The Defence White Paper

In December 2003 the Ministry of Defence published its Defence White Paper *Delivering Security in a Changing World.*

Following the Strategic Defence Review (SDR) in 1998 and the SDR New Chapter in July 2002, the White Paper sets out the MOD's analysis of the future security environment and the UK's strategic priorities in light of this assessment. It is generally regarded as a statement of policy against which decisions on the size and shape of the Armed Forces will be made.

This paper outlines the main elements of the Defence White Paper and examines some initial comments.

It should be read in conjunction with Library Research Paper RP04/72 *The Defence White Paper: Future Capabilities* which outlines the specific changes to force structures as a result of the conclusions of the White Paper.

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Summary of main points

The White Paper identifies international terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and failing states as the main threats to the UK's national security. In light of this assessment the UK's strategic priorities have been defined into eighteen military tasks across a wider geographical area than originally envisaged under the *Strategic Defence Review*. These cover standing commitments, including defence of the UK homeland and military assistance to the civil authorities, defence of the UK's Overseas Territories, and contingent operations overseas.

With regard to the latter, it is expected that multiple, concurrent, small to medium-scale peace enforcement or peacekeeping operations will become the overriding norm. The ability to undertake large-scale intervention operations, such as Iraq in 2003, will remain important.

The MOD's planning assumptions have therefore been revised. As a norm, and without causing overstretch, the Armed Forces must be capable of conducting three simultaneous and enduring operations of small to medium-scale. Given time to prepare, the UK should be capable of undertaking a demanding large-scale intervention operation while still maintaining a commitment to a small-scale peace support operation.

Within this context it is assumed that UK participation will generally be as part of a coalition and that the most demanding expeditionary operations involving intervention against state adversaries are unlikely to be conducted without the US. However, it is recognised that the UK must maintain the ability to lead or act as the framework nation for an EU-led or similar ad hoc coalition operation, where the US is not involved. The UN will remain the main forum through which major crises will be debated and suitable action authorised.

The White Paper advocates an "effects-based" approach to meeting all of these tasks. Eight strategic effects have been identified which the Armed Forces must have the capability to deliver. Therefore, flexible long term force planning rather than a fixed force approach is advocated. Network Enabled Capability (NEC) is at the centre of this transformation.

The emphasis in determining future force structures has, therefore, become "network-centric" rather than "platform-centric". Quantity as a measure of military capability is no longer considered effective. As such, reductions to the Royal Navy and RAF fleets are expected, while the Army will be reconfigured to include a new force of medium-weight capabilities in order to provide force balance and flexibility.

The White Paper also sets out the MOD's Defence Relations Strategy which was first acknowledged as a core defence activity under the SDR. The paper recognises that non-operational defence activities can promote regional stability and prevent or contain the emergence of conflict. However, it also recognises the contribution defence relations can make with regard to future operations, including securing regional access, promoting interoperability and gaining support from capable regional forces.

CONTENTS

I   Background

Since 1990 there have been three major reviews of the structure of the Armed Forces: *Options for Change* in 1990[1]; *Frontline First* in 1994[2] and the *Strategic Defence Review* (SDR)[3] in 1998. In July 2002 a new chapter to the SDR[4] was published to reflect changes in the international security environment after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001.

A.   Options for Change

The framework for the Armed Forces resulting from the *Options for Change* review was announced in July 1990. Unlike previous reviews, which had been conducted primarily in response to financial considerations, *Options for Change* was intended as a response to the changing strategic environment in the post-Cold War era.

Nonetheless, the opportunity to reap a "peace dividend" and make savings was also recognised. In his Statement to the House on 25 July 1990 the then Secretary of State for Defence, Tom King, stated:

> In the options for change studies, we have sought to devise a structure for our regular forces appropriate to the new security situation and meeting our essential peacetime operational needs [...]
>
> Our proposals will bring savings and a reduction in the share of GDP taken by defence.[5]

An analysis by the *International Security Information Service* suggested that financial and manpower pressures had also made the review unavoidable, regardless of the strategic arguments involved.[6]

In his book *Britain and Defence 1945-2000* Andrew Dorman suggested:

> The financial pressure upon the defence budget in the late 1980s had been steadily increasing to the extent that a review was already underway [...] the Service Chiefs, under the auspices of the CDS, had already agreed to a sweeping

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[1]   HC Deb 25 July 1990, c470-88 and *Statement on the Defence Estimates 1991: Britain's Defence for the 1990s,* Cm 1559, July 1991

[2]   Ministry of Defence, *Frontline First: The Defence Costs Study,* 1994

[3]   Ministry of Defence, *The Strategic Defence Review,* Cm 3999, July 1998

[4]   Ministry of Defence, *The Strategic Defence Review: A New Chapter,* Cm 5566, July 2002

[5]   HC Deb 25 July 1990, c470-1

[6]   "Options for change: the UK defence review, 1990-91", *International Security Information Service,* No.21, June 1991

across-the-board cut. What was left to consider was how they would manage these changes and the level of cutback required.[7]

The review implemented a major restructuring of the Armed Forces and was regarded as the beginning of a shift towards a capability-based rather than a threats-based policy in determining future force structure.

The main conclusions of the review outlined a reduction in manpower across all three Services of approximately 18% (56,000) by the mid-1990s.[8] The most significant cuts fell on the Army, which was reduced in strength by one third, from 160,000 to 120,000. The largest cuts were in the ground forces based in Germany which were reduced by over half.[9] Tactical air power based in Germany was significantly reduced with the closure of two out of four RAF bases and the withdrawal of six RAF squadrons. The review also advocated a reduction in the Royal Navy fleet from 48 destroyers and frigates to 40 and a 15% reduction in Nimrod Maritime Patrol Aircraft. The review reiterated the importance of retaining a strategic nuclear deterrent, although sub-strategic nuclear forces based in Germany were marginally reduced.

What *Options for Change* achieved was the same basic force composition and balance between the Services as that of the Cold War period, albeit on a smaller scale.

However, the cuts implemented by the *Options for Change* review were not widely welcomed. Many commentators questioned the rationale of such sweeping cuts before the exact nature of the strategic security environment post Cold-War had been identified and assessed.[10] Following the outbreak of the Gulf War in August 1990 many analysts also questioned whether the assumptions on which *Options for Change* was based were credible and whether the reductions envisaged under the review should be re-examined.

B.   Frontline First: The Defence Costs Study

In 1994 the then Conservative government undertook a further review of defence spending. The focus this time was on making savings with respect to frontline support functions within the Armed Forces.

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[7] Croft, Dorman, Rees and Uttley, *Britain and Defence 1945-2000,* 2001

[8] By the mid-1990s the manpower requirement of the British Army would be reduced from 160,000 to 120,000; the Royal Navy and Royal Marines from 63,000 to around 60,000 and the RAF from 89,000 to around 75,000. HC Deb 25 July 1990, c470-88

[9] The British Army of the Rhine was cut from three static divisions to two, with one based in the UK in peacetime

[10] Air Marshal Sir Timothy Garden and General Sir David Ramsbotham, "About face – the British Armed Forces which way to turn?", *RUSI Journal,* May 2004

As Andrew Dorman commented:

> The end of the Cold War had heralded considerable talk about a 'peace dividend' at a time of economic slump. The MOD therefore found itself the prime target of the Treasury, which sought to reduce government expenditure where it could. The response to this pressure was 'Front Line First: The Defence Costs Study' which sought to find the necessary savings without reductions to the front line.[11]

This premise of maintaining front line operational effectiveness was the key determinant in identifying potential savings. Three main conclusions came out of the *Front Line First* review. First that management and command structures across the whole of the MOD should be streamlined, secondly that many defence support functions could be outsourced to the private sector, mainly through the Private Finance Initiative (PFI),[12] and thirdly that, as future defence operations were likely to be carried out on a joint Service basis, the rationalisation of command, training and support structures could potentially increase operational effectiveness as well as offering savings. The establishment of a Defence Helicopter Flying School for all three Services by 1997 was one such recommendation. Proposals to rationalise primary and secondary care functions provided by the Defence Medical Services were also outlined, prompting considerable criticism.

