A Strong Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The National Security Strategy

HM Government

A Strong Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The National Security Strategy

Presented to Parliament by the Prime Minister
by Command of Her Majesty
October 2010

Cm 7953

£14.75

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at the Cabinet Office, 70 Whitehall, London SW1A 2AS.

This publication is also available on http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/

ISBN: 9780101795326

Printed in the UK for The Stationery Office Limited on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office

ID P002395981 10/10

Printed on paper containing 75% recycled fibre content minimum.

Contents

Foreword

Foreword

A Strong Britain in an Age of Uncertainty

In a world of startling change, the first duty of the Government remains: the security of our country.

Britain today is both more secure and more vulnerable than in most of her long history. More secure, in the sense that we do not currently face, as we have so often in our past, a conventional threat of attack on our territory by a hostile power. But more vulnerable, because we are one of the most open societies, in a world that is more networked than ever before.

Our predecessors grappled with the brutal certainties of the Cold War – with an existential danger that was clear and present, with Soviet armies arrayed across half of Europe and the constant threat of nuclear confrontation between the superpowers. Today, Britain faces a different and more complex range of threats from a myriad of sources. Terrorism, cyber attack, unconventional attacks using chemical, nuclear or biological weapons, as well as large scale accidents or natural hazards – any one could do grave damage to our country.

These new threats can emanate from states, but also from non state actors: terrorists, home-grown or overseas; insurgents; or criminals. The security of our energy supplies increasingly depends on fossil fuels located in some of the most unstable parts of the planet. Nuclear proliferation is a growing danger. Our security is vulnerable to the effects of climate change and its impact on food and water supply. So the concept of national security in 2010 is very different to what it was ten or twenty, let alone fifty or a hundred years ago.

Geographically Britain is an island, but economically and politically it is a vital link in the global network. That openness brings great opportunities, but also vulnerabilities. We know that terrorist groups like Al Qaeda are determined to exploit our openness to attack us, and plot to kill as many of our citizens as possible or to inflict a crushing blow to our economy. It is the most pressing threat we face today.

All of this calls for a radical transformation in the way we think about national security and organise ourselves to protect it. We are entering an age of uncertainty. This Strategy is about gearing Britain up for this new age of uncertainty – weighing up the threats we face, and preparing to deal with them. But a strategy is of little value without the tools to implement it, so alongside this National Security Strategy we will tomorrow publish a Strategic Defence and Security Review. This will describe how we will equip our Armed Forces, our police and intelligence agencies to tackle current and future threats as effectively as they dealt with those of the past.

Our ability to meet these current and future threats depends crucially on tackling the budget deficit. Our national security depends on our economic security and vice versa. An economic deficit is also a security deficit. So at the heart of the Strategic Defence and Security Review are some tough choices to bring the defence budget back to balance. Those choices are informed by the risks, analysis and prioritisation set out in this National Security Strategy.

Britain's place in the world

Any strategy for our national security must begin with the role we want Britain to play in the modern world. In a world that is changing at an astonishing pace, Britain's interests remain surprisingly constant. We are an open, outward-facing nation that depends on trade and has people living all over the world. In fact one in ten British citizens now lives permanently overseas. We are a country whose political, economic and cultural authority far exceeds our size. The global force of our language; the ingenuity of our people; the intercontinental reach of our time zone, allowing us to trade with Asia in the morning and with the Americas in the evening, means we have huge advantages.

We live in an age of unparalleled opportunity. Globalisation has opened up possibilites which previous generations could not have dreamed of and is lifting billions out of poverty. More open markets mean more open societies, and more open societies mean more people living in freedom. These developments are unambiguously in Britain's national interest and we should seize the opportunities they present, not fear for our future.

In order to protect our interests at home, we must project our influence abroad. As the global balance of power shifts, it will become harder for us to do so. But we should be under no illusion that our national interest requires our continued full and active engagement in world affairs. It requires our economy to compete with the strongest and the best and our entire government effort overseas must be geared to promote our trade, the lifeblood of our economy. But our international role extends beyond the commercial balance sheet, vital though it is.

Our national interest requires us to stand up for the values our country believes in – the rule of law, democracy, free speech, tolerance and human rights. Those are the attributes for which Britain is admired in the world and we must continue to advance them, because Britain will be safer if our values are upheld and respected in the world.

To do so requires us to project power and to use our unique network of alliances and relationships – principally with the United States of America, but also as a member of the European Union and NATO, and a permanent member of the UN Security Council. We must also maintain the capability to act well beyond our shores and work with our allies to have a strategic presence wherever we need it.

A change of course

In an age of uncertainty, we are continually facing new and unforeseen threats to our security. More than twenty years ago, as Soviet forces left Afghanistan, it would hardly have seemed credible to suggest that it would be British forces fighting there in 2010. But after 9/11 and 7/7 our national security demanded that we commit our forces in ways that we could not previously have anticipated. Iraq and Afghanistan have placed huge and unexpected demands on Britain's national security arrangements.

The last Government took little account of this fact. Twelve years elapsed while the world changed almost beyond recognition. Abroad, our forces were sent into action without the equipment they needed, and on the basis of lamentable planning, and in more simultaneous conflicts than the Defence Review in 1998 had planned for. At home, the machinery of Government failed to adapt to the new circumstances – lacking both the urgency and the integration needed to cope with the new situation.

As a Government, we have inherited a defence and security structure that is woefully unsuitable for the world we live in today. We are determined to learn from those mistakes, and make the changes needed.

In an age of uncertainty, we need to be able to act quickly and effectively to address new and evolving threats to our security. That means having access to the best possible advice, and crucially, the right people around the table when decisions are made. It means considering national security issues in the round, recognising that when it comes to national security, foreign and domestic policy are not separate issues, but two halves of one picture.

The first change was to make sure the Government takes decisions properly. That is why we set up a National Security Council on the very first day of the new Government, and appointed a National Security Adviser. The National Security Council brings together key Ministers, and military and intelligence chiefs. It meets weekly and is driving a culture of change in Whitehall, placing a powerful structure right at the heart of government to make sure our limited resources are deployed to best effect. It has already made a significant impact, giving clear direction to our huge national commitment in Afghanistan.

Second, the National Security Council has overseen the development of a proper National Security Strategy, for the first time in this country's history. To be useful, this strategy must allow the Government to make choices about the risks we face. Of course, in an age of uncertainty the unexpected will happen, and we must be prepared to react to that by making our institutions and infrastructure as resilient as we possibly can. Unlike the last Government, our strategy sets clear priorities – counter-terrorism, cyber, international military crises and disasters such as floods. The highest priority does not always mean the most resources, but it gives a clear focus to the Government's effort.

Third, we are going to place much more emphasis on spotting emerging risks and dealing with them before they become crises. To do that, we need to draw together, and use, all the instruments of national power, so that the sum of the British effort is much bigger than its component parts. Our diplomats must thoroughly understand the local situation on the ground so they can influence it; our development professionals must be fully involved in deploying our world-class development programme to help improve security in countries like Pakistan; our intelligence agencies have their crucial part to play in detecting threats and preventing them from turning into carnage on our streets. There must be seamless cooperation between the military and civilian agencies in stabilising fragile states: after our work in Bosnia, Kosovo, Sierra Leone, Iraq and Afghanistan, we have unparalleled experience in this field. We need to harness it.

Fourth, we need to build a much closer relationship between government, the private sector and the public when it comes to national security. Of course, the Government has a crucial role to play, and we will certainly fulfil our responsibilities. But we all have a part to play in keeping the country safe – be it from terrorists, cyber attack or natural disasters. For example, business and government will need to work much more closely together to strengthen our defence against cyber attack and to prepare for the worst, so that if it happens, we are able to recover rapidly and keep Britain moving.

Finally, decisions on the future of the Armed Forces have rightly received the most attention. Nowhere has the legacy we inherited been more challenging than in the state of the defence budget our predecessors left behind. We have been left a litany of scandalous defence procurement decisions, which have racked up vast and unfunded liabilities, without delivering the type of equipment our forces actually need to fight modern wars. Twenty years after the Berlin Wall came down, the equipment we have available is still too rooted in a Cold War mind-set, as we have found to our cost in Iraq and Afghanistan. Main battle tanks aplenty, but not enough protected vehicles to move our forces on the insurgency battlefield. Two massive aircraft carriers on order but unable to operate with the aircraft of our closest allies.

