

A senior and much respected UK Conservative figure recently set out some of the criteria which will underpin that party's defence and national security policy, including their proposed defence review (SDR). Delivered under the Chatham House rule, some of the key points are worth reporting for the light they throw on some of the detailed thinking that is being carried out by some thinkers in the Party. The proposals have not been formally included in Conservative Party policy but they should be.

The SDR will build upon current work (including that underway in the Ministries which may be published as a Green paper next year). However, it ought to go much wider than defence and the armed forces. Conceptually it should be radical on the wider security agenda. It is necessary to move away from the stove pipes of defence, foreign affairs and international aid. This leads to an interesting proposition: that, for instance, DfID should pay the MoD to use its facilities like air and sea lift for disaster relief EVEN IF this is more expensive than similar commercially available services, because the money would be recycled within Government rather than ending in the pockets of commercial enterprises. Maybe the MoD needs to be working out a "day rate" for C-17s and C-130s, HMS Ocean and landing ships (which could put aid across beaches and direct to where it's needed rather than being ripped off at airports and paying off obstructive elements). This also underpins the need to preserve an effective expeditionary capability. When the Royal Navy patrols off the West coast of Africa in the interest of energy security, why shouldn't they Department of Energy bear part of the cost? Drug seizures of the high seas contribute to health and policing objectives perhaps the relevant ministries should contribute to the costs and a similar argument could be made on anti-piracy patrols and the Department of Transport.

However, defence has usurped foreign affairs (and DfID now has a budget three times that of FCO). The armed forces have become a first port of call. The early use of force is no longer sustainable. There has been a lack of focus on how to prevent; a lack of will to focus on strategic risk. There must be less intervention which is not connected to UK Security intervention has become far too ambitious. Afghanistan excepted, defence assumptions have been under funded. There have been political consequences (including impact on public opinion) of equipment issues and perceived impact on casualties.

How should defence forces react to the changing security landscape? This is not a linear world! It is complex with variety of causations. The proposed National Security Strategy is a difficult task. But thinking needs to be pushed a good deal further.

What failed to happen was to consider the consequences of overseas activities as domestic phenomena. There needs to be a better balance between expeditionary activities and homeland security and defence. A consequence could be the establishment of a small Homeland Command.

The proposed comprehensive approach means not having separate foreign or security policies. The prestige and influence of the Foreign and Commonwealth office will be restored. Embassies will focus on defending Britain's national interests. We will continue to stay close to the USA that relationship is fundamental to national security. As far as ESDP (European Security and Defence Policy) is concerned, the Conservative Party is not enamoured of institutional building in Brussels. But there will be co-operation and partnership particularly with France. The technical transformation has been very important but has to some extent been at the expense of a focus on human skills.

There have been calls for a UK strategic retreat, but this is not believed to be the way to go. The Conservatives will try not to be pushed into a situation where this becomes unavoidable (threats and hazards don't recognise borders). The Conservatives will establish a National Security Council chaired by the Prime Minister (alternate: Foreign Secretary). It will be similar to an upgraded Cabinet Committee with a permanent secretariat. Permanent secretaries will be

brought in as deputies for Ministers. The NSC will lead the SDR assessment, across traditional boundaries. It will define UK Strategic interests and provide the framework for the SDR. Review has meant cuts to some. "The defence budget will not be ring-fenced but we are not going to pick on it".

The strategic context will include "drivers of insecurity" ♦ things like population growth, climate change, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (the world will go from a small number of nuclear powers to a significant number of countries if the NPT regime doesn't stick).

Is NATO a relevant instrument? It is an umbrella for coalition. Its Cold War role was as a forum for transatlantic dialogue. In the future it can help to manage the world better. The revision of the NATO security concept will be very helpful to help form a future framework. This could include bringing non alliance countries into operations. Britain needs to be strong. Russia, a revisionist power, respects strength.

In the short term things could get worse rather than better. Things like energy security threaten significant disruptive activity. Terrorism can have a significant economic and socio-political impact (e.g. Mumbai). Such a thing cannot be ruled out and must be considered by contingent planners. They need to take into account interoperability with the military, led by the blue light services as aid to the civil power ♦ but those must be assurance of availability. The military contributors to planning could include doctrine leadership while the blue lights address consequence management. The Home Office could draw on the MoD's procurement experience.

We are faced with hybrid warfare, different kinds of challenges and different modes of engagement. The UK needs to do more than just react. It needs to be able to act, but needs to be ahead of the game, with sustainability of policy and actions. Prevention is the aim, but successes are what fail to happen, while failures get the limelight. Certainly there should be capacity for reactive action but there must also be a focus on conflict prevention.

Ongoing operations in Afghanistan have to have top priority. It is vital to the UK's national security. To date, policy has been focussed on counter insurgency. It should aim to build the capacity of indigenous forces. Socio-economic investment will be needed over a much longer time period. As a future lesson, other instruments of policy will be needed to before, during and after military action.

Some capability balancing may be required. The skill set will need to shift to conflict prevention, and a capability for civilians to act in insecure environments. Non military activities should be given more weight.

Domestic infrastructure needs to be made more resilient. This is a serious agenda and will be included in the SDR. Without pre-empting the SDR, Urgent Operational Requirements give good lessons, but links to the long term programme should be improved. What the Army is getting now is influencing the future programmes. They should be relevant to long term needs not just a quick fix (N.B. currently the Treasury "draws back" up expenditure defrayed from the contingency reserves under such circumstances).

Equipment needs to be brought into service earlier, in an initial form. 80% of capability can often be obtained for a fraction of the price. There should be more discussion with industry at the conceptual stage. There are important skills which must not be lost. It would be a foolish economy to neglect research and development both because of the long term hobbling of defence technology and the need to shift the nation's economic base more towards technology ♦ this is fundamental to future wealth creation. The Defence Industrial Strategy needs to be reinvigorated; sovereign capabilities preserved; and much earlier partnership with industry.

There was a refreshing honesty in the ♦ "Gray Report". It called for a simplification of process; the insertion of technology over time on long life platforms; and the importance of ensuring that through life support is strategic and sustainable.

The power the State has taken has been too great and should be rolled back. The Regulation

of Investigatory Powers Act should be revised. People will have to realise the State can't protect them from every risk. As the cost of Government is cut, there will have to be a greater contribution from communities towards their own security.</p>