



House of Commons
Defence Committee

**Towards the next
Defence and Security
Review: Part One:
Government response
to the Committee's
Seventh Report of
Session 2013–14**

**Tenth Special Report of Session
2013–14**

*Ordered by the House of Commons
to be printed 18 March 2014*

HC 1175
Published on 26 March 2014
by authority of the House of Commons
London: The Stationery Office Limited
£5.00

The Defence Committee

The Defence Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Ministry of Defence and its associated public bodies.

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The Reports and evidence of the Committee are published by The Stationery Office by Order of the House. All publications of the Committee (including press notices) are on the internet at www.parliament.uk/parliament.uk/defcom.

The Reports of the Committee, the formal minutes relating to that report, oral evidence taken and some or all written evidence are available in a printed volume. Additional written evidence may be published on the internet only.

Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are James Rhys (Clerk), Dougie Wands (Second Clerk), Karen Jackson (Audit Adviser), Ian Thomson (Committee Specialist), Christine Randall (Senior Committee Assistant), Rowena Macdonald and Carolyn Bowes (Committee Assistants).

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Tenth Special Report

The Defence Committee published its Seventh Report of Session 2013–14 on *Towards the next Defence and Security Review: Part One* on 7 January 2014. The Government's response to this Report was received on 7 March 2014. This is appended.

Government response

The Government welcomes the House of Commons Defence Committee's inquiry 'Towards the next Defence and Security Review' and the findings set out in the Committee's report (HC 197), published on 7 January 2014.

The national security and prosperity of the UK and our decision making on the strategy, approaches and capabilities we need to assure it is a priority of this Government. We recognise the detailed work that the committee has undertaken to contribute to our efforts.

Our formal response to its recommendations and conclusions is set out below. The Committee's headings and findings are highlighted in bold, with the Government's response set out in plain text. For ease of reference, paragraph numbering in brackets refers to the order in which they are presented in the Committee's Report.

Was the 2010 Strategic and Security Review strategic?

1. We have previously noted that the 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review and the 2010 National Security Strategy were governed by the overriding strategic objective of reducing the UK's budget deficit. (Paragraph 12)

The 2010 National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review were about taking the right decisions to protect our national security in the years ahead. Despite the biggest budget deficit in post war history, our national security remains a priority; defence and security budgets are therefore contributing to deficit reduction on a lower scale than most other Departments. As the Prime Minister said recently before the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy, the review was about how we should configure our defence forces, given Britain's place in the world and our foreign policy and security policy objectives. This was not driven by spending, but of course it was informed by what the Government believed was affordable. This was a strategic defence and security review which took strategic decisions.

2. We have found it difficult to divine any other genuinely strategic vision in either document. This is the first of a series of reports that we intend to publish to assist in the preparation of the next Defence and Security Review; we hope that they will both inform and shape the next Review and the next National Security Strategy and help to drive a more strategic approach to security across Government. (Paragraph 12)

The National Security Strategy set out for the first time a clear over-arching vision to use all our national capabilities to build Britain's prosperity, extend our nation's influence in the

world and strengthen our security: our national security depends on our economic strength, and vice versa. To this end, the twin strategic objectives are to ensure domestic security and resilience, and to shape a stable world.

3. There is a need for an agreed definition of strategy. Our inquiry has suggested that there is not a clear definition being adhered to within Government. We offer our definition of strategy as "a course of action integrating ends, ways and means to meet policy objectives", which the Secretary of State has accepted, as one that should be adopted in preparation of the next National Security Strategy and the next Defence and Security Review. We recommend that the Ministry of Defence should work within Government to ensure that this definition is used consistently. (Paragraph 13)

The Government welcomes the Committee's recommended definition of "strategy", and agrees that clear and consistent terminology is necessary to bring coherence to cross-departmental work. As the Prime Minister said recently before the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy, strategy is about setting out a very clear series of goals and making sure that sensible means for achieving those goals are available. And as the National Security Strategy itself states: any "strategy" must be a combination of ends (what we are seeking to achieve), ways (the ways by which we seek to achieve those ends), and means (the resources we can devote to achieving the ends). The Committee's proposed definition is consistent with this overall approach.

We will want to be sure our chosen terminology incorporates further best practice in strategic thinking, such as the need for strategy to be insightful in how it applies ways and means to the ends of policy, and to remain sufficiently flexible to respond to the future.