The Strategic Defence and Security Review will set out how we intend to sort out the mess we inherited:

- to ensure our forces in Afghanistan have the equipment they need;
- to begin to bring the defence programme back into balance; and
- to enable Britain to retain the best and most versatile Armed Forces in the world – better equipped to protect our security in an age of uncertainty.

This country is extraordinarily proud of its Armed Forces. They exemplify the best qualities of our country and our people. The bravery of our young men and women serving in Afghanistan shows this on a daily basis. You only have to look at the homecoming parades in towns and cities across the country to see the immense respect and affection in which our Armed Forces are held. The least we can do for those who give so much for us is to give them the support they need. Not just today in Afghanistan – but in equipping our forces to meet the threats we are most likely to face in future.

Conclusion

This National Security Strategy and the Strategic Defence and Security Review mobilise the whole of Government behind the protection of this country's security interests. The task of protecting our security is never complete and in an age of uncertainty we must remain vigilant, regularly taking stock of the changing threats we face. So we will report annually to Parliament on the National Security Strategy, and we will require a new Strategic Defence and Security Review every five years.

David Cameron
Prime Minister

Nick Clegg
Deputy Prime Minister

Introduction

Introduction

The security of our nation is the first duty of government. It is the foundation of our freedom and our prosperity.

0.1 The Coalition Government has given national security the highest priority. One of the Government's first acts was to create a National Security Council, bringing together all the senior ministers concerned, under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister. The National Security Council ensures a strategic and tightly coordinated approach across the whole of government to the risks and opportunities the country faces and gives strategic direction to the efforts of our Armed Forces in Afghanistan to help them succeed in their mission.

0.2 The National Security Council has been responsible for the collective development of this National Security Strategy and for the associated Strategic Defence and Security Review which builds on it. This work is historic: no government has previously carried out a detailed review of all its security and defence capabilities. Nor has there been a full Strategic Defence Review since the world-changing events of 11 September 2001. We need to take full account of our experience of the previous decade, both at home and abroad and be prepared for the security needs of the future.

0.3 For the first time, the Government has produced a full strategy for national security alongside clear decisions about our country's priorities, the capabilities we need to achieve them and the resources we will allocate.

0.4 In order to make sensible decisions about the defence and security capabilities the UK will need for the decades ahead, it is essential to start with a **hard-headed reappraisal of our foreign policy and security objectives and the role we wish our country to play, as well as the risks we face in a fast-changing world.**

Our strategic approach

0.5 The UK is well placed to benefit from the world of the future. The National Security Strategy of the United Kingdom is: **to use all our national capabilities to build Britain's prosperity, extend our nation's influence in the world and strengthen our security.** The networks we use to build our prosperity we will also use to build our security.

0.6 We will use all the instruments of national power to prevent conflict and avert threats beyond our shores: our Embassies and High Commissions worldwide, our international development programme, our intelligence services, our defence diplomacy and our cultural assets.

0.7 We will give top priority to countering the threat from terrorism at home and overseas. We will maintain the defensive and offensive capabilities needed to deploy armed force to protect UK territory and its citizens from the full range of threats from hostile action and to meet our commitments to our allies.

0.8 This strategy for maintaining British security and influence in the world is characterised by the new National Security Council. We will tie in the efforts of all government departments to address threats to our security and interests and to seek new opportunities for Britain. The National

Security Council has reached a clear conclusion that Britain's national interest requires us to reject any notion of the shrinkage of our influence.

0.9 Our strategy reflects the country that we want to be: **a prosperous, secure, modern and outward-looking nation, confident in its values and ideas**. Our national interest comprises our security, prosperity and freedom. We must be a nation that is able to bring together all the instruments of national power to build a secure and resilient UK and to help shape a stable world. Our outlook will be characterised by flexibility and resilience and underpinned by a firm commitment to human rights, justice and the rule of law.

0.10 This Strategy outlines the international context in which we can best pursue our interests: through a commitment to collective security via a rules-based international system and our key alliances, notably with the United States of America (US); through an open global economy that drives wealth creation across the world; and through effective and reformed international institutions including the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), as the anchor of transatlantic security, and our vital partnership in the European Union (EU).

0.11 It sets out a **'whole of government' approach**, based on a concept of security that goes beyond military effects. It places greater emphasis on domestic resilience and a stable global environment. Where we can, we will tackle the causes of instability overseas in order to prevent risks from manifesting themselves in the UK, while being prepared to deal with them if they occur.

0.12 **A strategy is only useful if it guides choices.** This is particularly true as the UK, like many countries, has a pressing requirement to reduce its fiscal deficit and therefore government spending, to create economic security. Government departments dealing with national security cannot be exempt from these pressures. Prosperity is a core part of our national interest and a strong economy is a vital foundation for national security. Without national economic security we will not be able to maintain and project our influence. But it is vital that decisions on civilian and military capabilities, which may have consequences for decades to come, are taken on the basis of a careful prioritisation of the risks we may face so that we make the most effective investments we can to deal with them.

0.13 That is why the National Security Council has considered together our National Security Strategy and the Strategic Defence and Security Review. The general approach and overall priorities are set out in the National Security Strategy, and the detailed conclusions and decisions on resources follow in the Strategic Defence and Security Review. Both the Strategy and the Review take account of a wide range of contributions and ideas from parliamentarians, from many experts outside government and from consultation with the private sector and with allies.

Strategy in action

0.14 A national security strategy, like 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).

0.15 A strategy must **reflect the context** in which it is developed, the particular strengths and skills that we can bring to bear (our areas of comparative advantage); be clear, but also flexible, to take account of uncertainty and change. It must also **take account of the activities of others**: the positive contributions of allies and partners and of the private sector; and the negative effect of adversaries seeking to thwart our objectives. Therefore a strategy must also be based on creative insight into how best to achieve our own objectives and prevent adversaries from achieving theirs. It must **balance the ends, ways and means**. The ways and means by which we seek to achieve our objectives must be appropriate and sufficient and the objectives must also be realistic in light of the means available.

0.16 Parts One and Two of our National Security Strategy outline our analysis of the strategic global context and our assessment of the UK's place in the world. They also set out our core objectives:

- ensuring a **secure and resilient UK** – protecting our people, economy, infrastructure, territory and way of life from all major risks that can affect us directly; and

- **shaping a stable world** – actions beyond our borders to reduce the likelihood of specific risks affecting the UK or our direct interests overseas.

0.17 In Part Three we identify and analyse the key security risks we are likely to face in future. The National Security Council has prioritised these risks into tiers based on a combination of the likelihood of the risk arising and its potential impact. The National Security Council also took account of our current state of preparedness for each risk. The outcomes represent the detailed **ends** of our strategy: the need to prevent and mitigate the specific risks identified, focusing most on those that are of highest priority.

0.18 Specifically, the National Security Council judges that currently – and for the next five years – the four highest priority risks are those arising from:

- **international terrorism**, including through the use of chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear (CBRN) materials; and of **terrorism related to Northern Ireland**
- **cyber attack**, including by other states, and by organised crime and terrorists
- **international military crises** and
- **major accidents or natural hazards.**

0.19 Part Four of this National Security Strategy outlines the ways in which we will achieve our ends, both in terms of policy priorities and the tasks we will undertake across government to deliver them.

0.20 The detailed means to achieve these ends are set out in the Strategic Defence and Security Review. This will outline the decisions which the National Security Council has taken about all our key security capabilities, and how we will use them to tackle the key issues and priority risks identified in this National Security Strategy.

0.21 The National Security Council will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of this National Security Strategy and of the Strategic Defence and Security Review decisions. Lead ministers will have responsibility for coordinating priority areas of work across government, supported by officials, to implement the strategy and the review. We will publish an annual report of progress on implementation for scrutiny by the Joint Parliamentary Committee on the National Security Strategy, and we commit to producing a new National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review every five years.

Part One

The Strategic Context

1.1 We need to understand the context within which we operate in order to protect our security, achieve our national objectives and maintain our influence in world affairs. In this section we set out the main issues facing us now and possible future trends that we must prepare for.

The security context today

1.2 We face a **real and pressing threat from international terrorism**, particularly that inspired by Al Qaeda and its affiliates. Our Armed Forces are fighting in Afghanistan because of this threat. We and our allies are supporting the Government of Afghanistan to **prevent Afghan territory from again being used by Al Qaeda as a secure base from which to plan attacks on the UK or our allies**. Terrorists can also exploit instability in countries like Somalia or Yemen. This instability can spread from one country to another as we saw in the Balkans at the end of the last century. Lawless regions provide a haven for terrorist groups and organised criminal networks alike.

