our prosperity and our prosperity underwrites our diplomacy, our security, our defence and our ability to give to others less fortunate than ourselves.

He concluded:

[...] although the next twenty years is likely to be a time of increased danger in foreign affairs, it is also a time of extraordinary opportunity for a country that sets out to make the most of the still great advantages the United Kingdom certainly possesses.

Hague's second speech, "[Britain's prosperity in a networked world](#)", was given on 15 July during a visit to Japan. In it, he referred back to the "four ways" set out in the first speech in which the UK would pursue "a distinctive foreign policy":

First, by intensifying our engagement with the emerging economies of the world where so much economic opportunity now lies, looking beyond our shores for new partners and new possibilities.

Second, by building even stronger bilateral relationships for the United Kingdom. We will elevate key partnerships beyond Europe and North America with countries like Japan, seeking new ways of working together as networks of nations to support stability, security and prosperity in our own economies and in the wider world.

Third, by engaging with people and their aspirations and not just with other governments. If our foreign policy is to be effective in a networked world we must extend opportunity to others as well as striving for the best for Britain, upholding our own values and influencing others by being an inspiring example of our own values.

The fourth principle, and the subject of my speech today, is that our new Government believes that British foreign policy needs to support the UK economy to a greater degree if we are to ensure our economic recovery and long-term growth for the future.

He added, on the "fourth principle":

We will make economic objectives a central aspect of our international bilateral engagement alongside our other traditional objectives. We will work in a targeted and systematic fashion to secure Britain's economic recovery, promote open markets and improved financial regulation and to open the way to greater access for British companies in new markets worldwide. We will champion Britain as a partner of choice for any country seeking to invest and do business in Europe. And we will use our diplomacy to help secure a strong, sustainable and open global economy that benefits all nations and helps create the basic conditions for prosperity for those who are now denied it. To do this, we will inject a new commercialism into the work of our Foreign Office and into the definition of our country's international objectives, ensuring that we develop the strong political relationships which will help British business to thrive overseas.

We are confident that this new approach will deliver results for Britain and that as a country we have a great deal to offer our partners in the global economy. We are a world-class destination for international business, we are a global hub for creativity and innovation, a centre of the world's financial services industry and a leading champion of free trade and economic liberalism. We have a new Government that is committed to showing the world that Britain is open for business, to cutting corporation tax to 24% and to making Britain the easiest place in the world to start a business as well as one of the strongest business environments of all major European economies.

So 14 days after that first speech I am here in Asia to show that we do mean business. I am in Japan today and tomorrow to reaffirm our relationship and to seek a closer partnership in commerce and in foreign policy. I have just visited China, where encouraged Chinese leaders to continue the process of opening China's markets to foreign companies. Later this week I will visit the Gulf, where we are taking systematic steps to elevate our ties. Over the coming month British Ministers will fan out across the world in support of this new approach, including a delegation to India led by our Prime Minister David Cameron and a visit to Brazil by the Business Secretary Vince Cable.

Later in the speech, he said:

Today I have written an open letter to all 15,000 employees of our Foreign Office, including our staff here in Tokyo and Osaka, explaining that we must use our global diplomatic network to support UK business even more intensively and to build stronger bilateral relationships for Britain. This is a matter of vital national importance. In the words of our Prime Minister, our Ambassadors will now be economic as well as political Ambassadors for Britain.

We will work alongside British businesses and the rest of Government and other Governments around the world to use our political influence to help unblock obstacles to commercial success, including cultural and language barriers, excessive regulation or weak enforcement of property rights. We will also strengthen and broaden the science and technology network in our Embassies across the world, so that we help maintain the world-class science and engineering base necessary to transform the United Kingdom into Europe's leading high-tech exporter and stay at the cutting edge of science and innovation.

And we will pursue this approach across the whole of Government, not just the Foreign Office, so that this new focus on economic opportunity runs through the veins of our entire administration and so that whenever Ministers from domestic departments travel overseas on behalf of the United Kingdom they too will promote opportunities for British business as well as other essential objectives.

In other parts of the speech, Hague amplified upon how UK-Japan trade and co-operation could be further deepened, referring to Japan's importance as a means of entry for the UK to the wider East Asian region but also talking about Britain's value to Japan through its membership of the EU and the Commonwealth, and its influence in the Gulf and South Asia. Specifically, he talked about "a significant opportunity to deepen our defence and security partnership if British industry, as part of the Eurofighter consortium, is successful in bidding to supply Japan's future fighter aircraft." Hague ended:

To draw this together and conclude, UK economic recovery depends on global stability and growth. We will not prosper without a sustained economy recovery, access to new markets and new sources of inward investment. We will only thrive over the long term within a healthy global economy. So we must work with others on reform of the IMF, successful implementation of the G20 macroeconomic framework for strong, sustainable and balanced growth. We must find innovative ways to take forward the Doha trade round which would boost the global economy by around \$170 billion dollars annually and prevent billions more being lost through protectionism. At the same time we need to deal with the softer economic challenges which will be vital to sustaining prosperity: ensuring that growth in the developed and emerging economies benefits low income countries without further damage to our environment; improving international energy dialogue and institutional architecture; and embedding green growth into economic strategies.