Two former military commanders, Air Marshal Sir Timothy Garden[13] and General Sir David Ramsbotham commented in an article in May 2004:

> As more and more specialist tasks were moved to the civilian sector, so the availability of uniformed, trained specialists fell. For some specialisations this trend could prove to be catastrophic in the long term. For example the review resulted in the ability of the military medical services to support military operational deployments being virtually eliminated.[14]

As a result of these recommendations military and civilian personnel within the Armed Forces were to be reduced by 18,700 by the year 2000. The manpower requirement of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines was reduced by 1,900, the Army was cut by 2,200 and the RAF was cut by 7,500. An estimated 7,100 civilian posts were also lost.[15]

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[11] Croft, Dorman, Rees and Uttley, *Britain and Defence 1945-2000,* 2001

[12] The Private Finance Initiative was introduced in 1992 as one of a range of policies intended to increase the involvement of the private sector in the provision of public services. More information on PFI is available in Library Research Paper RP03/79 *The Private Finance Initiative,* 21 October 2003

[13] Air Marshal Sir Timothy Garden is now an adviser to the Liberal Democrats.

[14] Air Marshal Sir Timothy Garden and General Sir David Ramsbotham, "About face – the British Armed Forces which way to turn?", *RUSI Journal,* May 2004

[15] A further breakdown of manpower reductions is available on p.39 of *Front Line First: The Defence Costs Study,* 1994

Andrew Dorman argued:

> While these cuts did not look as though they would have an effect on the frontline the reality was somewhat different. They raised a number of questions about the ability of Britain's armed forces to sustain the number of different types of operations that British forces became involved in. Moreover, the ongoing shift away from a threat-based defence policy […] toward a capabilities-based policy requiring the dispatch of forces outside the European region required a significant logistical tail, the area most affected by this review.[16]

C.   Strategic Defence Review

One of the manifesto commitments of the Labour government when it entered office in 1997 was to conduct a foreign policy-led review to re-assess the UK's national interests and likely overseas commitments in the post-Cold War strategic environment to 2015, and then to establish how the UK's Armed Forces should be structured and deployed in order to meet those interests and commitments.

In an uncertain new security environment characterised by a diversity of multi-centric threats, two main themes emerged from the SDR: the need to move towards more rapidly deployable expeditionary forces capable of addressing any potential threat across the full military spectrum and in any location, and the need to co-ordinate the activities of the three Services more closely by pooling their expertise to achieve maximum operational effectiveness, while at the same time eliminating the duplication of resources. This tri-service 'Joint' approach was epitomised by the establishment of structures to support one, and if necessary two, Joint Rapid Reaction Forces (JRRFs) formed from across all three Services and due to be operational by 2001; the creation of Joint Force 2000 which combined Harrier aircraft from the RAF and Royal Navy enabling them to operate equally effectively from both land and sea; the establishment of a Joint Helicopter Command bringing all Service battlefield helicopters under a single command; and the amalgamation of the three single-Service logistical organisations with a view to creating a single tri-service logistics organisation in 2001. An improved expeditionary capability was intended to be achieved through the utilisation of the JRRF concept, through a commitment to acquire two new larger aircraft carriers in order to project power more effectively on a global scale, and through the acquisition of new strategic air and sealift capabilities.

The SDR also acknowledged the need to exploit the rapid advances in technology as a means to developing this expeditionary capability, making it the first defence review since the end of the Cold War to seriously consider the impact that technology could have on military strategy, capability and operational effectiveness.

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[16]   Croft, Dorman, Rees and Uttley, *Britain and Defence 1945-2000,* 2001

Other key recommendations of the SDR included an ongoing commitment to maintain a strategic nuclear deterrent, the need to revise and streamline the equipment procurement process through the 'Smart Procurement Initiative',[17] and the introduction of a wide-ranging personnel policy aimed at minimising the problems of overstretch and undermanning. Changes to the composition of the RAF and the Royal Navy were regarded as minimal, with only marginal cuts to both the Royal Navy and RAF fleets.[18] Personnel released as a result of these minor changes were intended to fill the shortfalls which existed in frontline manning at the time. Changes to the structure and composition of the Army were more significant. The restructuring and 're-roling' of the Army at brigade and regiment level were intended to transform the Service in line with the notion of rapidly deployable and flexible expeditionary forces.[19]

In addition to the changes in the Regular Army, the Territorial Army also underwent a radical restructuring as a result of the strategic premises of the SDR. Prior to the review the TA had been configured to fight a conventional large-scale war in Europe with units largely allocated as reinforcements to regular UK forces in Germany or in defence of the UK homeland. In order to complement the move in defence strategy toward an expeditionary capability the SDR envisaged a restructuring of the TA that would allow it to integrate more closely with Regular Forces and provide support to the Armed Forces at short notice and across the spectrum of military operations. To support this change, the SDR set out an intention to cut the number of TA volunteers from 56,000 to approximately 40,000, with reductions mainly concentrated in the yeomanry, infantry and supporting combat services.

More information on the specific recommendations of the SDR is available in Library Research Paper RP98/91 *The Strategic Defence Review White Paper,* 15 October 1998.

The conclusions of the SDR were largely welcomed. However, in contrast to the view of the then Secretary of State for Defence, George Robertson, that the SDR was "the most radical restructuring of our armed forces for a generation"[20] many analysts considered the SDR to be evolutionary rather than revolutionary.[21] The SDR was widely perceived to provide an insurance policy against future uncertainty by advocating a continuation of

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[17]   The key elements of the Smart Procurement Initiative are outlined in Library Research Paper RP03/78 *UK Defence Procurement Policy,* 20 October 2003

[18]   The Royal Navy destroyer/frigate fleet was reduced from 35 to 32 ships and the attack submarine fleet was reduced from 12 to 10. The Mine Counter Measures Vessel fleet was reduced from an original requirement for 25 ships to 22. The net effect of changes was a reduction in the Royal Navy's manpower requirement of 1,400. The RAF's fast jet aircraft were reduced from 177 to 154 and 17 Squadron based in Germany disbanded. The air defence force was cut from 100 to 87 aircraft with 29 Squadron disbanded. The RAF Regiment was also reduced from 14 to 13 squadrons.

[19]   The post-SDR structure of the Army is available online at: http://www.mod.uk/issues/sdr/post_sdr.htm

[20]   George Robertson writing in *The House Magazine,* 27 July 1998

[21]   "Robertson's blueprint is more sensible than truly radical", *The Times,* 8 July 1998 and "The Strategic Defence Review A good job", *RUSI Newsbrief,* August 1998.

planning for the full range of defence capabilities, the precise balance of which could be reviewed and readjusted as necessary. The SDR did prompt some criticism, however, with many commentators bemoaning the lack of detail regarding the foreign policy baseline from which the capability decisions outlined in the SDR were taken.

D.   SDR New Chapter

A New Chapter to the SDR,[22] which was published in July 2002, sought to re-examine the UK's defence posture in response to the challenges of asymmetric warfare[23] and international terrorism, issues highlighted by the events of 11 September 2001.

In a statement to the House of Commons on 17 October 2002, the Secretary of State for Defence, Geoff Hoon, commented:

> Across Government, we have been set new challenges by international terrorism. We have set in train work to re-examine our defence policy and plans in light of the terrorist threat demonstrated by 11 September…As a result, we published a new chapter to the strategic defence review on 18 July. It shows that the strategic defence review's emphasis on expeditionary operations working with allies was right, but demonstrates– crucially– how best to use our forces against a different sort of enemy: one that is determined, well hidden and vastly different from the conventional forces that we might have expected to face in the past.[24]

The New Chapter emphasised three key aims for addressing terrorism and asymmetric warfare more generally:

- Prevention/ Stabilisation – The use of defence diplomacy measures as a means to creating stability;
- Deterrence/ Coercion – Maintaining a wide and flexible range of military and non-military options in order to deter any potential terrorist activity;
- Military force – The use of military means to rapidly "detect and destroy" any potential terrorist threat.