Afghanistan

British troops are fighting in Afghanistan, alongside our US and other allies, to protect our national security. Following the 11 September attacks, the international community played a critical role in driving Al Qaeda from Afghanistan and now they must be kept out. We want an Afghanistan that is not a threat to the UK or the international community. To achieve this we are supporting an Afghan-led process to develop the Afghan security forces and build a more effective Afghan state that can control its own security and, ultimately, achieve a lasting political settlement.

We are making progress. The Afghan security forces are now 260,000 strong, well on track to meet their 2011 targets and increasingly showing the capability to provide their own security. We expect transition of security responsibility to the Afghans to begin in early 2011. Joint Afghan and international operations across the country are putting pressure on the insurgency. The London Conference in January and the Kabul Conference in July marked our progress on wider issues. The economy is growing rapidly and the Afghan Government's ability to deliver key services such as health and education has significantly improved. We will continue to work with the Afghans to secure further progress made on corruption, regional engagement and political and economic reform.

But we are not complacent. The insurgency remains strong and adaptable. Our continued resolve and commitment is required to ensure success and the consequent withdrawal of our combat troops by 2015.

1.3 Al Qaeda remains the most potent terrorist threat to the UK. The current national threat level is Severe, which means an attack is highly likely. Al Qaeda wants to use violence to overthrow governments in the Middle East to create a caliphate, a unified government for the Muslim world based on an extreme interpretation of Islam. By launching terrorist attacks against the US and its allies, Al Qaeda hopes to remove western influence from the Islamic world. Al Qaeda has sought to attack the UK on a number of occasions. Real terrorist plots against the UK are uncovered on a fairly regular basis by the Intelligence Services. The campaign of attempted attacks against the UK will continue: some may succeed.

1.4 The core of Al Qaeda remains in the borders of Afghanistan and Pakistan but there are a number of affiliated groups in Somalia, Yemen and Iraq. These affiliates share Al Qaeda's name, broad objectives and methods. These groups broaden Al Qaeda's reach across the Muslim world and enhance its ability to plan terrorist attacks. There is an associated, unpredictable threat from people who are inspired but not trained or directed by Al Qaeda. These can include people who have travelled overseas for training or insurgency, or individuals in Britain who have been inspired to commit attacks even without having travelled overseas.

1.5 There are a number of other significant transnational threats that require our attention. We are at a crucial stage in international efforts to **prevent nuclear proliferation in the Middle East.** If Iran acquires nuclear weapons technology, there is a strong possibility that other states in the region would follow. A Middle East with several nuclear weapons states would lead to high instability, precarious energy security and would have a severely damaging effect on the Middle East Peace Process. **Organised crime** affects our interests and the lives of our people at home and abroad. At present there are around 38,000 individuals involved in organised crime affecting the UK, costing our economy and society between £20 billion and £40 billion per annum. Although we currently face no major state military threat some states continue to attempt to gain advantage over us **through hostile espionage activity or cyber attack**.

1.6 Traditional **espionage** continues to pose a threat to British interests, with the commercial sector under threat alongside our diplomatic and defence interests. The revolution in global communications and increased movement of people, goods and ideas has also enabled the use of cyberspace as a means of espionage. This enables operation from a safe distance and makes the attribution of attacks more difficult, thus reducing the political risk associated with spying.

1.7 At home there remains a serious and persistent **threat from residual terrorist groups linked to Northern Ireland**. Although these groups have no coherent political agenda and lack popular support, the frequency of terrorist incidents has increased over the last 18 months: there have been 37 attacks on national security targets this year to date, up from 22 in the whole of 2009. The threat level within Northern Ireland is Severe; and the threat level for Great Britain has recently been raised from Moderate to Substantial indicating that an attack is a strong possibility.

1.8 We must also be ready at any time to deal with the possibility of **major natural hazards or accidents** and be resilient in handling and recovering from their effects.

1.9 However, the largest single challenge facing the Government affects both national security and all other areas of public policy. Our **most urgent task is to return our nation's finances to a sustainable footing** and bring sense to the profligacy and lack of planning that we inherited. We cannot have effective foreign policy or strong defence without a sound economy and a sound fiscal position to support them. All government departments, including those contributing to national security, will be required to play their part. This Strategy sets out how we will continue to protect our security while rebuilding our finances.

The world is changing

1.10 The main building blocks of our national security are enduring. The UK benefits from a tried and successful approach to **collective security** using a wide set of alliances and partnerships. Our relationship with the US will continue to be essential to delivering the security and prosperity we need and the US will remain the most powerful country in the world, economically and in military terms. Through NATO, the EU and other alliances we share our security needs and gain collective security benefits.

1.11 As a result **we face no major state threat at present and no existential threat to our security, freedom or prosperity**.

1.12 But we cannot be complacent. The world will change. Our National Security Strategy needs to position us for the future as well as the present. We must scan the horizon, identify possible future developments and prepare for them. We must be prepared for alternative futures based on key trends, building in the adaptability to respond to different possibilities.

1.13 Though the US will continue to be the world's largest economy and the largest foreign investor in the UK, the relative weight of **economic activity** around the world is shifting, from the developed economies of Europe and the rest of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) towards the rising economies of Asia, Latin America, and the Gulf. The financial crisis has accelerated this shift. International Monetary Fund analysis indicates that emerging economies are recovering more quickly from the crisis than developed ones.

1.14 The crisis demonstrated the level of interdependence and the depth of integration of economies across the world. This trend towards closer integration is set to continue. The UN estimates that the total amount of global investment overseas stood at $2 trillion in 1990 and reached almost $18 trillion in 2008.

1.15 The UK has strategic and economic imperatives to build closer ties with the new economic powers. The balance of geopolitical power will gradually change over the coming decades. The world of 2030 will be **increasingly multipolar**, with power distributed more widely than in the last two decades. The circle of international decision-making will be wider and potentially more multilateral. We are already seeing new systems of influence develop where countries share interests and goals which are outside the traditional international architecture. The G20 has replaced the G8 as the main forum for international economic co-operation. The G8 will continue, though it will increasingly focus on foreign policy and development. Other structures, regional organisations and informal groupings may grow in influence.

1.16 To respond we need to enhance our reach and influence. We should aim to reinforce existing international institutions such as the UN and the emerging ones such as the G20 so as to preserve the best of the rules-based international system. We will need to change too, both to adapt to and influence, developments in the structures that support our security. Our relationship with the US is and will remain central but we must expect it to evolve. NATO will formulate and apply its new strategic concept; the EU's international role will develop; and the UN Security Council may be reformed. We will continue to play an active role in shaping international law and norms.

1.17 Some emerging powers are insufficiently tied into multilateral approaches. They may not be fully represented in international institutions despite their economic weight and regional influence. Yet they are indispensable to global solutions on issues such as climate change and nuclear proliferation. So we must also **strengthen our network of bilateral ties** with new partners as well as traditional allies, recognising that many emerging powers put a premium on direct relationships.

1.18 A key feature of this change will be the rise of China and India as **global powers** alongside the continuing economic development and increasing influence of Latin America and the Gulf. China is already the second largest economy in the world and, in the long term, India's economic growth will also project it to the first rank of powers. Both these countries, and other emerging powers, will continue to grow in influence, in their ability to affect global issues and in military and other offensive capability. We recognise the importance

of enhancing our bilateral relationships with these countries and with other emerging powers. The Prime Minister, accompanied by six ministers and a large non-government delegation, visited India in July this year. The forthcoming UK-China Summit will also demonstrate the breadth of our relationship with China. The developing relations between all these countries and the US will be a central feature of the coming decades.

1.19 In the wake of the financial crisis, protectionist measures have largely been kept in check, including through commitments at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and in the G20. The UK has long benefited from and contributed to the openness of markets and free trade. Nevertheless, as further trade barriers are removed and global trade and investment flows increase, domestic lobbies affected by these trends could become more vocal. As emerging economies move up the value chain the effects of liberalisation will be felt by skilled workers, particularly in developed countries. Some countries may challenge the open world trading system, seeking instead to secure or restrict access to markets and resources. But our prosperity and security will require us to sustain it. We will remain a strong advocate of free trade and open markets.

1.20 Most developing countries' economies will continue to grow over the medium term. In India, China and elsewhere development will lift millions out of poverty. But fragile and conflict-affected countries will benefit much less from future growth. The world's poorest people live on less than $1000 a year. Around half currently live in Asia and half in Africa but by 2030 the clear majority of those living on less than $3 a day will be in Africa. Compounded by other drivers such as climate change and resource scarcity, this increases the likelihood of conflict, instability and state failure.