Coordinated by the Cabinet Office and building on such an approach, the MOD and other Government Departments are already working closely together in preparation for the next National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review.

4. We welcomed the establishment of the National Security Council which has given greater operational focus and coordination across Departments. However, we echo the criticism of the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy that the National Security Council is failing to take on the higher strategic role that it might have done in Government. (Paragraph 14)

As the Prime Minister said recently before the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy, while the National Security Council does discuss strategy, its primary role is to determine policy, agree actions and then evaluate the implementation of those actions. The balance between strategic and operational discussions will always fluctuate according to need. More strategic discussions have examined the UK's relationships with China, Russia and India, alongside strategic work on the Emerging Powers, a cross-cutting look at how government spends resources overseas, and, currently, a strategy looking at long term relationships with and interests in the Gulf region. Discussions have been much more operational at critical moments on topics like Libya and Afghanistan.

The drivers of SDSR 2010

5. The 2015 Review should set out the Government's thinking on how the Armed Forces need to be re-balanced following the end of operations in Afghanistan, and

address the challenges inherent in regenerating their capability following the end of operations. (Paragraph 18)

In committing this Government to deliver the sustainable and balanced Future Force 2020, the 2010 Review set out how the issue of the Armed Forces' emphasis post-Afghanistan will be addressed, restructuring our forces to deliver contingent capability for the future.

In addition, the Armed Forces will continue to play a unique role in the wider security and prosperity of the UK. The International Defence Engagement Strategy (IDES) published in February 2013 formalised the MOD contribution to building stability overseas as one of the four pillars of defence engagement – the others being: security and non-combat operations; defence diplomacy; and support to defence and security exports. Our contribution to NATO, and particularly US and French relationships, continues to ensure our security and prosperity and that of our allies and partners.

Initial preparatory work for the 2015 Review is underway. No decisions have yet been taken on its scope. The Government notes the Committee's recommendation.

Public support for defence spending and for expeditionary operations

6. One of the greatest strategic threats to defence is the disconnect between the Armed Forces and the public caused by a lack of understanding of the utility of military force in the contemporary strategic environment. The Government cannot hope to bridge this divide without looking to explain what it believes the UK's position in the world could or should be, and the manner in which that is to be delivered. Without a proactive communications strategy, there is a serious risk of a lack of support for defence amongst the public. We ask the Department to review its communications strategy for the next Defence and Security Review and keep the Committee fully informed of its conclusions. We are convinced that there is an important role for this Committee, and Parliament as a whole, to play in articulating the case for defence to the public at large. (Paragraph 24)

The Government agrees that Members of Parliament, and Parliament as a whole, have an important role to play in articulating the case for defence to the public.

The public show great interest in understanding the role of the Armed Forces in the contemporary strategic environment. Armed Forces Day attracts wide support nationally; our dedicated Facebook page reached 8 million users in the week of Armed Forces Day 2013. TV programmes in recent years, like 'Our War', the documentary about operations in Afghanistan shown on BBC 3 in 2011, have attracted record audiences and reviews across a broad section of British society, particularly amongst younger audiences.

With the focus on operations in Afghanistan, we have put great effort in recent years into communicating the broader role of the Armed Forces and Defence. The 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review connects the plan to develop Future Force 2020 – the requirement for an adaptable, sustainable future posture able to project power, build stability through upstream engagement, and work with allies – to the broad range of tasks required to mitigate the strategic risks the UK faces, as set out in the National Security Strategy.

Much of the wider work Defence does – contributing to UK influence and prosperity, and building stability – is well reported. Our support to humanitarian efforts in the Philippines after Typhoon Haiyan was widely reported and we reported on the visits of HMS Daring to South East and East Asia, supporting the building of Defence links and UK prosperity with powers in the region. More recently, the military contribution to flood relief in the UK has received wide and positive coverage, raising our public profile in a UK contingencies role.

In addition we report to Parliament, and publicise in the media, a broad range of routine activity – supporting the French with airlifts into the Central African Republic, evacuation of UK nationals from South Sudan, routine deployments to assure the security of overseas territories, counter narcotics patrols in the Caribbean, and our contribution to multinational counter-piracy operations off the Horn of Africa. This is about preventing terrorism, building stability, and supporting UK prosperity and interests.