So making the most of our relations with Japan, with China and with other key economies will, for all of these reasons, be a central priority for the Foreign Office that I lead, as part of an approach that puts promoting trade and commercial interests at the heart of our foreign policy. Nothing will come to us by right or by virtue of the past. We have to work hard to earn our living as a nation and maintain our international influence. What we have set out to do with Japan we will also do more widely, pursuing British interests as well as the global good in a systematic fashion while making the most of the new opportunities for influence and action presented by a networked world. If we succeed, the rewards are clear, not only for our economy but

for our ability to strengthen the international system and to deal with all challenges of the 21st century more effectively.

Emerging Proposals for Defence

On several occasions the Government has emphasised that this review will address every aspect of defence policy including force structures, basing arrangements, the reserves, equipment requirements and welfare provision. The intention is for the review to be “policy-led, and resource-informed”.

As a starting point, the Coalition’s *Programme for Government* reaffirmed the intention to implement many of the proposals set out in both parties election manifestos, in particular those related to the Military Covenant. It is likely that many of those policy proposals, if not already implemented,¹⁹ will find their way into the SDSR as they will have cost implications. The *Programme for Government* also confirmed the proposal to reduce the MOD’s running costs by at least 25% and, significantly, presented Coalition policy on the renewal of Trident. Under that agreement Lib Dem opposition to the like-for-like replacement of Trident has been dropped, although the new Government announced that the programme would be scrutinised for value for money, within the framework of the Strategic Defence and Security Review, and that the Liberal Democrats could continue to make the case for alternatives.²⁰ That value for money review was concluded at the end of July 2010 and its conclusions and recommendations are expected to be presented to the National Security Council over the summer and inform the SDSR this autumn.²¹

Over the last few months various speeches and statements made by the Government have given some indication of the likely themes and priorities for the SDSR. Those points are as follows:

1. The SDSR will be undertaken in line with three core principles:
 - Relevance – defence posture and capabilities must be relevant to the current environment, dispensing with much of the Cold War legacy.
 - Realism – the UK cannot insure against every imaginable risk, and therefore the government must decide which risks it is willing to take.
 - Responsibility – the nation has a duty to support its Service personnel, including ensuring that the capabilities to do what is asked of them, and that Service personnel and their families are looked after.
2. The Armed Forces must be structured first to deter and second to deliver the use of force in support of the UK’s national interest and to protect national security. This does not mean that the UK must be able to do all things at all times. The UK will need to be smarter about when and how it deploys power, which tasks can be done in alliance with others and what capabilities will the UK require as a result. Afghanistan will remain the UK’s top priority but the UK must retain the capacity to deploy military strength in defence of the UK’s own national interests. The defence contribution to the SDSR will therefore balance the immediate demands of Afghanistan with planning for alternative futures.

¹⁹ The doubling of the operational allowance, for example, was announced on 15 June 2010.

²⁰ *Our Programme for Government*, May 2010

²¹ Further information on the Trident replacement programme is available in Library briefing, *Future of the British Nuclear Deterrent: A Progress Report*

Coined 'the 2020 option' the intention is structure the Armed Forces on the basis of the foreign policy goals the UK has set for itself at the end of the decade, the UK's assessment of the future character of conflict and the changes in technology that will need to be incorporated. The result will be a "flexible, adaptable posture [that] will maintain the ability to safeguard international peace and security, to deter and contain those who threaten the UK and its interests, and where necessary to intervene on multiple fronts. It will also, crucially, keep our options open for a future in which we can expect our highest priorities to change over time".²² That would mean an Armed Forces capable of maritime-enabled power projection, the capacity to control air-space to guarantee freedom of manoeuvre and the ability to deploy land power with the logistical strength to sustain it.

3. The MOD faces an unfunded liability over the next ten years of approximately £37bn, over £20bn of which is taken up by the equipment and support programme alone. Defence cannot be immune from the economic realities that the UK faces and all defence programmes will be reviewed and need to demonstrate their value for money. Without cost containment in current programmes the MOD has indicated that there will be no option but to either cut programmes currently underway or curtail investment in future programmes. Fleet numbers that provide any one capability must also be reduced in order to cut multiple supply chains and associated infrastructure and training costs.

Any changes to a current programme or platform will be assessed against a series of criteria, including: cost savings in years 0-5, 5-10 and 10+; the implications for capability and what other assets the UK possesses that might provide a similar capability; what operations would the UK be unable to undertake as a result of any change; the ability to regenerate a capability, and to what cost and timeframe; and the threat that the capability currently protects the UK from, or is likely to do so in the future.