1.21 Globalisation in all its forms has made **the world more interconnected** both through technology, travel and migration and through the global trade in goods, services and capital. This means that it is much harder to isolate the UK from shocks occurring outside our own territory, whether they are economic or geopolitical. Thanks to technological developments, social networking and twenty four hour news media, there is a mass of connections between individuals, civil society, business, pressure groups and charitable organisations. Today, in the UK alone, over 30 million adults access the internet almost every day. Globally there are more than 500 million active users of social networking sites, one person for every fourteen in the world. These diffuse networks enable groups and individuals to coalesce around specific issues and exert influence over international governments and organisations.

1.22 In this networked world we are all increasingly connected, not just as states, but as interest groups and as individuals. This can aid the spread of our values but also those of others. We may have to deal with threats motivated by different **ideologies** which compete with our values. At present only Al Qaeda represents a major ideologically driven threat to the national security of the UK and our allies. But in the future some regionally based ideologies could affect us through our role as an international 'hub', through the engagement of some among our diaspora populations, or through driving conflict which impacts on our interests. It is a realistic possibility that in the next ten years extremists motivated by new ideologies or narratives could cross the line between advocacy and terrorism.

1.23 The pace of **scientific and technological innovation** is likely to continue to increase. Technological knowledge will spread more widely and more rapidly than before. Both state and non-state actors will have access to a greater range of technology which can be used both to protect and to attack national security. At the start of the century, just 12% of the world's population had a mobile phone. In 2008 the figure was well over 50% and according to the UN it is now around 61%, evidence of the increased availability and use of technologies across the world. The advantage that the West has traditionally enjoyed in technology is likely to be eroded. The numbers of people able to access information and to innovate will increase. Further game-changing technologies, such as artificial intelligence, advanced web applications, and possibly quantum computing, will become mainstream in the next twenty years.

1.24 Rapid advances in the **biological sciences** also present opportunities and threats. DNA sequencing, the process of determining the order of the three billion chemical 'building blocks' that make up human DNA, offers great potential for advances in many areas such as preventative healthcare and the development of new drug-production methods. However, given that ethical norms governing the application of new developing technologies are likely to lag behind progress, it will be increasingly challenging for governments to protect themselves against malicious misuse or accidental consequences. It will be important to ensure that regulation of these advancing technologies continues to be effective. Similarly, society's complex response to improved surveillance, data-mining and profiling technologies is likely to challenge the balance between security and individual rights.

1.25 Innovation will be key in ensuring our **energy security**. We will rely on the development of new energy production technologies to move us away from dependence on hydrocarbons. We will need to find ways to integrate these new technologies into existing systems to ensure the availability and integrity of supply.

1.26 Innovation, both scientific and social, affects conflict itself. States, as well as non-state actors, are likely to employ 'asymmetric' means which are cheaper and less attributable than conventional ones. At the same time, some non-state actors have significant conventional military capability and some aspire to develop biological and nuclear weapons capabilities. Around the world **the character of conflict is changing**. Many future wars will be 'among the people', resembling in some respects the counter-insurgency that we are currently fighting with allies in Afghanistan. But there will also be wars between states. Critically, both types of conflict will share some common characteristics that affect our own military requirements.

1.27 In the future we should expect that securing access to and freedom of manoeuvre in conflict environments will be difficult. Battle lines will be unclear and the battlefield may contain local people and the media, as well as adversaries. We need to be prepared for the fact that our lines of communication will be vulnerable to disruption; and our actions will be subject to scrutiny in the media and courts and by society at large. The implications of this are examined in the Strategic Defence and Security Review.

1.28 **Social and demographic trends** will shape the future. Though Britain's population (like that of the US) is forecast to grow, much of the western world faces the ageing and shrinking of its populations. Overall the world's population will continue to increase. UN projections suggest it will reach 9.2 billion by 2050, compared to 6.9 billion now. In some areas, population growth will outpace the development of stable governance. Poor infrastructure, political exclusion and unemployment, combined with population and resource pressures, caused in part by urbanisation, will increase the risk of instability and conflict. By 2030, population increase will mean that global demand for food and energy will rise by up to 50% and water by up to 30%.

1.29 **Environmental factors** will grow in importance. The physical effects of climate change are likely to become increasingly significant as a 'risk multiplier', exacerbating existing tensions around the world. The UN suggests that the conflict in Darfur is one where the effects of climate change may be a factor, with sustained years of heavy rainfall impacting on farming conditions and creating tensions between farming communities. As in this case, climate change is likely to have a disproportionate impact on the developing world. It will add extra stress to already fragile states and lead to an increase in the number of displaced people moving both within and between states. But the 2007 floods in Britain – occasioning the largest ever civil emergency response since the Second World War – highlighted the impact that natural disasters can have, even on fully developed networked societies.

1.30 **Tackling climate change** is increasingly an issue which is bringing countries together. Failure to reach agreement at the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen was a strategic setback. Nevertheless we will strive for an effective response, including a global deal. Over 70 countries (accounting for some 80% of global emissions) have set out their emissions reductions commitments.

1.31 Greater **demand for scarce natural resources** is attracting interest in countries which control those resources. Action by them to restrict exports and stockpiling by other countries in response could undermine certain strategic industrial sectors in the UK (for example restrictions on exports of rare earth metals, a key component of various low carbon and military technologies). Competition for resources may also increase the prospect of global conflicts over access to them.

Implications for the UK

1.32 The risk picture is likely to become increasingly diverse. No single risk will dominate. The world described above brings many benefits but can also facilitate threats. Therefore, **achieving security will become more complex**. During the Cold War we faced an existential threat from a state adversary through largely predictable military or nuclear means. We no longer face such predictable threats. The adversaries we face will change and diversify as enemies seek means of threat or attack which are cheaper, more easily accessible and less attributable than conventional warfare. These include gathering hostile intelligence, cyber attack, the disruption of critical services, and the exercise of malign influence over citizens or governments.

1.33 Since the events of 11 September 2001 we have become used to focusing on non-state actors as the main national security threat we face. That remains true for now. International terrorism is still our principal current national security threat. But over the next 20 years, we may face security threats from a range of sources: rather than having one clear type of threat around which to organise our planning. Our ability to remain adaptable for the future will be fundamental, as will our ability to identify risks and opportunities at the earliest possible stage. It will also be essential to maintain highly capable and flexible armed forces so that we can exercise military power when necessary.

1.34 The specific opportunities offered by the UK's distinctive place in the world are discussed in Part Two.

Part Two

Britain's Distinctive Role

2.1 Britain will continue to play an active and engaged role in shaping global change.

Our economic position

2.2 Despite our fiscal deficit and the fact that we have only 1% of the world's population we are the sixth largest economy in the world. We are ranked by the World Bank as the fifth easiest place in the world to do business. London is a world renowned financial and business hub. We are a global leader in science and technology, medicine, creative industries, media and sport, and home to some of the top universities in the world. We continue to attract large flows of inward investment, ranking equal first with the US in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, as well as holding $50 billion of investments of our own overseas.

2.3 Economic growth in the coming decades is likely to be driven by the world knowledge economy, in which UK companies are highly globally competitive. Emerging nations, notably China and India, will look to increase domestic consumption and develop service industries. With our leading financial, professional, creative and media services, and our world class universities and think tanks, the UK will be well placed to benefit. A strong economy is a vital basis for our security. There will also be greater opportunities for influencing and spreading our values amongst populations and individuals.

A centre of global activity

2.4 Britain is **at the heart of many global networks**, has an outward-looking disposition and is both a geographical and virtual centre of global activity. Our location and our time zone position us as a link between the economic centres of Asia and America, as well as forming part of the European single market.

2.5 We have a global reach disproportionate to our size. This brings tremendous opportunities for trade, building relationships, and working with partners. We are a base for international flows of people, communications and services. 5.5 million Britons now live overseas. We have strong historical and economic links with emerging markets in Asia, Africa and the Middle East as well as an unparalleled transatlantic relationship with North America. **London is a world city,** acting as a second home for the decision-makers of many countries. This provides an unrivalled opportunity for informal influence of the kind that matters in the networked world.

2.6 **The English language** gives us the ability to share ideas with millions – perhaps billions – of people and to build networks around the world.