In his evidence to the Committee, the Defence Secretary concluded that there are ways to increase popular support for Defence. While the approach and timing for the next National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review remain to be decided, strategic communications will be a key factor.

The case for a national strategy?

7. The imminent end of operations in Afghanistan provides an opportunity for the Government to think more strategically about the UK's place in the world in shaping the 2015 National Security Strategy and the 2015 Defence and Security Review. We believe that there is a persuasive case for a national strategy to be incorporated in the National Security Strategy, defining what position in the world the UK should adopt as the ends of the strategy and setting out the combination of hard and soft power that represent the ways and means of getting there. Even though the strategy will, in practice, be dynamic to meet changing threats and challenges, the document should make clear the process by which it has been arrived at, confirming the Government's priorities, and contain clear definitions of policy and strategy and how they relate to each other. The National Security Strategy (NSS) should be the subject of a published annual report on its implementation. The NSS should provide the strategic context for the Defence and Security Review. (Paragraph 32)

As the Prime Minister said recently before the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy, the work for the next National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review will span the period of the next election. No decision has, therefore, yet been taken on their final scope. Initial preparatory work, however, is underway and the Government notes the Committee's recommendations.

8. The concept of fighting power provides a useful framework for analysis of the operational effectiveness of the Armed Forces. The 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) pledged that it would not entail a "strategic shrinkage" for the UK. We ask the Ministry of Defence to provide us with an assessment of the fighting power of the Armed Forces both prior to the SDSR 2010 and now, and to outline in the Defence and Security Review 2015, the impact of any changes on that fighting power. (Paragraph 33)

The experience of operations in Afghanistan and Iraq over the past thirteen years has clearly shown the outstanding capabilities, skill and professionalism of our Armed Forces. We took difficult strategic decisions to balance defence spending in 2010, but we still retain one of the most capable Armed Forces in the world. We have global power projection capability second only to the US, and among the most capable troops, aircraft, ships and submarines. We are investing over £160 billion over the next decade in modernising our capabilities, bringing the Queen Elizabeth class carrier and Joint Strike Fighter aircraft into service are a clear demonstration of that. The Future Force we have designed will be well equipped, capable and deployable, and more sustainable.

Operational effectiveness is not the only measure of the benefit the UK gains from Defence and the Armed Forces. International defence diplomacy and defence alliances, contributions to security operations such as counter piracy off the coast of Somalia, military capability building and other activities contributing to conflict prevention, make a unique and valuable contribution to the security and prosperity of the UK, her citizens, and those around the world – and fulfil a wide range of government security objectives. The International Defence Engagement Strategy is driving effective alignment of Defence activity with HMG priorities, and improving Defence’s responsiveness.

We will explore the method behind an assessment of ‘Fighting Power’ and if a measure is both feasible and useful. ‘Fighting Power’ may need relabeling as ‘Defence Power’ or ‘Defence Effectiveness’ to avoid connotations of effectiveness being solely about our ability to deliver effect on operations.

Assessing the effectiveness of Defence will always be inherently subjective. As British Defence Doctrine points out, Fighting Power should always be considered relative to that of other parties. And the notion of effectiveness itself will change over time as the strategic context and our national objectives change, making comparisons challenging. An assessment of Fighting Power would also represent a statement of the relative strengths of Defence and could play into the hands of those who would wish to reduce the security and relevance of our Armed Forces. Therefore we would not issue a public assessment. We will update the Committee if we find an assessment is feasible, in due course.

The last Strategic Defence and Security Review assessed and set out, in Future Force 2020, the right changes to our Armed Forces to ensure their enduring effectiveness. The overall effectiveness of our Armed Forces will be the central deciding factor in any changes made and communicated in the next one.

The UK's place in the world

9. A vision of the UK's position in the world needs to be articulated in the National Security Strategy as the basis for any consideration of the next Defence and Security Review. As noted above, this requires active communications in which this Committee is ready to play its part. This vision would represent the definition of the ends of the strategy; a truly strategic DSR should outline the ways and means by which those ends could be achieved to provide the integration that is presently lacking. (Paragraph 37)

We will decide on the scope of the National Security Strategy at the time of the next review but note the Committee’s recommendation. As the Prime Minister said recently before

Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy, the 2010 National Security Strategy helped to set the context for what the Government wanted to do in defence and security; and strategy should inform defence and security decisions. The National Security Strategy set out for the first time a clear over-arching vision to use all our national capabilities to build Britain's prosperity, extend our nation's influence in the world and strengthen our security. It needs to be refreshed rather than subjected to a complete overhaul.