These three aims established the beginning of a conceptual framework for an effects-based approach to warfare, what is more generally referred to as Effects Based Operations (EBO). Identifying the force structure and capabilities required to deliver these desired effects was one of the main themes of the New Chapter. The paper identified two areas where future efforts should be concentrated: developing a Network Enabled Capability to

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[22]   This is available online at: http://www.mod.uk/issues/sdr/newchapter.htm
[23]   Asymmetric warfare is the ability to inflict disproportionate harm in relation to the level of unconventional force which is used.
[24]   HC Deb 17 October 2002, c500

allow for rapid intelligence gathering, decision making and the use of requisite military force within 'real-time', and to improve homeland defence.

a) Network Enabled Capability (NEC)

Network Enabled Capability (NEC) is defined by the MOD as "the enhancement of capability through the effective linkage of platforms and people through a network".[25] The intention of NEC as a concept is to exploit information superiority in order to achieve military dominance and decisive effect. NEC has been identified as the central component in achieving Effects Based Operations.

However, limitations in defence resources have led the MOD to emphasise the development of capabilities that are "key enablers" of operational effectiveness and effectively link everything else together, rather than focusing on the wholesale transformation of forces which the US is seeking to achieve.

Three categories of key enabling capabilities were identified in the New Chapter: sensors (mainly C4ISR assets[26] such as unmanned aerial vehicles (Watchkeeper) and airborne stand-off surveillance (ASTOR and the Nimrod MR4A)); communications and networking assets (such as Bowman, Falcon and the development of tactical datalinks); and precision strike capabilities (such as the Tomahawk land-attack cruise missile and the Paveway Precision Guided Bomb).

b) Homeland Defence

The New Chapter made several recommendations for addressing the potential terrorist threat to the UK mainland through closer co-operation between the military and civil authorities in the event of a crisis and a greater role for the Reserve Forces. Among other things, the New Chapter supported the establishment of Regional Liaison Officers and a clearer role for the Headquarters of the Commander in Chief, Land Forces as the principal focus for the provision of military assistance to civil authorities.

In addition, fourteen Civil Contingency Reaction Forces (CCRFs) would be established from the Reserve Forces to provide assistance at short notice, in response to a request from the emergency services or local authorities. Each CCRF is comprised of 500 volunteers from across all three Services. A communications infrastructure to support the regional chain of command would also be provided by 2 (National Communications) Signals Brigade, an existing TA formation.[27]

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[25] Ministry of Defence, *Delivering Security in a Changing World: Defence White Paper,* Cm 6041-I, December 2003, p.3

[26] C4ISR refers to command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities.

[27] The CCRFs became fully operational in December 2003.

More detail on the provisions of the SDR New Chapter is available in Library Standard Notes SN/IA/1968 *The New Chapter of the Strategic Defence Review: An Update* and SN/SC/2047 *Civil Defence Contingencies IV: Armed Forces Reserves.*

II   The Defence White Paper

While many of the conclusions reached in the SDR and the SDR New Chapter remain valid, the 2003 White Paper sets out proposals for adapting the Armed Forces to meet future security challenges.

A.   Future Threat Assessment

In March 2003 the MOD's Joint Doctrine and Concepts Centre (JDCC) published its assessment of the future threats, risks and challenges that the UK and its Armed Forces may face within the next 30 years. The JDCC argued that the greatest risk to UK security would derive from the strategic environment changing faster than the UK could acquire and/or apply resources to meet that threat. In particular, it concluded that the following trends would have a direct bearing on the UK's defence and security policy up to 2030:

- Increased destructive power of the asymmetric threat from terrorists and/or hostile states to UK homeland and overseas interests;
- Greater requirement for UK Armed Forces to operate in complex terrain,
- Increasing turbulence worldwide with persistent low intensity threats;
- Likely new nuclear and WME [weapons of mass effect] powers;
- Proliferation of new technologies which could be used by future adversaries;
- Failing states becoming a greater threat to global security than resurgent ones;
- The US-declared 'global war on terrorism' and ongoing military transformation programme would significantly alter future US concepts, diplomacy and global military footprint;
- Increasing mutual antagonism between Islamic and Western cultures;
- Increasing calls for humanitarian intervention and assistance overseas;
- New environments for conflict: space and cyberspace.[28]

Many of these trends are evident in the future strategic priorities as set out in the MOD's White Paper.

In his Statement to the House on 11 December 2003, Mr Hoon commented:

> The shadow of the Cold War, which has shaped our armed forces for two generations, may have receded, and the threat of a large-scale conventional military attack on Europe may seem remote as a result. New threats are emerging, however. We must respond to today's strategic environment and prepare for tomorrow's. The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the threat

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[28]   Joint Doctrine and Concepts Centre, *Strategic Trends,* March 2003, p. I-9. *Strategic Trends* is available online at: http://www.mod.uk/jdcc/trends.htm

posed by international terrorism, coupled with the consequences of failed or failing states, present us with a real and immediate challenge.[29]

The White Paper provides more detail on these three issues:

International Terrorism

The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 demonstrate the strategic effect that a sophisticated and determined group of terrorists can achieve. As well as confronting the threat directly, we are working with our partners to tackle the conditions that promote terrorism and provide ready recruits and to deny terrorists funding and freedom of movement […]

Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction

The international community's response to such proliferation, particularly of nuclear weapons, must be firm. We do not believe the world community should accept the acquisition of nuclear weapons by further states. Preventing the potential passage of WMD knowledge or weapons from states to terrorist groups is also a key part of the counter-proliferation challenge.

Failing States

Weak and failing states are an increasing problem for the stability of several regions especially on NATO's borders and in Africa. Such states are characterised by political mismanagement, ethnic and religious tensions or economic collapse. They can contain areas of ungoverned territory which provide potential havens and sources of support for terrorist groups and criminal networks involved in drugs production or the plundering of natural resources. Neighbouring states may be drawn into competition for control or influence over these territories and their resources. Internal conflict, poverty, human rights abuse and famine can all create the conditions for mass population movements, adding to pressures on neighbouring countries or emerging as a surge in migration to Europe.[30]

However, the White Paper does not give priority only to these three issues. It also considers the future implications of worldwide social and environmental pressures and suggests that world population growth, religious and ethnic tensions and increased competition for limited natural resources could potentially result in either intra-state or inter-state conflict at some point in the future. The consequential threat to UK security would derive from the internationalisation of any regional conflict and the impact of these issues on the global economy, energy security and the UK's allies and partners.

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[29] HC Deb 11 December 2003, c1208
[30] Ministry of Defence, *Delivering Security in a Changing World,* Cm 6041, December 2003, p.4-5

The White Paper's response to these strategic priorities is two-fold:

Regional – In addition to the broader aim of fostering international peace and security, the Paper envisages the proactive engagement of the UK in shaping the international response to any event which impacts upon its security interests. However, the Paper acknowledges that the UK does not have the capability to respond militarily to every crisis. Therefore, national interest, proximity and responsibility will be key determinants in any response. European security will remain central to the UK's national interest while other regional priorities will continue to be those regions on Europe's periphery: the Near East, North Africa and the Gulf. Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia are also highlighted as areas that may require a significant level of involvement.

However, the Paper recognises the globalisation of threats such as terrorism and WMD proliferation, and the need to plan accordingly.

International – The White Paper reiterates the importance of working within the international community in order to address the UK's national security and economic interests. The UN will remain the main forum through which major crises will be debated and suitable action authorised. However, the Paper recognises the limitations of the UN and "the difficulties of translating broad consensus on goals into specific actions, particularly where proactive military intervention is concerned".[31] Therefore, the UK's ability to lead and organise coalitions of the willing that can rapidly implement UN-mandated action is expected to result in a major role for the UK in future UN operations.