2.7 **We are also connected to many parts of the world** through our diverse population. This includes large communities whose ethnic origin derives from many countries; and a range of family links to people of British heritage in parts of the Commonwealth, a network spanning 54 countries, and in the US. There are currently 400,000 foreign students being educated in our universities, of which 47,000 are Chinese.

2.8 As the world becomes more interconnected through trade, new markets, shared interests, technology and cyberspace, the **value of these connections** to us and to our allies is likely to grow.

2.9 We should look to our existing areas of **comparative advantage**, outlined in this section, and to the areas we can develop in the future. In a multipolar world, comparative advantage does not apply only to areas of world leadership – though we have significant examples of that. We can and will invest in all those areas where we are relatively stronger than other countries.

Our role in international affairs

2.10 We have a web of relationships across the globe, with a unique position as a key member of multilateral fora as diverse as the UN Security Council, NATO, the EU, the G8, the G20 and the Commonwealth. We continue to play a major role in shaping international institutions, including in the emergence of the G20 and future reform of the UN Security Council. A full description of our alliances and partnerships is set out in more detail in the Strategic Defence and Security Review.

2.11 Our strong defence, security and intelligence relationship with the US is exceptionally close and central to our national interest. Our Armed Forces and intelligence agencies are respected around the world. We are a leading contributor to NATO, the **third largest financial contributor to UN peacekeeping operations,** and one of five nuclear weapons states recognised in the Non-Proliferation Treaty. We are a world leader in combating poverty and one of the few large countries to meet our Official Development Assistance pledges.

Our enlightened national interest.

2.12 Our **security, prosperity and freedom** are interconnected and mutually supportive. They constitute our national interest.

2.13 Our prosperity enables us to afford the skills and capabilities we need to advance our security from military training and arms, to technical and scientific expertise and equipment. **Security and prosperity form a virtuous circle.** Without the security of our land and infrastructure and the ability of our citizens to live their lives freely, the foundations of our prosperity, trade, industry, enterprise and education would be undermined.

2.14 Above all, we act to **maintain our way of life**: to protect our people and the freedoms we have built for ourselves, and the values of our society and institutions.

Our openness to the world exposes us to a unique set of both risks and opportunities

2.15 The networked world provides us with great opportunities. But Britain's very openness and deep engagement with the world means that we can be particularly vulnerable to overseas events. This includes conflicts in South Asia, the Middle East or North Africa which could lead to terrorist activity here; economic shocks, given that our economy is linked to others all around the world for supplies of energy and for trade; and the disruption of the free flow of information on the internet, on which our service-based information economy depends. Like many other countries, we are also vulnerable to the spread of pandemic diseases.

Our response

2.16 This means our response must encompass **two complementary strategic objectives**:

- ensuring a **secure and resilient UK** – protecting our people, economy, infrastructure, territory and way of life from all major risks that can affect us directly – requiring both direct protection against real and present threats such as terrorism and cyber attack, resilience in the face of natural and man-made emergencies and crime, and deterrence against less likely threats such as a military attack by another state; and
- **shaping a stable world** – acting to reduce the likelihood of risks affecting the UK or our interests overseas. We do this by applying all our instruments of power and influence to shape the global environment and tackle potential risks at source. We must address trends that contribute to instability, as well as tackling risks directly.

2.17 All of our national security effort will be directed towards delivering against these objectives. Nevertheless, whilst we will focus on early identification and mitigation of risks, we recognise that we cannot expect to eliminate risks altogether. Part Three sets out our analysis of the risks involved and our priorities for responding to them.

National Security and British values

The UK has a proud tradition of protecting its citizens, promoting civil liberties and upholding the rule of law. For 800 years, the UK has been at the forefront of shaping the relationship between the rights of individuals and the powers and obligations of the state.

At the same time, we need security to protect the freedoms we hold dear. Security and freedom should be reinforcing. Both form part of our national interest. National security is about protecting our people – including their rights and liberties – as well as protecting our democratic institutions and traditions.

To protect the security and freedom of many, the state sometimes has to encroach on the liberties of a few: those who threaten us. We must strike the right balance in doing this, acting proportionately, with due process and with appropriate democratic oversight.

Our security and intelligence agencies play a vital role in protecting our country from threats to our way of life. It is inherent in their work that most of it has to be done in secret to protect those who risk their lives for our security, and to maintain the confidence and cooperation of partners overseas. For the same reasons the exercise of oversight, whether by Parliament or through the courts, also has to involve a measure of secrecy. Here too we must strike a balance, between the transparency that accountability normally entails, and the secrecy that security demands.

Protecting our security requires us to work with countries who do not share our values and standards of criminal justice. In working with them to protect our country from terrorist attacks and other threats we do not compromise on our values. We speak out against abuses and use our own conduct as an example. But we have to strike a balance between public condemnation of any deviation from our values and the need to protect our security through international cooperation.

Striking these balances is not always straightforward, and reasonable people can differ on how to do it. In recent years it has not proved easy to find this balance in some cases. So next year, we will publish a Green Paper seeking views on a range of options, designed to enable the courts and other oversight bodies to scrutinise modern day national security actions effectively without compromising our security in the process.

But our core values are not open to question. In July 2010, we published consolidated guidance for the use of intelligence and service personnel on the detention and interviewing of detainees oversees. That guidance makes clear, in particular, that such personnel must never take any action where they know or believe torture will occur. They must also report other concerns and take steps to mitigate risks. They report any abuses and take action where they can to stop it. Acting on our values in this way is central to our approach to national security. As the Foreign Secretary has said, "we cannot achieve long-term security and prosperity unless we uphold our values."

Part Three

Risks to Our Security

3.1 Our National Security Strategy requires us to identify the most pressing risks to our security, and put in place the ways and means to address them.

Risks and resilience

3.2 Our national interest can be threatened by natural disasters, man-made accidents and by malicious attacks both by states and by non-state actors, such as terrorists and organised criminals. These risks have different impacts if they occur. Some are more likely to occur than others.

3.3 We must do all we can, within the resources available, to **predict, prevent and mitigate the risks** to our security. For those risks that we can predict, we must act both to reduce the likelihood of their occurring, and develop the resilience to reduce their impact.

3.4 Most national security threats arise from actions by others: states or non-state actors, who are hostile to our interests. There is much we can do to **reduce the likelihood** of such risks occurring, on our own or with partners. We will directly disrupt adversaries such as terrorists; we will promote cooperation to reduce the motivation of states to be hostile to us; we will build alliances that make hostile acts against us more risky to their perpetrators; we will act to control the spread of advanced technology systems and the development of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons; and we will promote development and combat poverty to reduce the causes of potential hostility. In many cases, we aim to tackle problems at root overseas, to reduce the likelihood of risks turning into actual attacks on us at home.

3.5 But we cannot prevent every risk as they are inherently unpredictable. To ensure we are able to recover quickly when risks turn into actual damage to our interests, we have to promote **resilience**, both locally and nationally. Ensuring that the public is fully informed of the risks we face is a critical part of this approach. To support national and local resilience, we will continue to publish a National Risk Register which sets out the more immediate risks of civil emergencies occurring in the UK.

National Security Risk Assessment

3.6 A truly strategic approach to national security requires us to go further than just assessing domestic civil emergencies. In this National Security Strategy, as well as looking at short-term domestic risks, we consider for the first time all aspects of national security. We have conducted the first ever **National Security Risk Assessment (NSRA)** to assess and prioritise all major areas of national security risk – domestic and overseas.

3.7 Subject-matter experts, analysts and intelligence specialists were asked to identify the full range of existing and potential risks to our national security which might materialise over a five and 20 year horizon. All potential risks of sufficient scale or impact so as to require action from government and/or which had an ideological, international or political dimension were assessed, based on their relative **likelihood** and relative **impact**. Impact was assessed based on the potential direct harm a risk would cause to the UK's people, territories, economy, key institutions and infrastructure.

3.8 A risk that is both high impact and high likelihood is more significant than one that is low impact and low likelihood. Judgements have to be made about the relative significance of risks that are high impact but low likelihood; or low impact but high likelihood. In addition, it is necessary to consider our **vulnerability**, or our preparedness to handle risks, in judging priority. A detailed explanation of the methodology used to undertake the risk assessment is at Annex A.

3.9 This process provides an insight into potential **future** risks, so as to contribute to decisions on capabilities for the future. It does not directly address immediate security issues. Thus we did not include in the NSRA a risk directly related to a conflict in Afghanistan, since we are already engaged there. But we do include risks of future terrorism and risks of future conflicts.