The changing context for the 2015 DSR

10. This short inquiry has only scratched the surface in examining the potential impact of current geo-political developments on the UK and its strategic alliances. However, there can be few developments more fundamental to the UK's strategic position than the US pivot to the Pacific. The Government's thinking on the implications of this and other developments for the country's broader security and for the military capabilities that the country requires is a matter of vital interest for both Parliament and the public. The process of development of the National Security Strategy should be the vehicle for the Government to seek to engage both in this debate. (Paragraph 43)

As stated above in response to the Committee's Recommendation 7, the work for the next National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review will span the period of the next election. No decision has, therefore, yet been taken on their final scope or on the nature, extent and process of any external engagement. The Government's response to the Report of 11th July 2012 by the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy noted that the Government will be developing ideas for wider consultation including with external academics, think tanks and experts.

11. The fact that a number of the asymmetric security threats to the UK, such as from terrorism or cyber attack, may not be capable of being deterred in all circumstances requires the Government to think more strategically about the resilience of the country's critical infrastructure and recovery following a successful attack. This needs to inform the next NSS and DSR and an assessment must be made of the proportion of resources dedicated to these functions. (Paragraph 50)

The Government agrees that it is important to have a strategy for all risks to security. The next National Security Risk Assessment is due in 2014 and will inform the next National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review. As this work will span the period of the next election, no decision has been taken on their final scope. Initial preparatory work, however, is underway and the Government notes the Committee's recommendations.

Ensuring the UK can keep essential services running is one of the eight vital national security tasks set out in the Government's National Security Strategy. Government Departments work closely with infrastructure owners and operators to monitor and prioritise security and resilience.

One way Departments do this is through each Lead Government Department producing annual 'Sector Resilience Plans'. These alert Ministers to any vulnerabilities in sectors' Critical National Infrastructure to risks identified in the National Risk Assessment, and set

out what industry action and Government support are planned over the next year to address them.

As it is not always possible to prevent disruption, the Government has continuing programmes to develop robust response capabilities to ensure that disruption is minimised when it does occur, and that recovery is as quick as possible. Given that often the same response is required to disruption from different threats and hazards, strategically building generic response capabilities helps ensure we reduce potential duplication of effort and allocate resources most effectively. This also increases flexibility, especially when we do not know exactly what we face until it happens. Bespoke arrangements for high-impact risks, such as pandemic influenza, or risks with unique consequences, supplement these to ensure that the UK is resilient to all potential risks.

12. The list of changing factors identified in this interim inquiry gives only a flavour of the full range of those that will need to be taken into account in framing the next NSS and DSR. We acknowledge that some factors affecting Government strategic thinking cannot be put in the public domain, but, if the public is to be brought on board, the Government must do more to set out the rationale behind its strategic thinking and make a commitment to allocate the necessary resources to give it substance. (Paragraph 51)

As noted above, the work for the next National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review will span the period of the next election. No decision has been taken on their final scope; but initial preparatory work is underway. The next Review will of course need to balance strategic and financial perspectives. The Government notes the Committee's recommendations.

A Comprehensive Spending Review

13. We raised concerns in our report on the last SDSR that there might be a discrepancy between the ambitions outlined and the resources available to fulfil them. If the expected real-terms increase in funding from 2015 were not to be made available, the Defence and Security Review would have to make clear that strategic ambition would have to be curtailed, and explain how that would be achieved. There is an inescapable link between budget and the capacity to deliver a strategic ambition which must be recognised and acknowledged in any DSR process. (Paragraph 59)

The Government recognises that national security strategy must take account of capabilities and financial realities, and that it should not be pre-determined by resource allocations. The Government notes the Committee's recommendation for the next Strategic Defence and Security Review.

14. A failure to meet the Ministry of Defence's budgetary assumptions could lead to a disproportionate decline in the Armed Forces' fighting power, which would have a significant impact on the UK's strategic ambition. (Paragraph 60)

The Government remains committed to an Equipment Plan growing at 1% a year in real terms after the next Spending Review.