In addition, the Paper also reiterates that:

> [the UK] must be prepared and plan to operate through a number of differing multinational fora to counter different problems. NATO and the EU are likely to be the organisations of choice through which [the UK] develop responses to international crises".[32]

The paper acknowledges that NATO will remain the cornerstone of the UK's collective defence and global crisis management, while the UK also remains committed to the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), as a means of complementing NATO, rather than competing against it:

> The UK is committed to an ESDP that complements NATO and to the development of an EU military capability that can fulfil humanitarian and rescue tasks, peacekeeping and crisis management operations (including peace making). Both NATO and the EU should help to develop member states' defence

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[31] Ministry of Defence, *Delivering Security in a Changing World: Defence White Paper,* Cm 6041-I, December 2003, p.6

[32] Ministry of Defence, *Delivering Security in a Changing World: Supporting Essays,* Cm 6041-II, December 2003, p.1

capabilities, with transparent and coherent approaches that are mutually reinforcing.[33]

However, the limitations of the consensual nature of decision making within NATO and the EU is also acknowledged and therefore, the utility of 'coalitions of the willing', for dealing with specific threats when appropriate, is emphasised.

B.   Force Planning, Structure and Capabilities

As a consequence of the expected nature of the future security environment and the UK's anticipated response to these strategic priorities, the White Paper makes a number of assumptions with regard to requisite force planning and capabilities:

- The Armed Forces face a broader range of tasks across a wider geographical area than originally envisaged under the SDR. In particular, proactive engagement in conflict prevention and short notice peace support and counter-terrorist operations is expected to increase.

- The UK will not be able to contribute militarily in every international crisis. Participation will generally be in coalitions with other countries.

- The UK's Armed Forces must be more prepared for asymmetric attacks by both state and non-state actors, including the use of WMD through a variety of means.

- The Armed Forces must be equipped and configured to fulfil the requirements of homeland defence and countering international terrorism.

Therefore, the Defence Mission and Military Tasks as outlined in the SDR[34] have been streamlined in the White Paper to comprise a single Defence Aim and 18 Military Tasks[35] against which force structures and capability requirements for the future are to be determined. The Defence Aim is defined as follows:

> To deliver security for the people of the United Kingdom and the Overseas Territories by defending them, including against terrorism, and to act as a force for good by strengthening international peace and security.[36]

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[33] ibid

[34] Ministry of Defence, *The Strategic Defence Review: Supporting Essays,* July 1998, Essay 6

[35] Ministry of Defence, *Delivering Security in a Changing World: Supporting Essays,* Cm 6041-II, December 2003, p.4-5

[36] Ministry of Defence, *Delivering Security in a Changing World: Defence White Paper,* Cm 6041-I, December 2003, p.4

The 18 Military Tasks are categorised under the following four general headings:

- Standing Strategic Commitments
- Standing Home Commitments
- Standing Overseas Commitments
- Contingent Operations Overseas

1. Standing Strategic Commitments

These tasks cover the strategic elements of UK defence policy, including the nuclear deterrent, intelligence gathering and the provision of specialised contracted services vital to the effectiveness of the Armed Forces.

The Government's nuclear weapons policy, as set out in the SDR, remains unchanged and the White Paper concludes that the continued proliferation of nuclear weapons makes the UK's strategic nuclear deterrent a necessity for the foreseeable future. The Government remains committed to strengthening arms control and counter-proliferation measures with respect to WMD. A decision on whether to replace the nuclear deterrent, currently provided by Trident, is expected to be taken during the next Parliament.

The Paper also reaffirms the Government's commitment to examining the feasibility of missile defence as a means of deterrence against any ballistic missile threat to the UK and to deployed forces in theatre.

2. Standing Home Commitments

These are longstanding tasks of the Armed Forces that focus on the protection of UK territorial sovereignty, including the integrity of UK waters and airspace, and the provision of security in support of other Government departments, more commonly referred to as Military Aid to the Civil Community (MACC). The White Paper confirms the MOD's commitment to the measures for homeland defence introduced in the New Chapter to the SDR (see section ID above).

3. Standing Overseas Commitments

The MOD has a long-standing obligation to provide for the external defence and security of the UK's 13 Overseas Territories and the Sovereign Base Areas (SBAs) in Cyprus, including the provision of support and assistance to the civil authorities of those territories.

Other key tasks set out under this commitment include providing defence capabilities to support key alliances and partnerships; promoting British interests abroad; supporting counter-drugs operations and encouraging arms control measures.[37] The MOD's Defence Relations Strategy is one of the main vehicles through which these objectives are achieved. The aims of the DRS are outlined in Section II D below.

4.   Contingent Operations Overseas

Contingent overseas commitments have been revised in the White Paper into seven core tasks:

Humanitarian assistance and disaster relief – At the request of the Department for International Development the Armed Forces may contribute to humanitarian and disaster relief operations either on a national basis or as part of a co-ordinated international effort.

The evacuation of British citizens from overseas – The Armed Forces may be used to evacuate UK-entitled personnel from countries where their lives may be at risk when the civil contingency plans in the country in question prove insufficient.

Peacekeeping – An appropriate contribution may be made, in concert with other nations, to international peacekeeping operations which are conducted with the consent of the disputing parties in order to achieve a peace settlement and oversee the implementation of the terms of any such agreement.

Peace enforcement – An appropriate contribution may be made, in concert with other nations, to international peace enforcement operations conducted in circumstances where there is either a peace agreement and/or mandate in place but the level of consent from all conflicting parties is uncertain.

Power projection – Rather than directly intervene the UK may, in concert with allies, wish to deploy stand-off military capabilities that are able to deliver significant force if necessary in order to deter or coerce an adversary.

Focused intervention – Rapid and localised use of force may be used to address a specific threat by intervening in the region of occurrence.

Deliberate intervention – The UK may wish to respond, along with other nations, to conflicts or crises, in order to support other allies and partners, to protect the UK's national interests, to maintain international security or uphold

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[37]   Ministry of Defence, *Delivering Security in a Changing World: Supporting Essays,* Cm 6041-II, December 2003, p.5

international law, by directly intervening with as much combat power as is necessary to defeat or destroy an adversary.[38]

These tasks are not mutually exclusive and there is every expectation that the Armed Forces would be required to move from one task to another during a given operation.

The planning assumptions for contingent operations overseas outlined in the SDR envisaged the Armed Forces being able to undertake either:

- A single medium-scale, long term peace support operation whilst providing for training and leave for all forces;

- A medium-scale, long term peace support operation plus a medium-scale intervention operation of limited duration;

- A one-off large-scale commitment.

The number of operations conducted by the UK since the SDR has been higher than anticipated. Supporting Essay 2 of the White Paper states:

> We have effectively been conducting continual concurrent operations, deploying further afield, to more places, more frequently and with a greater variety of missions than set out in the SDR planning assumptions […] a major lesson of the last five years is that the Department and the Armed Forces as a whole have to be structured and organised to support a fairly high level of operational activity at all time, not as a regular interruption to preparing for a large scale conflict.[39]

Multiple, concurrent small to medium-scale operations[40] that fall mainly within the defined military tasks of peace enforcement and peacekeeping, such as counter-terrorism and counter-proliferation operations and enduring peace support operations, are expected to become the overriding norm. However, the Paper also recognises the need to retain the capability for undertaking large-scale intervention operations, such as Operation *Telic* in Iraq, at longer notice in Europe, the Mediterranean and the Gulf region. Consequently, one of the main themes of the White Paper is the development of planning structures and capabilities designed for flexible expeditionary warfare rather than conventional territorial defence.

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[38] Ministry of Defence, *Delivering Security in a Changing World: Supporting Essays,* Cm 6041-II, p.5
[39] ibid, p.7
[40] The UK deployment to Macedonia in 2001 (initially involving approximately 2,000 troops) is described as a small scale operation, while the deployment to Afghanistan in 2001 (involving 4,200 personnel) is described as medium scale.