3.10 The process of identifying, assessing and prioritising risks is intended to give us **strategic notice about future threats** to enable us to plan our response and capabilities in advance. But there are limits. We cannot predict every risk that might occur, as there is intrinsic uncertainty in human events. We must be alert to change. We will continue to assess the risks facing us.

3.11 We will review the full NSRA every two years.

Identifying our priorities

3.12 The results of the first NSRA suggest that, over the next twenty years, we could face risks from an **increasing range of sources**, and that the means available to our adversaries are increasing in number, variety and reach. As noted in Part One, the networked world creates great opportunities but also new vulnerabilities. In particular, protecting virtual assets and networks, on which our economy and way of life now depend, becomes as important as directly protecting physical assets and lives.

3.13 The NSRA informs strategic judgement. It is not a forecast. We cannot predict with total accuracy the nature or source of the next major national security incident we will face. But it helps us make choices. In particular, it helps us **prioritise** the risks which represent the most pressing security concerns in order to identify the actions and resources needed to deliver our responses to those risks.

3.14 The NSRA was put to the National Security Council. On that basis, the National Security Council identified 15 generic priority risk types, and allocated them into three tiers as outlined in the following table.

National Security Strategy: Priority Risks

Tier One: The National Security Council considered the following groups of risks to be those of highest priority for UK national security looking ahead, taking account of both likelihood and impact.

- **International terrorism affecting the UK or its interests**, including a chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear attack by terrorists; and/or a significant increase in the levels of **terrorism relating to Northern Ireland**.
- **Hostile attacks upon UK cyber space** by other states and large scale cyber crime.
- A **major accident or natural hazard** which requires a national response, such as severe coastal flooding affecting three or more regions of the UK, or an influenza pandemic.
- An **international military crisis** between states, drawing in the UK, and its allies as well as other states and non-state actors.

Tier Two: The National Security Council considered the following groups of risks to be the next highest priority looking ahead, taking account of both likelihood and impact. (For example, a CBRN attack on the UK by a state was judged to be low likelihood, but high impact.)

- An attack on the UK or its Oversees Territories by another state or proxy using **chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear (CBRN) weapons**.
- Risk of **major instability, insurgency or civil war overseas** which creates an environment that terrorists can exploit to threaten the UK.
- A significant increase in the level of **organised crime** affecting the UK.
- Severe **disruption to information received, transmitted or collected by satellites**, possibly as the result of a deliberate attack by another state.

Tier Three: The National Security Council considered the following groups of risks to be the next highest priority after taking account of both likelihood and impact.

- A large scale **conventional military attack on the UK** by another state (not involving the use of CBRN weapons) resulting in fatalities and damage to infrastructure within the UK.
- A **significant increase** in the level of **terrorists, organised criminals, illegal immigrants and illicit goods trying to cross the UK border** to enter the UK.
- **Disruption to oil or gas supplies** to the UK, or price instability, as a result of war, accident, major political upheaval or deliberate manipulation of supply by producers.
- A major **release of radioactive material from a civil nuclear site** within the UK which affects one or more regions.
- A conventional **attack by a state on another NATO or EU member** to which the UK would have to respond.
- An **attack on a UK overseas territory** as the result of a sovereignty dispute or a wider regional conflict.
- Short to medium term **disruption to international supplies of resources** (e.g. food, minerals) essential to the UK.

3.15 It should be noted that **all these risk areas are important**. Together, they constitute the most substantial risks we face. These three tiers represent the highest priorities among a broad set of risks considered. The inclusion of a risk in Tier Three rather than Tier Two or Tier One does not mean that it is irrelevant, or has been discounted. All of them are significant areas of concern and all of them require government action to prevent or mitigate the risk.

3.16 In many cases, **we take action precisely to prevent risks that are in Tier Two or Tier Three from rising up the scale** to become more pressing and reach Tier One. For example, we can use the combined efforts of diplomacy, development assistance, and military and intelligence capacity-building to help ensure that a potential area of instability (a risk in Tier Two) does not degenerate to such an extent that it becomes an immediate source for increased acts of terrorism against us (a Tier One risk). Similarly, we use diplomacy, influence, trade, and deterrent power to ensure that the Tier Three risk of a conventional attack on a NATO member does not become more likely; and we maintain border controls to prevent a significant increase in the flows of terrorists, criminals or illegal immigrants or goods. In almost all cases, our efforts to prevent risks are strengthened by working alongside allies and partners with the same interests.

3.17 Nonetheless, a strategy involves making choices. To inform the Strategic Defence and Security Review, it has been essential to prioritise risks in order to prioritise capabilities. That does not automatically mean greater resources are allocated to the higher priority risks. But it does indicate where particular effort must be made to prevent or mitigate risks.

The highest priority risks

3.18 The National Security Council judged that currently – and for the next five years –tackling the risks from **terrorism, cyber attack, international military crises,** and **major accidents or natural hazards** should be our highest priority objectives. The potential risks in each of these categories are diverse and will change over the coming years. In order to ensure that our response is appropriate, we must be flexible and monitor trends to understand the nature and evolution of these threats. This section sets out some of the considerations underlying that judgement.

1. Terrorism

3.19 We assess that the principal threat from **international terrorism** will continue to come from Al Qaeda, its affiliates, and terrorists inspired by its ideology. The core of Al Qaeda led by Usama Bin Laden, his deputy and key commanders, in the borders of Pakistan and Afghanistan is under increasing pressure. **Military action has weakened Al Qaeda and other terrorists there, but has not destroyed them entirely**. This increased pressure has forced Al Qaeda to adapt.

3.20 This threat is already becoming more diverse and this trend is likely to continue over the next five years. Al Qaeda has **affiliates** in Somalia, Yemen and Iraq, through which it can exert its influence on others. Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, based in Yemen, came close to a successful attack against a US flight over Detroit in December 2009 and aspires to similar attacks against the UK.

3.21 **Fragile, failing and failed states around the world provide the environment for terrorists to operate as they look to exploit ungoverned or ill-governed space.** Those who have experience of fighting overseas may return to the UK with the know-how to conduct attacks. The men responsible for attacking Glasgow airport in June 2007 had undergone such experiences in Iraq. The current Al Qaeda-aligned insurgency in Somalia may provide a similar training ground for individuals with terrorist ambitions.

3.22 **We must be prepared for different types of terrorist attack.** Al Qaeda still aspires to mass-casualty attacks, but the increased pressure it is under and the success of the security services in disrupting attacks has forced its members to explore other methods. For example, Al Qaeda and other groups have stated an aspiration to develop unconventional (chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear – CBRN) capabilities. Al Qaeda has a long-held desire to maximise the impact of its attacks through the use of such weapons. It has yet to develop such capability but will continue to seek all means to do so.

3.23 Senior Al Qaeda figures have urged Muslims in the West to conduct attacks without training or direction from established groups. Such **lone terrorists** are inherently unpredictable and their plots are difficult to detect. Al Qaeda may consider smaller-scale attacks against softer targets which would nonetheless attract considerable media attention.

3.24 It has been nine years since the events of 9/11. Some of those investigated and convicted of terrorism related offences during that period have served their terms with remission and may return to terrorist activities. It is also only two years until we host the London Olympics. Though robust preparations are being made, we must not underestimate that challenge.

3.25 Although we have had success in disrupting the great majority of planned attacks in the UK, international terrorism can affect British interests at home or overseas. It is easier to disrupt terrorist capability than to remove terrorists' underlying motivation, but we must still work to stop people from becoming terrorists in the first place. We expect international terrorism to continue to pose a significant threat in terms of both likelihood and potential impact.

3.26 At home, despite the significant and continuing progress in stabilising the political situation in Northern Ireland, **the activities of residual terrorist groups** have increased in the last 18 months, and the security situation is unlikely to improve in the short term. There have been an increasing number of disruptions and arrests by the security forces, but these groups are resilient. They are determined to try and destabilise the Northern Ireland Executive and continue to target the Police Service of Northern Ireland in particular. We know that they also aspire to mount attacks in Great Britain.

2. Cyber Attack

3.27 Like terrorism, this is not simply a risk for the future. **Government, the private sector and citizens are under sustained cyber attack today, from both hostile states and criminals.** They are stealing our intellectual property, sensitive commercial and government information, and even our identities in order to defraud individuals, organisations and the Government.