Defence cannot operate outside the context of the economic health of this country, and a Strategic Defence and Security Review must balance strategic and fiscal perspectives to find a sustainable solution for Defence. The budget for Defence will be decided under the next Spending Review, in consultation between departments.

A key tenet of our Defence posture is to be flexible and adaptable to meet the UK's strategic objectives. This includes financial flexibility, and we have shown how resilient we are when the financial means available to Defence change unexpectedly. But our ability to meet our strategic ambition is not solely related to our financial resources. Though we plan to spend £160 billion over the next ten years on state-of-the-art equipment, and to regenerate the Armed Forces for the requirements of the post-Afghanistan defence and security environment, in the last Strategic Defence and Security Review we also said that closer co-operation with allies and partners would be increasingly important to our security and prosperity. We are increasing the depth and breadth of our co-operation with our key allies to improve our policy and strategy alignment, and interoperability to ensure we can work increasingly effectively together and deliver greater effect from our respective defence budgets. We continue to develop our relationships with new international partners to enhance our global influence.

Any significant future budget reductions, which cannot be absorbed by non-front line savings alone, do, however, run the risk of impacting our strategic ambitions.

15. There is a danger of defence becoming a matter of discretionary spending. We note that the National Security Adviser referred to expeditionary capability as "optional". To a degree, the NSA is correct. However, discretionary decisions about the expeditionary capability that the UK retains must be based on proper strategic decision making about the UK's place in the world and not simply flow from the "horse-trading" that surrounds the CSR process. (Paragraph 61)

As noted above in response to Recommendation 13, the Government recognises that National Security Strategy must take account of capabilities and financial realities, and that it should not be pre-determined by Spending Review allocations. The Government notes the Committee's recommendation for the next Strategic Defence and Security Review.

Sequencing of the NSS, CSR and DSR

16. While we accept that the three documents should be developed in parallel, we believe that the National Security Strategy should be published first. As we have argued, the NSS should outline a vision of the UK's role in the world that should not be driven purely by a consideration of the resources available. (Paragraph 66)

Within the overall package, strategy should set out the general approach and priorities. The Strategic Defence and Security Review then follows logically in specifying decisions and conclusions on resources; but in practice, strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review must be coherently integrated, as they were in 2010.

17. The NSS, together with the CSR, setting out respectively the "ends" and the "means" should logically precede the DSR outlining the "ways" of meeting the security objectives within the resources available. The allocation of resources will be based on national spending priorities set to meet the nation's security needs. Once the national strategy

has been articulated in the NSS, the process of agreeing the ways and the means is therefore an iterative one. Getting the balance right between the CSR and the DSR is more important than strict adherence to a particular timetable. (Paragraph 67)

As stated in response to the Committee's Recommendation 13, the Government recognises that National Security Strategy must take account of capabilities and financial realities, and that it should not be pre-determined by Spending Review allocations. All three processes should interact over time pragmatically. There is debate to be had over the exact sequencing: the balance has to be struck between all three elements; one cannot be satisfactorily completed without considering the others: we cannot live beyond our means. As the Prime Minister said recently before the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy, in the difficult and straitened times in which we live, it is essential to consider what is affordable alongside what is desirable. But strategy should inform defence and security decisions.

Strategic Skills

18. We call on the MOD to provide us with an update on education and skills training in strategy offered to senior officers and officials, both within the Defence Academy and at other institutions. (Paragraph 70)

The Defence Academy provides a range of education and training interventions in strategy for senior officers and officials. The Academy provides military officers with a comprehensive grounding in strategy and the associated skills, at progressively greater depth and sophistication, through the Advanced and Higher Command & Staff Courses (conducted at the Joint Services Command and Staff College) and the Royal College of Defence Studies (RCDS) International Course. As set out in our written evidence, the latter course is the main educational intervention on strategy. The objective of the Course is to ensure that:

The RCDS graduate understands the international strategic context, is skilled in analysis and able to work intuitively across national, cultural and ideological boundaries to lead or contribute to developing strategy at the highest level.

An entire term is devoted to Conflict and Strategy in the Modern World. The term enables participants to consider the key features of the strategic and geo-political environment and their implications for strategy, the applicability of different levers of national and multinational power, and the methods and tools of strategy. It also develops skills in the analysis and formation of strategy through a series of table top exercises and practical case studies. The aspiration is that, in future, all officers with potential to reach 3* rank will complete the RCDS Course.