Therefore the planning assumptions under the White Paper have been revised as follows:

- As a norm, and without creating overstretch, the UK should be able to mount:

  - An enduring medium-scale peace support operation simultaneously with an enduring small-scale peace support operation and,
  - a one-off small-scale intervention operation.

- The UK should be able to reconfigure its forces rapidly to carry out:

  - an enduring medium-scale peace support operation and,
  - a small-scale peace support operation simultaneously with,
  - a limited duration medium-scale intervention operation

- Given time to prepare, the UK should be capable of undertaking:

  - a demanding one-off large-scale operation while still maintaining a commitment to,
  - a simple small-scale peace support operation.

- In addition, these assumptions take account of the need to meet standing commitments with permanently committed forces, including Quick Reaction Alert (QRA) Aircraft tasked with defending UK airspace.[41]

In line with these planning assumptions the Paper acknowledges that the most demanding expeditionary operations, involving intervention against state adversaries, are unlikely to be conducted without the US, either at the head of a coalition or within NATO. Therefore, whilst maintaining a broad spectrum of capabilities in order to conduct three concurrent operations (as outlined above) is regarded as essential, it is recognised that it will be unnecessary to generate large-scale capabilities across the same spectrum when operating alongside the US or other allies. Developing interoperability with US command and control structures and delivering capabilities that achieve greatest impact when operating alongside US forces are regarded as priorities. The implication of these planning assumptions, therefore, is that unilateral action by the UK in the most demanding expeditionary operations is unlikely.

In his Statement to the House Mr Hoon commented:

> Expeditionary operations on that scale [Operation Telic] can be conducted
> effectively only if United States forces are engaged. When the United Kingdom
> chooses to be involved, we would want to be in a position to influence their

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[41] Ministry of Defence, *Delivering Security in a Changing World: Supporting Essays,* Cm 6041-II, December 2003, p.7

political and military decision making. That will involve sharing the military risk, and will require an ability for our armed forces to play an effective role alongside those of the United States […]

More generally, the key to retaining interoperability with the United States, for our European allies as well as for the United Kingdom, is likely to rest in the successful operation of NATO's new Allied Command Transformation.[42]

However, the Paper does not make the presumption that the US would always be engaged. It reiterates the need for the Armed Forces to maintain the capability to lead and act as the framework nation for a European or similar *ad hoc* coalition operation of medium-scale, where the US is not involved.

5.   Force Structure and Capabilities

The SDR New Chapter established a conceptual framework for an effects-based approach to force structure and capabilities planning in response to the growing prevalence of asymmetric warfare. That approach is wholly adopted in the White Paper which identifies eight strategic effects that the UK's Armed Forces should be able to deliver with respect to the 18 military tasks and the revised planning assumptions, as outlined above. Those strategic effects are:

Prevent – to stop or limit the emergence and development of crises and conflict through fostering regional and national security […]

Stabilise – to set the secure and stable conditions required for political and economic action so as to bring a situation under control. Military involvement could include the deployment of forces to assist with the return of political control and to assist in reconstruction efforts […]

Contain – to actively limit or restrain the spread, duration or influence of an adversary or crisis […]

Deter – to dissuade an adversary from a course of action by diminishing the expected gains and/or raise the expected costs […]

Coerce – similar in nature to deterrence although coercion aims to use force, or the threat of force, to persuade an adversary to adopt a particular course of action […]

Disrupt – to disable an adversary's capability with the use of military action […]

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[42]   HC Deb 11 December 2003, c1208

> **Defeat** – to reduce the effectiveness of an adversary so that they are no longer able to conduct combat operations. Action should consequently bring about the cessation of hostilities […]

> **Destroy** – to damage an enemy state or non-state adversary so that they are no longer militarily viable.[43]

Achieving one, or a combination, of these desired strategic effects has become the underlying principle in determining future force structure and capability requirements. This new approach, which has been conceptualised as Effects Based Operations (EBO), advocates flexible long term force planning, rather than a fixed force approach, in recognition of the fact that the force structure and requisite military capabilities required to deliver a certain strategic effect may change over time as threats, technology and coalitions evolve. Consequently emphasis on the quantity of platforms and personnel as a measure of capability has altered.

According to the White Paper there are three premises which underpin the ability to achieve any, or all, of these desired effects: the rapid deployment and configuration of forces, the capacity for rapid decision making and the precise delivery of force. Enhancing key strategic enablers such as communications, logistics and intelligence, in line with the overall concept of a Network Enabled Capability, is regarded as central to developing these capabilities. Interoperability with US forces, and maintaining a force flexible enough and large enough to warrant political involvement in coalition decision making, is also a recurring theme.

The White Paper states:

> NEC is crucial to the rapid delivery of military effect […] When implemented [NEC] will allow us to prosecute the full range of contingent operations with greater awareness, confidence and control. It relies on the ability to collect, fuse and analyse relevant information in near real-time so as to allow rapid decision making and the rapid delivery of the most appropriate military force to achieve the desired effect […] The ability to respond quickly and decisively to achieve maximum effect should also act as a force multiplier, allowing the same military effect to be achieved with less.[44]

However, the Paper acknowledges that achieving a balance of capabilities to meet all eight strategic effects across the operational spectrum will be difficult, in particular with regard to C4ISR, strategic air and sea lift and logistics. The assumption is that conducting several concurrent small to medium-scale operations would place greater demands on these key assets than one or two substantial operations. Maintaining platforms and

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[43] Ministry of Defence, *Delivering Security in a Changing World: Supporting Essays,* Cm 6041-II, December 2003, p.6

[44] ibid, p.11

capabilities that do not have the flexibility to meet the demands of future operations, which are expected to be largely expeditionary in nature, is also regarded as untenable.

Across the generic capability elements, the White Paper makes the following assessment:

Maritime Assets – The emphasis in the maritime environment will increasingly be on delivering a land attack capability, an amphibious landing capability and securing access to the theatre of operations. The introduction into service of the future carrier (CVF) and the Joint Combat Aircraft (Joint Strike Fighter) is expected to be a key element in increasing the ability to project air power from the sea. CVF will have a greater reach and be sustainable in theatre for a longer period of time than the Navy's current carriers, while the multi-role JCA will improve strike and reconnaissance capability. Future amphibious capability will be provided by the amphibious assault ships HMS *Albion* and *Bulwark* which entered service in 2003, and supported by four Bay-class landing ships which are expected to enter service from late 2005 onwards.

The range of capability provided by the Navy's fleet of destroyers and frigates will continue, in particular with respect to their involvement in smaller scale operations. However, the reduction in conventional threats, the MOD's subsequent revision of its planning assumptions, the enhancements that are expected to derive from improved networked capability and the introduction of the Type 45 from 2007 onwards which will be crucial for enhancing the protection of joint and maritime forces and assisting force projection leads to the conclusion in the White Paper that fewer naval platforms will be required to deliver intended military effects.

Land Assets – Current land forces are a mixture of heavy and light capabilities. While heavy forces provide firepower, tactical mobility and protection to carry out ground warfare, considerable effort is required to deploy and support them on operations. In contrast light forces are able to deploy rapidly but lack much of the firepower and protection necessary to engage in operations against an adversary equipped with armour and mechanised forces. In order to increase the flexibility of the Armed Forces to respond to the kind of operations envisaged in the future, the White Paper concludes that a new complement of medium weight forces, combining all of these elements, is necessary.

It is envisaged that moves toward a more graduated and balanced structure of light, medium and heavy forces will over time lead to a reduced requirement for main battle tanks, other heavy armoured fighting vehicles and heavy artillery. Therefore, the White Paper outlines the intention to create a new light brigade and reduce the number of armoured brigades from three to two. 4 Armoured Brigade in Germany will be 're-roled' as a mechanised brigade, while 19 Mechanised Brigade will be 're-roled' as a light brigade.[45] The reallocation of key support elements such as logistics, medical and engineer support personnel from divisional to the brigade level will be undertaken to

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[45]   HC Deb 11 December 2003, c1210

reflect the demand of multiple concurrent operations. The integration of the Apache attack helicopter into an Army force structure optimised for medium and small scale operations will also be reviewed.