3.28 But in future, unless we take action, this threat could become even worse. For this reason, cyber security has been assessed as one of the highest priority national security risks to the UK. Cyberspace is already woven in to the fabric of our society. It is integral to our economy and our security and access to the internet, the largest component of cyberspace, is already viewed by many as the 'fourth utility', a right rather than a privilege. In less than 15 years, the number of global web users has exploded by more than a hundred-fold, from 16 million in 1995 to more than 1.7 billion today.

3.29 While cyberspace provides the UK with massive opportunities, the risks emanating from our growing dependence on it are huge. By 2015, there will be more interconnected devices on the planet than humans – everything from mobile phones, cars and fridges will be networked across homes, offices and classrooms across the globe. Activity in cyberspace will continue to evolve as a direct national security and economic threat, as it is refined as a means of espionage and crime, and continues to grow as a terrorist enabler, as well as a military weapon for use by states and possibly others. But **getting our cyber security posture right across the full spectrum of activities is also a great opportunity for the UK** to capitalise on our national economic and security **comparative advantages.**

3.30 The Internet provides great benefits for UK's industry, government and general populace, but as our dependency on it increases so do the risks and threats we face online:

- Modern UK national infrastructure, government and business depends more and more on information and communications technology and particularly the internet
- Cyber-crime has been estimated to cost as much as **$1 trillion per year globally**, with untold human cost. Major British companies are increasingly anxious about the impact of cyber-crime on their bottom line and the resilience of the networks upon which commerce relies
- The Olympics will be an attractive target for criminals and others seeking to defraud and potentially disrupt. Beijing experienced **12 million cyber attacks per day** during the 2008 games

- Attacks in cyberspace can have a **potentially devastating real-world effect**. Government, military, industrial and economic targets, including critical services, could feasibly be disrupted by a capable adversary. 'Stuxnet', a computer worm discovered in June 2010, was seemingly designed to target industrial control equipment. Although no damage to the UK has been done as a result, it is an example of the realities of the dangers of our inter-connected world
- **Terrorists** use cyberspace to organise, communicate and influence those vulnerable to radicalisation.

3.31 But the UK already has some areas of comparative advantage in cyber-security, which we can use not just to mitigate the risk, but also to gain economic and security opportunities.

3. An international military crisis

3.32 No state currently has the combination of capability and intent needed to pose a conventional military threat to the territorial integrity of the United Kingdom. Yet history shows that both capability and intent can change, sometimes in a matter of only a few years. Our aim is to deter direct threats, including through our membership of NATO and, ultimately, our independent nuclear deterrent. But that does not mean that we would not have to become engaged in an international military crisis overseas if we judged that it constituted a threat to our national interests. Recent history has seen major commitments of British forces to military operations in the Balkans, Iraq and Afghanistan. In each case the Government judged that our national interests or our international responsibilities were at stake.

3.33 Our strategic interests and responsibilities overseas could in some circumstances justify the threat or use of military force. There will also be occasions when it is in our interests to take part in humanitarian interventions. Each situation will be different and these judgements will not necessarily be easy.

3.34 International crises can be sparked by a multitude of sources. Changes in regional power balances – the rise of some powers and the decline of others – can themselves be the source of crises. Conflict and instability within failed or failing states can spill over into disputes with neighbouring states. The ambitions of states to acquire nuclear weapons capabilities could trigger international crises and armed conflict. Malign powers may wish to exert influence that impacts on the security of our vital networks, including for example our energy supplies, or that could have an adverse effect on the international system of trade and commerce upon which our prosperity relies. The nature of crises will often involve a blurring between the actions of states and non-state actors, between crime and conflict, and between combatants and civilians. Such crises can arise, and change in nature, rapidly and unpredictably.

3.35 Today we see regional power struggles and the desire of some states to acquire nuclear weapons capabilities increasing the danger of escalating crises. Unresolved border and sovereignty disputes could spark regional conflicts and draw in major regional powers. These scenarios would pose very significant threats to international peace and security and hence our interests and responsibilities.

3.36 We will work with others to seek to prevent such crises developing, to deter malign forces and, in the last resort, to intervene militarily. We therefore need preventative and stabilisation activity, including diplomatic action and strategic intelligence capability, the ability to deter, and the ability and will to intervene militarily where absolutely necessary. We would work closely with our allies and partners at all stages of an international military crisis.

4. A major accident or natural hazard

3.37 Civil emergencies, including natural disasters and major accidents, can cause serious damage to the UK. Catastrophes on the scale of the recent earthquake in the Republic of Haiti are thankfully rare in this country. However, over the past few years we have seen how a range of emergencies can have a significant impact on the ability of the British public to go about their daily lives, on the health of our economy, and on our environment.

3.38 The risk of **human pandemic disease** remains one of the highest we face. Influenza pandemics are natural phenomena that have occurred four times in the last century – including H1N1 (Swine Flu) in 2009. As a result of rapid spread from

person to person, pandemics have global human health consequences. A pandemic is also likely to cause significant and wider social and economic damage and disruption.

3.39 The most notable influenza pandemic of the last century occurred in 1918-19 and is often referred to as 'Spanish Flu'. It caused an estimated 20-40 million deaths worldwide, with an estimated 228,000 additional deaths in the UK alone. While the outbreak of Swine Flu last year, which resulted in 457 deaths in the UK, did not match the severity of the worst-case scenario that we plan for, future pandemic influenza outbreaks could be much more serious. There is a high probability of another influenza pandemic occurring and, based on a range of data, possible impacts of a future pandemic could be that up to one half of the UK population becomes infected, resulting in between 50,000 and 750,000 deaths in the UK, with corresponding disruption to everyday life.

3.40 The **flooding** across England in summer 2007 affected 48,000 households and 7,300 businesses. The Cumbria flood in 2009 caused six bridges to collapse, severing the road network and cutting off communities. These events highlighted the significant and widespread impact on people, businesses, infrastructure and essential services that flooding can cause. The three main types of flooding are from the sea (coastal or tidal), from rivers and streams, and from surface water (where heavy rainfall overwhelms the drainage system).

3.41 Coastal flooding has the potential to have the most widespread impact in a single event. The last significant event of this type to affect the UK was in January 1953 when the east coast of England suffered one of the biggest environmental disasters to occur in this country. Flood defences were breached by a combination of high tides, storm surges and large waves, with many coastal communities on the east coast quickly devastated as seawater rushed inland. Almost 1,000 square kilometres of land were flooded, 307 people killed and 32,000 people safely evacuated. In today's money, the estimated cost of the damage was over £5 billion.

3.42 **Major industrial accidents** can take a wide variety of forms and consequently their impacts can vary considerably both in scale and nature. In December 2005, the largest peacetime fire in Europe occurred at the Buncefield Oil Storage Terminal in Hemel Hempstead. The surrounding area had to be evacuated, with some businesses on the site, and in the immediate vicinity, experiencing long-term disruption to operations. The accident also caused one of the greatest strains on fuel supply that the UK has experienced to date. Jet fuel rationing was imposed at Heathrow during peak periods for two years after the event, and short term supplies were only maintained by the great efforts of industry to use alternative supply routes.

3.43 Severe disruption to critical UK utility services such as telecoms, water supply or energy supplies could also be a consequence of natural hazards. An extreme, but less likely, example is a nationwide loss of electricity, something the UK has not previously experienced. We maintain plans to minimise the impact of a loss of electricity and to restore supply as quickly as possible. These plans can be deployed whatever the cause of the disruption. In the unprecedented situation of the whole electricity network failing, some power stations have the ability to start up independently of the grid and plans are in place for sequentially restoring the whole network.

3.44 We also monitor new and emerging risks, such as the potential impact of severe space weather on our infrastructure. Given the range of hazards and accidents that can cause large-scale disruption, and the very severe impacts of the worst of these, this risk grouping is judged to be one of the highest priority risk areas. Our approach is to plan for the consequences of potential civil emergencies no matter what the cause.

Other priority risks

3.45 The four risk areas discussed above are those the National Security Council concluded should be the highest priority for action in the Strategic Defence and Security Review. In terms of our National Security Strategy, preventing and mitigating the Tier One risks are the top priority **ends** of the strategy. Though we highlight the four Tier One risks, action is required to tackle the other risks and the Strategic Defence and Security Review contains decisions about capabilities and actions relevant for them all.

Part Four

Our Response

4.01 The process of analysis, assessment and prioritisation has provided the foundation for making difficult choices about the capabilities we need to protect our country.

4.02 The Strategic Defence and Security Review provides detailed information about the policies we will pursue and the resources we will allocate over the course of this parliament in order to achieve our two core objectives: ensuring a **secure and resilient United Kingdom**; and **shaping a stable world**.