Both the Advanced Command & Staff Course and the RCDS International Course are accredited to Master's degree level by King's College London, one of the Defence Academy's principal academic partners.

Strategy is also addressed in the shorter Higher Command & Staff Course for future operational commanders. Its objective is to ensure that students can:

Make sound, timely decisions, in the current context, at the military-strategic and operational levels of conflict.

The Defence Academy also provides training in strategy for civil servants – whether those selected to attend these courses or, more widely, through the new Policy, Strategy and Parliamentary Profession ‘Base Camp’ course.

The syllabi of all these courses are continuously developed to take account of the changing strategic context. For example, the Advanced Command & Staff Course is currently being extensively redesigned to ensure that it prepares officers for the challenges of the future operating environment, with greater emphasis on analytical and critical thinking skills.

The Defence Academy is not a closed environment. A wide range of speakers, representing diverse perspectives, speak to the courses – and free discussion is encouraged. The presence of a significant number of international students also provides other perspectives. Both the Joint Services Command & Staff College and the RCDS have formed external advisory panels to ensure that syllabi benefit from external challenge.

As well as its International Course, the RCDS arranges periodic strategy seminars for officers and officials. In July, RCDS plans to bring together more than 40 senior civil servants from across Whitehall to review cross Government thinking on Strategy. Finally, the Defence Academy provides guidance on strategy for a wider audience through CDS’s Reading List which is published on the Academy’s website.

In addition to the opportunities available through the Defence Academy, the Department sponsors about 10 officers per year to study for Master’s degrees in strategy or strategic issues at other universities.

Accurate and timely historic analysis

19. We recommend that the Ministry of Defence, in close conjunction with the Cabinet Office and National Security Secretariat, initiate the writing of official histories of the Iraq and Afghanistan campaigns and of other conflicts since the end of the Cold War; review how the history function is being undertaken by all three Services and by the Ministry of Defence as a whole; and confirm in the 2015 Defence and Security Review its plans for the preparation and publication of histories and other measures designed to address these deficiencies. This work could usefully call on input and expertise from other Government Departments including the Department for International Development and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office; since the comprehensive approach became a hallmark of the operations in both Iraq and Afghanistan, its lessons should be learnt from and shared across Government as a whole. (Paragraph 76)

We agree the value of cross-Government learning of lessons from history and cross-Government input into Official Histories, but in our evidence to the Committee we noted the value of a time lag before producing them. The existing programme of Official Histories is continuing, with its commissioned histories being published at the rate of one or two a year.

We have already learned some of the most significant and immediate lessons from operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the political complexity around them. The need to

develop upstream understanding and influence has become a central part of our international Defence Engagement plans. And the lesson of the value of clearer strategy and vision for the role of Defence has influenced responses to Libya and Syria.

In addition to improvements in the work considered by senior level boards noted in evidence to the Committee, the Ministry of Defence has taken steps to improve the supply and demand for history, particularly amongst policy and strategy staff and personnel. Work is underway, under the joint leadership of MOD Head Office and Joint Forces Command, to ensure that those working within Defence are better able to learn from the lessons of the past – both Defence lessons, as well as broader areas of historical information. For example, last year we introduced an occasional ‘learning from history’ series of lectures and presentations in Head Office. And information is readily available on the Defence Intranet and in the Head Office library based in Defence Main Building, including a growing repository of documents covering strategic and organisational decision-making and lessons, and links to each of the Historical Branches and operational lessons teams.

The programme to formalise a Policy profession within the Civil Service includes training on a holistic approach to policy and strategy – in Defence known as the Defence Policy Guide – which encourages professionals to draw on history and past lessons as a routine part of their work. Defence Academy courses make extensive use of historical case studies to illuminate contemporary and potential future strategic challenges. The MOD is currently engaging with the Institute for Government on its work to consider how history can be better exploited within policy making and will continue to take a close interest in how we can do that, and whether or not it is appropriate for the White Paper to convey how this will be done.