Air Assets – A priority is the projection of air power from both land and sea, which will offer capabilities across the range of air operations but with a clear emphasis on offensive effect. The Eurofighter Typhoon and Joint Strike Fighter are expected to offer greater flexibility in the future, thus reducing the need for single-role fast jet aircraft. Multi-role aircraft will also allow deployed force packages to be smaller. Therefore, a reduction in the number of combat aircraft would be possible.

The core of the UK's strategic airlift capability will remain focused upon the RAF's C-130 fleet and the A400M when it begins to replace C-130 aircraft from 2011. The option of retaining a small fleet of C-17 transport aircraft after the introduction of the A400M remains a possibility. Four C-17 are currently being leased by the MOD to provide a strategic airlift capability.

C4ISR Assets – Effective C4ISR assets are central to achieving a Network Enabled Capability. The aim for C4ISR, as stated in the White Paper, is "to be sufficiently proficient […] to operate at a tempo that will outpace and dominate potential adversaries, including when we face an asymmetric threat".[46] The Paper also emphasises the need to be able to operate alongside technologically advanced allies and in coalitions of the willing. Investment in these technologies is expected to be considerable.

Logistics – The increased frequency and duration of operations has highlighted the demand placed upon logistics support and has led military planners to regard it as a capability in its own right. Operation *Telic* in particular reinforced the importance of visibility of assets and the need to track equipment and stocks robustly both into and within theatre.[47] To support future expeditionary operations the focus for logistics support will increasingly be on the development of logistics as an enabling capability. To implement this approach the White Paper outlines the intention to minimise unnecessary logistic demand by improving the reliability and serviceability of equipment, replacing the physical provision of unnecessary stock with assurance of supply from industry, and improving assets and stock visibility and tracking. Work is currently in hand to take forward the recommendations of the End to End Review of Logistics which reported in September 2003.[48]

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[46] Ministry of Defence, *Delivering Security in a Changing World: Defence White Paper,* Cm 6041-I, December 2003, p.14

[47] The Ministry of Defence report *Operations in Iraq: Lessons for the future,* December 2003 examines this issue in greater detail. A copy of the report is available online at: http://www.mod.uk/linked_files/publications/iraq/opsiniraq.pdf

[48] A copy of the findings of this report is available in the Library (ref: DEP 03/1944).

A new chapter to the Defence White Paper entitled *Delivering Security in a Changing World: Future Capabilities* was published in July 2004. It sets out the intentions of the MOD with respect to future force structure and capabilities of each of the Services, within the framework of force planning set out above. Library Research Paper RP04/72 *The Defence White Paper: Future Capabilities* outlines these changes.

In order to deliver effective capability, the White Paper also underlines the need for continued investment in science and technology and defence research and development (R&D). Smart Acquisition, which was developed in response to the SDR, will continue to form the underlying principle for effective defence procurement, while the Defence Industrial Policy that was published in October 2002 sets out the framework for the MOD's future relationship with industry. Further information on both concepts is available in Library Standard Note SN/IA/2590 *UK Defence Industrial Policy,* 1 September 2003, and Library Research Paper 03/78 *UK Defence Procurement Policy,* 20 October 2003.

C.   Personnel Policy

The SDR, through its 'Policy for People', implemented a vast number of initiatives aimed at improving recruitment and retention within the Armed Forces and the welfare of Forces personnel. Key initiatives that have been implemented in the last five years include the development of an Armed Forces Overarching Personnel Strategy (AFOPS); the implementation of a Defence Training Review which was conducted in 2001; an appraisal of initial training in 2003; the extension of the Operational Welfare Package for personnel deployed overseas; the introduction of Financial Retention Incentives to help overcome shortages in specific trades such as the Defence Medical Services; and the establishment of the Defence Academy in 2002.[49]

The White Paper reaffirms the MOD's commitment to building upon these initiatives, particularly in the area of recruitment and retention and training, which are regarded as key enablers for effectively delivering the expeditionary capability which the Paper envisages.

- **Retention and Welfare** – The White Paper acknowledges that the increasing focus on concurrent small to medium-scale operations, often requiring short notice deployment, will have an impact on the amount of time personnel will be separated from their families. Therefore, the paper reiterates the need to maintain a balance between manning measures, financial compensation and family support.

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[49]   More information on the progress of personnel initiatives introduced under the SDR, recruitment and retention, the appraisal of initial training and the 2004 Armed Forces pay review is available in Library Standard Note SN/IA/2182 *Armed Forces Personnel Policy,* 11 May 2004

- **Training** – More frequent operations are expected to place a premium on training time. The focus of future training requirements will be on joint, combined and fully integrated training for operations that reflect all components of capability. Exercises at the operational level, such as *Saif Sareea* in 2001, will be given emphasis. Additionally, routine tactical exercises will build in a greater degree of tri-service training.

The Paper also outlines the commitment of the MOD to developing a new Service Personnel Plan in order to manage effectively the deployment of sufficient numbers of personnel with the right skills and training. A number of new initiatives are also planned including a new strategy for defence housing, tri-service disciplinary arrangements, new pension and compensation arrangements,[50] a modernised Joint Personnel Administration dealing with pay and other personnel issues which is due to be implemented across all three Services between 2005 and 2007, and rationalised delivery of individual training needs.[51]

In support of Service-leavers, the White Paper also reiterates its commitment towards the objectives of the cross-departmental Veterans Initiative which was launched in 2001, and the MOD's subsequent *Strategy for Veterans* which was published in March 2003. Both are aimed at identifying and addressing the needs of the veterans' community, including social exclusion, homelessness and the transition to civilian life. Detail on the objectives of the Veterans Initiative and the progress made to date is available in Library Standard Note SN/IA/3070 *Veterans Policy,* 4 June 2004.

Reserve Forces

The role of the Reserves has changed significantly over the last ten years as they have been restructured from a large, yet under-utilised force, to one that is frequently used to support expeditionary operations and more recently as part of the Civil Contingency Reaction Force (CCRF) involved in homeland defence.

The Reserve Forces are expected to play an integral part in the provision of the expeditionary capability outlined in the White Paper. The Paper states:

> This policy sees the Reserves providing an integrated, ready and capable component of Defence, capable of being mobilised for any type and scale of operation. We look to Reserves to provide:

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[50] The *Armed Forces (Pensions and Compensations) Bill* is currently going through Parliament. Information on the main provisions of the Bill is available in Library Research Paper RP04/05, 8 January 2004

[51] More detail is available in Supporting Essay 5.

- Forces (for both contingent and enduring operations) which cannot always be justified as full-time parts of the Regular establishment on grounds of cost or the need for specialised transferable skills;

- A further step in strategic coercion or deterrence through the act of mobilisation.[52]

In order to support a flexible expeditionary capability the Territorial Army (TA) is identified as the Reserve of first choice in support of land forces, with the Regular Reserve providing a further valuable resource when required. The TA is expected to form an integral part of the future structure of the Army and in the future can expect to be deployed alongside Regular forces as an integrated part of a larger deployment. At present most Reserve units are held at low states of readiness. In order to meet the demands of future operations, some units and individuals with specialist skills will be maintained at higher states of readiness than parts of the Regular Forces. This is intended to apply specifically to certain logistics and medical personnel and other specialists.

To reflect the growing importance of the Reserve Forces the White Paper acknowledges the need to examine the support and financial assistance given to both Reservists and their employers. It makes a number of recommendations:

- The financial assistance scheme providing for payment of the difference between Reservists' military pay and their civilian earnings should be simplified.[53]

- The legislation covering the re-instatement of Reservists back into their civilian jobs on demobilisation needs to be more widely understood and examined to ensure continuing effectiveness.