4. The core of UK security must remain NATO which should be the UK's instrument of first choice for collective security challenges and the US will be the UK's major partner. However, it will be necessary to "step up bilateral co-operation with France and other partners, and revitalise a broad programme of defence diplomacy". The UK must use every lever at its disposal including the Commonwealth, UN, EU and other regional organisations to protect national security. A Defence Diplomacy programme will therefore be funded separately within SDSR.
5. The government will push ahead with the process of acquisition reform, including the implementation of a 10-year planning horizon agreed with the Treasury, and audited by the NAO every year, to provide more clarity and predicatability. The Government will support the UK defence industry as a strategic asset and support the drive for exports. An updated and improved Defence Industrial Strategy will be published after the SDSR has concluded. That strategy will define the UK's sovereign requirements and how associated industrial capabilities will be protected; and provide more detail on helping small and medium enterprises and supporting exports, both of which have been identified as two of the Government's highest priorities. A Green Paper is expected to be published before the end of 2010 which will then lead into a consultation period before culminating in the publication of a White Paper in spring

²² Speech by the Secretary of State for Defence, 13 August 2010

2011. That White Paper will set out the Government's approach to industry and technology until the next SDSR.

6. A full review of how the Ministry of Defence is run and how the Armed Forces can be reformed to produce more efficient provision of capability, and generation and sustainment of operations will be undertaken. There will be two themes to this review: structural reform which will see the MOD reorganised into three pillars: Strategy and Policy, Armed Forces and Procurement and Estates; and a cultural shift towards a leaner and less centralised organisation combined with devolved processes which carry greater accountability and transparency.

To oversee implementation, a Defence Reform Unit has been established within the MOD to help plan and execute any structural/organisational changes set out in the SDSR. That work will proceed on a separate track with a view to completion of a blueprint for reform by September 2011, although early high-level findings may be woven into the SDSR. Lord Levene will chair the Steering Group, comprised of internal and external experts, which will be supported by a civil service implementation team. The Defence Reform Unit will also examine options for devolving greater responsibility for the running of the Services themselves, including an assessment of whether the current Senior Rank structure across the Services is appropriate for a post-SDSR world. The inaugural meeting of the Steering Group was held on 6 September 2010.²³

A review of how the Armed Forces undertakes the tasks of force generation and sustainability will also be established once the SDSR has been published, with a view to completion of work by spring 2011. That review will be led by the three Service Chiefs and is expected to consider issues such as tour lengths and intervals and harmony guidelines.

7. A new Tri-Service Covenant will be established that will set out the government's obligations and commitments to Armed Forces personnel, their families and veterans. Specifically the MOD will examine Service children's education, Service voting, maximising rest and recuperation periods, creating a new programme to encourage ex-Service personnel into the teaching profession, providing extra support for veterans mental health needs, reviewing the rules governing the award of medals, including Armed Forces pay in plans for a broader fair pay review, treating injured personnel in dedicated military wards and whether there is scope to refurbish Service accommodation from efficiencies within the MOD. In June 2010 the Prime Minister announced that the Military Covenant would be enshrined in law for the first time.
8. In addition to the Trident value for money review, the Government will also re-examine the UK's nuclear declaratory policy (ie. the UK's position on 'no first use') as part of the SDSR.
9. The MOD is currently engaged in 41 individual policy and capability studies which will contribute to the overall work of the SDSR. A full list is set out in a July 2010 MOD Memorandum to the Defence Select committee:

²³ See: <http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/DefenceNews/DefencePolicyAndBusiness/DefenceReformUnitStartsWork.htm>

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmselect/cmdfence/memo/hc345/m01.htm>

The main decisions on the SDSR are expected to be taken in September and the SDSR will conclude at the end of October, in parallel with the publication of the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review. The conclusions of the SDSR will be published in a cross-departmental White Paper.

As part of the consultation process on the SDSR, the Government committed to a one day debate in the House, which was held on 21 June 2010. A further debate, initiated by the Backbench Business Committee, on the Future of the UK Armed Forces, will be held on 16 September 2010.

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HC Deb 26 May 2010, [c181-182](#) and [272-276](#)

3 Suggested Papers, Speeches and Articles

The main focus of commentary on the defence review thus far has been on the question of whether it will, despite best intentions, be budget driven as opposed to policy driven. Indeed, many analysts have pointed to the intention to publish the SDSR in parallel with the Comprehensive Spending Review as evidence of the budgetary focus of the review. Questions over the replacement of Trident have also dominated, in particular those arguments calling for the MOD to scrap Trident and seek instead to fund the conventional capabilities of the Armed Forces, and the debate over which government department should fund the capital costs of the replacement programme. The inherent dilemma of planning, and funding, 'the' war (Afghanistan), as opposed to 'a' war in the longer term also remains, with much of the focus on where equipment and basing cuts should subsequently fall.

As much of the present debate on the SDSR is speculative, the following articles and papers provide an extensive guide to the evolving arguments and differing opinions on what the MOD can reasonably achieve in this forthcoming review.

A comprehensive reading list to the beginning of February 2010 is available in Library Standard Note [SN/IA/5341](#).

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- [Address by the Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope](#), to RUSI, 7 July 2010
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- [Address by the Chief of the General Staff, General Sir David Richards](#), to Chatham House, 17 September 2009

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