Process

20. We see much advantage in the widest consultation on the next National Security Strategy and Defence and Security Review. We have no doubt that the process would be better if Government thinking were available at an early stage to enable structured comment. We have already recommended that the NSS should be published in advance of the DSR. We further recommend that a National Security Green Paper be issued at an early stage in the proceedings to provide a framework against which interested parties may comment. (Paragraph 84)

As stated in the Government’s response to the Report of 11th July 2012 by the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy, the Government will be developing ideas for wider consultation including with external academics, think tanks and experts. The Government notes the Committee’s recommendations.

21. We consider that there are lessons for the MoD to learn from the practice of the French Government in seeking a wide range of input into the reformulation of its Livre Blanc. Given the importance of allies to the implementation of both SDSR 2010 and DSR 2015, it is essential that the UK’s key strategic allies are fully engaged in the process from an early stage. (Paragraph 85)

We accept the Committee's view on the importance of engaging early with Allies and we will be actively seeking their views. How and when we will formally engage with allies as we develop our National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review will be confirmed by the Government in due course. As the Secretary of State for Defence noted in giving evidence to the Committee, we have already had preliminary discussions in particular with the US and France following our engagement in the French Livre Blanc and US Quadrennial Defense Review processes. We enjoy close working relationships between our policy, strategy and force planning communities. Our equipment co-operation programmes, like F-35 with the US and the Future Anti-Ship Guided Weapon with France, go from strength to strength. Finally, embedded exchange officers in both policy and operational posts ensure working-level familiarity. These links provide us with an ideal basis for consultation with close Allies during work on the next National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review.

A shadow process and red team challenge

22. Constructive challenge must be part and parcel of national strategy making. We recommend that independent groups be set up as soon as possible to provide a structured "Red Team" challenge to both the National Security Strategy and Defence and Security Review. (Paragraph 87)

As stated above, no decision has yet been taken on the scope and process for the next National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review; but initial preparatory work is underway and the Government notes the Committee's recommendation on "Red Team" challenge.

Different government departments already have a variety of existing approaches to 'Red Team' policy and strategy which could be considered. For example, MOD uses academic engagement quite extensively in research and consideration of policy including through its connections with think tanks like the Royal United Services Institute. At the strategic level, the Foreign Secretary already regularly uses a mechanism called 'The Locarno Group', a trusted group of academics and retired ambassadors and officials with the express purpose of subjecting FCO analysis and policy to challenge.

Conclusions

23. Our inquiry has focused on the need for a truly strategic approach to the next Defence and Security Review, which integrates the ends of what the UK wants to achieve, with the ways, outlining the full spectrum of capabilities of both hard and soft power required, and the means available. This methodology requires the Government to set out a national strategy in the National Security Strategy, identifying the UK's position in the world and how the UK's national interests and obligations will be upheld in the face of shifting threats and profound geo-political and geo-economic changes. This document should be published giving sufficient time to provide the strategic context for the 2015 Defence and Security Review. (Paragraph 88)

24. There is a lack of understanding amongst the public of what HM Armed Forces should be for, and this represents one of the greatest strategic threats facing the Armed Forces. Public sympathy and support for the Armed Forces is to be welcomed, but it

must not obscure or undermine a hard-headed understanding of what they are for. The process of producing the next Defence and Security Review, shaped by the next National Security Strategy, is the opportunity to engage the public in understanding the future of the Armed Forces. Parliament and this Committee, in partnership with the Ministry of Defence, have an important role in debating and explaining the case for defence to the public at large. For this reason, we have made a number of recommendations around the process for preparation of the next Defence and Security Review to ensure that it is inclusive, is informed by full historical analysis, and is subject to robust internal and external challenge. (Paragraph 89)

The Committee will understand that the content and conduct of the next Review remains ‘to be confirmed’, as it spans the period of the next election.

The last National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review confronted the issues facing Defence and National Security in 2010. As we noted above, it articulated a clear over-arching vision to build Britain’s prosperity, extend our nation’s influence in the world and strengthen our security in the face of the changing strategic environment and risks to our security. Recognising our national security depends on our economic strength, and vice versa, it set out strategic objectives of ensuring domestic security and resilience, and shaping a stable world.

We welcome and note the Committee’s recommendations and will consider them as we move towards the next Review. We are making progress on a number of areas: for example, our use of history, our strategic training, and in our approach to the emerging cross government preparatory work for the next Review, with which we will build on the solid approach of the last review. This will ensure we continue to make the most effective decisions for the national security of the UK.