- The relationship between the MOD and employers, in particular with regard to the flow of information about mobilisation, needs to be improved. The employer support package, including the right to claim financial recompense, needs to be re-assessed.

D.   Defence Relations Strategy

The SDR acknowledged that the wide range of non-operational activities conducted in support of conflict prevention and peacetime diplomacy were core defence activities. In the last five years a number of measures have been implemented in line with this policy, including programmes for defence education and training and joint exercises. The

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[52] Ministry of Defence, *Delivering Security in a Changing World: Supporting Essays,* Cm 6041-II, December 2003, p.8

[53] A consultation document on the Financial Assistance Scheme was published in July 2004. This is available online at: http://www.mod.uk/consultations/reservists.htm

establishment of the cross-departmental Conflict Prevention Fund in 2001 has been regarded by many analysts as one of the most significant measures.[54]

This commitment toward Defence Diplomacy, as the SDR termed it, is reiterated in the White Paper. However, the Paper also goes a step further. While it recognises that defence relations can promote stability and prevent or contain the emergence and development of crisis and conflict, it also highlights the contribution that defence relations activities can make with regard to future operations, including securing regional access, promoting interoperability and gaining support from capable regional forces.

The Defence Relations Strategy, as it is now termed, has the following strategic aims:

- Sustaining the security of the UK and overseas territories, including efforts to defeat international terrorism and counter the proliferation of WMD;
- Strengthening international peace and security, in particular through conflict prevention and conflict resolution initiatives;
- Enabling military operations;
- Supporting wider British interests through strengthening international relationships.[55]

In order to achieve these overarching aims the Paper identifies seven priorities:

- **Confidence and Security Building Measures** within regions to enhance stability, reduce regional hostilities and promote transparency. The Provincial Reconstruction Teams deployed in Afghanistan are highlighted as one such example.[56]

- **Promoting Good Governance** throughout foreign governments and their armed forces in particular, by developing public and legal accountability, promoting human rights and accepted international norms of behaviour.

- **Building Local Operational Capacity** to ensure that allies, partners and appropriate regional players are able to contribute to local conflict prevention and counter-terrorist activities.

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[54] More information on the Conflict Prevention Fund is available online at: http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1007029393906

[55] Ministry of Defence, *Delivering Security in a changing world: supporting essays,* Cm 6041-II, December 2003, p.14

[56] Information on the PRTs deployed in Afghanistan is available in Library Standard Note SN/IA/2601 *International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan,* 6 July 2004

- **Improving Interoperability** with other forces, in particular NATO and other key allies, to enable effective joint operations to be conducted when necessary. Developing interoperability with NATO accession states is an overriding priority.

- **Bringing UK forces to a level of readiness** in order to sustain a high level of fully trained and prepared personnel to respond to any crisis. Good relationships with certain countries provide access for the Armed Forces to specialised training areas which enhances the ability of the UK to operate in a diverse range of environments.

- **Supporting UK Defence Exports** and promoting British scientific, economic, industrial and political interests among key partners.

However, the White Paper recognises that there are neither the resources nor the need to support all of these activities in every region throughout the world. Activities will, therefore, be determined on a regional basis and in concert with the Conflict Prevention Fund initiative.

III   Initial Comments

The conclusions reached in the White Paper were largely welcomed by most commentators, despite what many regarded as a lack of detail. However, concerns were raised over the potential cost of putting the Armed Forces on a more 'high tech' footing and the indication of potential cuts in manpower at a time when the Armed Forces are committed in a number of theatres of operation.

In response to Mr Hoon's statement in the House the Shadow Defence Spokesman, Nicholas Soames, commented:

> Despite the lack of detail, we agree with the fundamental thrust of the White Paper. It does, indeed, foretell considerable change for the conduct of the armed forces business across the board. The House must not forget that the strategic defence review—its predecessor—was never properly costed or funded, and the same must not be allowed to happen this time. For our part, we generally accept the Secretary of State's assessment of the strategic environment and the difficulties that flow from it. Indeed, it is clear that we have come to a decisive moment in history when a new and diverse constellation of threats have appeared that are not nearly as obvious as were their relatively certain predecessors. We assert that since the end of the cold war, the world has never been as dangerous and unpredictable, nor the threats so serious. An era of invulnerability is over and our adversary has changed […]

> Unlike the Secretary of State and what is said in the White Paper, we believe that measuring the capability of our armed forces by the number of units and platforms and the extent of manpower remains significant, because the same unit or platform obviously cannot be in two places at the same time. A combination of capabilities and numbers will thus continue to be critical in any assessment of the potential effectiveness of our armed forces. Infantry and armour on the ground can be augmented by technological wizardry but cannot be replaced by it […]

> Although Conservative Members recognise the demands for the new technologies and the need wholeheartedly to embrace them, we remain deeply concerned about the consequences that flow from the financial crisis in the Ministry of Defence at a time of severe overstretch. We look forward to the Secretary of State announcing his detailed intentions to the House and thus, we hope, removing the understandable anxieties of many of our loyal servicemen and women and their families.[57]

The Liberal Democrat Spokesman, Paul Keetch, said:

> Liberal Democrat Members welcome the strategic rebalancing that the Government have announced today. However, that investment must never come

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[57]   HC Deb 11 December 2003, c1211-1214

at the expense of the number of regular and reservist personnel. Yes, our forces need to be able to fight high-intensity wars, but they also need to have the troop numbers to keep peacekeeping operations going and to give support at home. The message today from the Government appears to be that they can manage both—that they can maintain that balance—and we sincerely hope that they are right. However, the evidence so far does not always suggest that that is the case.[58]

An assessment of the White Paper in *The Independent* by Professor Christopher Bellamy of Cranfield University suggested:

Yesterday's eagerly - for some, anxiously - awaited Defence White Paper, Delivering Security in a Changing World, reflected all the complex paradoxes of defence and security in the 21st century. In broad terms, its conclusions about that changing world, and the military's role in it, are undeniably correct, but the remarkably slim document is enigmatic about how the technology that is a "key driver for change" will be paid for. And, as a Defence White Paper, it is only a part of the overall security picture.

It is clear that the Government's defence policy is to be able to accompany US forces into wars anywhere on the planet in just enough strength to count for political influence and at a level of technological competence to be compatible with US forces. The UK is probably the only other global military player with any hope of doing this, assisted by the special relationship that the Prime Minister has done his best to sustain and develop.

A corollary of this is that, in the European context, the UK will be far and away the most potent military power, and that if the European Union, with its new Common European Security and Defence Policy, becomes engaged in a complex emergency, crisis or conflict, the UK will be unquestionably the European alpha male.[59]

Bronwen Maddox, Foreign Editor at *The Times* commented:

The biggest gamble taken in the White Paper is that this view of future wars is correct. On this view, the wars that will demand British engagement in the next couple of decades are likely to resemble those of the 1990s – Bosnia, Sierra Leone, Kosovo. Or they will resemble those of this century – Afghanistan and Iraq – and will be fought alongside the US. But they will not be like the Falklands, the Cold War or the Second World War.

This view is certainly plausible given the instability of the Middle East and Central Asia. But the question is whether such wars would really be as small as this document appears to imply […] Even if the White Paper is right in its vision

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[58] HC Deb 11 December 2003, c1216
[59] "Slimmed and sophisticated new Army will make UK the alpha male of Europe", *The Independent,* 12 December 2003

of the wars of the future, it may well have underestimated the need for peacekeeping troops.[60]

The Guardian also commented:

> The white paper strategy for lighter and more integrated forces was broadly welcomed by defence experts, although one pointed out that it contained no surprises.
>
> A ringing endorsement came from Rear Admiral Richard Cobbold, director of the Royal United Services Institute, a forum for defence professionals. He said: "What the government is trying to do is profoundly important. It is the essential way to go. It's a big bite whereas before they had just been nibbling at the problem. "It is looking at the armed capability as a whole, what we call networking. It makes everything quicker and more accurate." He said it was right to get rid of older ships and to reduce the number of Eurofighters.
>
> Ian Kemp, of Jane's Defence Weekly, said there were "absolutely no surprises in the white paper and the defence industry has been well aware of the changes". He said: "The basic concept is to reduce the heavy forces in favour of more rapid response. This is going to get rid of a generation of vehicles, like the Saxon, which should have been put out of service years ago".[61]

Two issues have dominated the debate since the publication of the White Paper: the extent to which future doctrine, force structure and capabilities rely on technology and the concept of a Network Enabled Capability in order to achieve strategic military effect; and the financial implications of this focus.