4.03 It identifies, for the first time, eight cross-cutting **National Security Tasks**, supported by more detailed planning guidelines. In terms of our National Security Strategy, these are the **ways** in which we will act to achieve our objectives.

National Security Tasks

1 Identify and monitor national security risks and opportunities.

2 Tackle at root the causes of instability.

3 Exert influence to exploit opportunities and manage risks.

4 Enforce domestic law and strengthen international norms to help tackle those who threaten the UK and our interests.

5 Protect the UK and our interests at home, at our border, and internationally, in order to address physical and electronic threats from state and non-state sources.

6 Help resolve conflicts and contribute to stability. Where necessary, intervene overseas, including the legal use of coercive force in support of the UK's vital interests, and to protect our overseas territories and people.

7 Provide resilience for the UK by being prepared for all kinds of emergencies, able to recover from shocks and to maintain essential services.

8 Work in alliances and partnerships wherever possible to generate stronger responses.

4.04 Achievement of all of these tasks will require close coordination between Government departments and strong National Security Council leadership. Our strategic intelligence capability must support the core military, diplomatic and domestic security and resilience requirements outlined above as well as our economic prosperity.

Implications for capabilities and resources

4.05 Guided by our strategic objectives and the tasks we will undertake to achieve them, the National Security Council has made decisions about the capabilities and resources required to protect our national security.

4.06 As noted in Part Three, although some risks have been judged as being of higher priority than others, this does not automatically mean greater resources must be allocated to them. This is because some capabilities are inherently more costly than others. Some are already well resourced, and others less so. In some cases, it may be appropriate to devote more resources to addressing risks which have low probability but very high impact; nuclear deterrence is an example of this.

4.07 Overall, however, the risks prioritised in Tier One also drive a prioritisation of capabilities. The Strategic Defence and Security Review will outline our approach to all of these risks and will give detailed information about the resources we will dedicate to tackling them.

4.08 Building on the risk assessment in Part Three, our main priorities for resources and capabilities will be to:

- protect operational **counter-terrorist** capabilities in intelligence and policing, and the necessary technologies to support them, while still delivering some efficiency gains in these areas
- develop a transformative programme for **cyber security**, which addresses threats from states, criminals and terrorists; and seizes the opportunities which cyber space provides for our future prosperity and for advancing our security interests
- focus cross-government effort on **natural hazards**, including major flooding and pandemics, and on building corporate and community resilience
- focus and integrate diplomatic, intelligence, defence and other capabilities on **preventing the threat of international military crises**, while retaining the ability to respond should they nevertheless materialise.

Implementation

4.09 We need a whole-of-government approach to implementing this National Security Strategy. All Government departments and agencies will need to work flexibly to ensure they give the agreed priority to national security risks and opportunities within their policies and programmes. Departments will be supported to deliver against these priorities by leaner, better coordinated structures and processes under the National Security Council. The National Security Council will continue to meet and take decisions every week, informed by up to date intelligence and assessment of risks and threats.

4.10 In order to ensure that we are able to anticipate future risks, we will ensure that **strategic all-source assessment, horizon-scanning and early warning** feed directly into policy-making through biennial reviews of the National Security Risk Assessment. In particular, we will ensure the flow of timely, relevant and independent insight to the National Security Council to inform decisions.

4.11 Lead ministers, accountable to the National Security Council, will take responsibility for **coordinating priority areas of work to deliver the national security tasks**. They will work with all departments with a stake in the issue. Ministers will be supported by officials who will lead work across Government and in partnership with others.

4.12 Implementation of the National Security Strategy, and the Strategic Defence and Security Review, as a whole, will be driven from the centre by a cross-departmental Implementation Board chaired by the Cabinet Office and attended by lead officials. It will monitor progress, risks and issues

and to identify areas of concern. This Board will provide regular updates to the Prime Minister and National Security Council.

4.13 We will publish an annual report of progress in implementation, for scrutiny by the Joint Parliamentary Committee on the National Security Strategy, and we commit to producing a new National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review every five years.

Based on our assessment of the context, our national interests, the objectives we have outlined and the resources at our disposal, the National Security Council has overseen a full Strategic Defence and Security Review to implement this strategy. This will outline how we will achieve our objectives, and the balance of resources and capabilities we need to deliver them.

Annex A

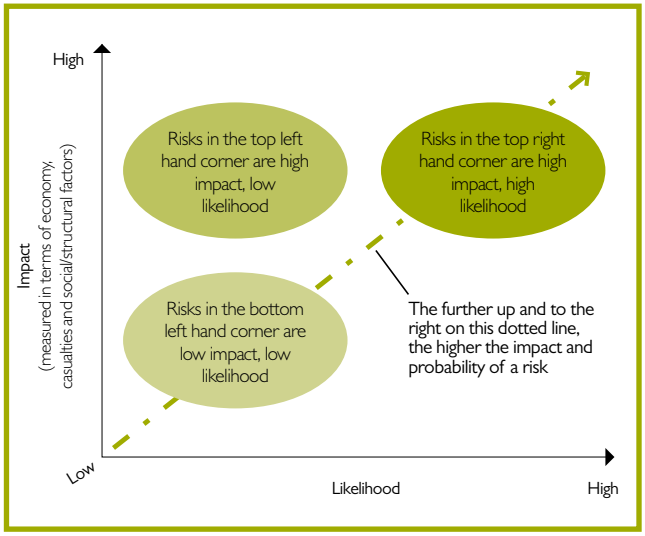
National Security Risk Assessment: methodology

A.1 Risk assessment involves making judgements about the relative impact and likelihood of each risk in comparison with others. In order to undertake the National Security Risk Assessment (NSRA) we adapted the methodology used to compile the UK's National Risk Register (which focuses only on domestic civil emergencies). This methodology involves consideration of the impact of an event (based on economic consequences, casualties and social/structural factors); and the likelihood of this event occurring over a determined timeframe.

A.2 The NSRA process compared, assessed and prioritised all major disruptive risks to our national interest, which are of sufficient scale or impact so as to require action from government and/or which have an ideological, international or political dimension. Using five and 20 year perspectives, we identified and analysed a full range of real and potential risks. We gave greatest weight to those with the ability to cause immediate and direct harm to the UK's territories, economy, people, key institutions and infrastructure prior to any mitigating action or response by the UK.

A.3 We focussed our risk assessment only on impact to the UK and our interests overseas and considered the risk of a significant increase or decrease in levels of ongoing problems: for example, a step-change in the penetration of organised crime in the UK.

A.4 The plausible worst case scenario of each risk was then scored in terms of its likelihood and its potential impact. In order to compare the likelihood of one risk against another and to make relative judgements, these plausible worst case scenarios were plotted on a matrix similar to that in the diagram.



A.5 A risk in the top right hand corner is of higher relative likelihood and higher relative impact. Generally speaking, risks assessed as both high likelihood and high impact would be considered high priorities for action. Similarly, those risks judged to be low impact and low likelihood would be considered lower priorities. However, careful judgements have to be made, as some risks – such as chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear attack – have low likelihood but are of sufficiently high potential impact as to warrant a priority response. In many cases, risks assessed to be of low current likelihood may have that status because of existing mitigation strategies which need to be maintained.

A.6 The outcomes of the NRSA enabled the National Security Council to determine the relative priority that should be given to addressing the risks we face. Generally speaking, risks assessed as both high likelihood and high impact would also be considered high priorities for action. Similarly, those risks judged to be low impact and low likelihood would be considered lower priorities. We will review the NSRA every two years.

Published by TSO (The Stationery Office) and available from:

Online
www.tsoshop.co.uk

Mail, Telephone Fax & E-Mail
TSO
PO Box 29, Norwich, NR3 1GN
Telephone orders/General enquiries 0870 600 5522
Order through the Parliamentary Hotline Lo-Call 0845 7 023474
Fax orders: 0870 600 5533
E-mail: customer.services@tso.co.uk
Textphone: 0870 240 3701

The Parliamentary Bookshop
12 Bridge Street, Parliament Square,
London SW1A 2JX
Telephone orders/ General enquiries: 020 7219 3890
Fax orders: 020 7219 3866
Email: bookshop@parliament.uk
Internet: http://**www**.bookshop.parliament.uk

TSO@Blackwell and other Accredited Agents

Customers can also order publications from
TSO Ireland
16 Arthur Street, Belfast BT1 4GD
028 9023 8451 Fax 028 9023 5401

ISBN 978-0-10-179532-6

9 780101 795326