In its July 2004 report on the Defence White Paper the Defence Select Committee concluded:

> We believe that focusing on network-enabled capability risks emphasising technology at the expense of a thorough consideration of the utility and application of military force and its judicious and appropriate use in effects-based operations […]
>
> We believe that the MOD's discussion of the evolution of warfare has not always distinguished sufficiently clearly between the concepts of network-enabled capability (NEC) and effects-based operations (EBO). NEC may contribute to the delivery of military effect in support of EBO, but it is not a prerequisite for it, or indeed, necessarily the main contributor towards an effects-based operational outcome […]

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[60] "Britain's future wars may be small but they will certainly not be cheap", *The Times,* 12 December 2003
[61] "Exports hail the changes to future conflict", *The Guardian,* 12 December 2003

> We are not convinced that mass "effect" alone will be enough in meeting the challenges faced by the UK, since in many situations we will still require the capacity for mass "presence" as well […] We fully support the idea of devoting further resources to enabling assets and achieving more deployable forces. We do not however believe this should be done at the expense of reasonable scale.[62]

Michael Codner, Director of Military Sciences at the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), has argued that the UK's approach to NEC and the lack of a specific timetable for its implementation could also affect the UK's ability to operate with US forces, a concept strongly advocated in the White Paper. In an article in *RUSI Defence Systems* he stated:

> It has been, one feels, accepted that NEC differs from the US concept of Network Centric Warfare (NCW) in that the UK approach is of necessity evolutionary and less ambitious. It will, in the first instance, enable and enhance the existing doctrinal approach, whereas the US counterpart seeks to embark on a new doctrine driven by technological opportunity provided by networking. The problem for the UK is that there will be increased doctrinal divergence as the US moves ahead more rapidly with networking […] interoperability will be prejudiced because there may be insufficient connectivity […] what is most evidently missing […] is a timescale for its adoption across the various environments and at the various levels of command. We know when various systems are expected to be in service but not when the full benefits of networking will be available at the various levels.

Initial reaction on the financial impact of the White Paper was summed up by an article in the *Financial Times*:

> The new threats facing armed forces around the world, of global terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, require a serious rethink of military strategy. So does the need to provide muscular peacekeeping operations in many areas of localised conflict, often far from home. In theory, that is easy enough. Rapid reaction of highly mobile forces, and investment in far more computer networks and intelligence systems, are the name of the game. But matching resources to the new threats is the biggest challenge.
>
> That is the dilemma at the heart of the new defence white paper […] Old reliance on heavy armour is on the way out. Tanks, old ships and aircraft will be scrapped. Less armour and more mobility is required. Intelligent networks to link fewer, more sophisticated military platforms are supposed to enable the new system to operate. But to think that can be done within a defence budget that is frozen in real terms is fanciful […]
>
> Even on present plans, the likelihood is that UK defence spending will face a new crunch around 2007, when substantial new supplies such as the Eurofighters and

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[62] Defence Select Committee, *Defence White Paper 2003,* HC465-I, Session 2003-04, p59-60

new missiles are to be delivered. Yet the political will to increase defence spending is missing. There must be more emphasis on joint procurement, and pooling of resources between European allies in NATO. And the military planners will have to choose more clearly between their priorities.[63]

In her article Bronwen Maddox commented:

The White Paper is fuzzy too, in its claims about the white heat of technology […] there is a tendency, as in every White Paper, to imply that newer technology will be cheaper. The most obvious weakness of the White Paper is that the bill has not yet come in – and it is likely to be high.[64]

Michael Codner argued:

There was little in the 2003 White Paper that was new. It was, rather, a summary of progress in a number of initiatives and, for want of a better word, new conceptualisations such as Effects Based Operations (EBO) and Network Enabled Capability (NEC). It was published at a time when there was widespread awareness that there was not enough money in the Defence Budget to fund defence activities and the equipment plan and that the imbalance was too large to be redressed by modest increases in defence spending and greater efficiencies.

Affordability of NEC is another issue. It is not that the communications and information technology is particularly expensive in the over all scheme of things, but that major platform costs dominate the Equipment Plan in the next decade leaving little room for this additional provision. Ironically, effective NEC would allow for better use of weapon systems and would therefore reduce the number of platforms required.[65]

The First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Alan West, is reported to have acknowledged that the future warship building programme would be unsustainable in light of current budget constraints.[66]

Following the Budget statement in March 2004 an article in *The Guardian* pointed out that:

Even if they win a real-terms increase, the armed forces are expected to have to cut back on their ambitious projects, with destroyers and submarines, as well as the Eurofighter and Nimrod maritime patrol aircraft, the likely targets.[67]

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[63] "Wanting it all – new military thinking means more cash or fewer options", *The Financial Times,* 12 December 2003

[64] "Britain's future wars may be small but they will certainly not be cheap", *The Times,* 12 December 2003

[65] "UK defence directions", *RUSI Defence Systems,* Summer 2004

[66] "Navy chief accepts cuts to fleet and new ships", *The Financial Times,* 16 January 2004

[67] "More money promised but real battle is still to come", *The Guardian,* 18 March 2004

Ed Crooks, Economics Editor of the *Financial Times*, suggested:

> The commitments to increase spending on defence, law and order and transport in real terms could still mean that spending on all of those areas falls as a share of gross domestic product. As many of the public sector's costs, such as pay, tend to rise in line with GDP, a "real terms" rise in spending can still mean pressure on resources.[68]

Peter Robinson of the Institute for Public Policy Research is quoted in the article:

> To say that spending rises in real terms is not in itself very meaningful: it could mean just a tenth of a percentage point ahead of inflation… a real terms rise in spending could still cause real problems for the armed forces, for example.[69]

In the 2004 Comprehensive Spending Review the Chancellor of the Exchequer made the following commitment with respect to defence spending:

> In the last spending review the Ministry of Defence and our armed forces—upon which the defence of our country depends and to which we owe, particularly in this recent period, a debt of gratitude—were awarded the largest spending increase for 20 years. In this spending review I have matched that increase. Indeed in this spending review the increase is higher.
>
> To enable the Ministry of Defence to modernise for the long term, and to increase its efficiency and make the changes that are now necessary to continue to adapt strategically and technologically to the threats posed by international terrorism, the proliferation of weapons and the rapidly changing global environment, I propose to increase the defence modernisation fund so that in the period to 2008 it will be worth £1 billion.
>
> The Secretary of State for Defence will set out the detailed allocations of his full budget for our armed forces. It will rise from £29.7 billion this year to £33.4 billion by 2007–08—£3.7 billion a year higher than now, an annual average real-terms increase of 1.4 per cent. for defence. In addition, I will continue to meet the additional costs of military operations in full from the reserve, and to meet the costs of Iraq and Afghanistan, we have provided, to date, an additional £4.4 billion. To meet other pressures that may arise, aside from operations, in the future, we will provide the Ministry of Defence in 2007–08 with guaranteed access of up to £300 million. Taken together, these rises provide for a faster rate of real-terms growth in this spending round for defence than in the last and ensure the longest sustained real-terms increase in spending for two decades.[70]

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[68] "Don't be fooled by lollipops: the outlook is tight", *The Financial Times,* 18 March 2004
[69] *ibid*
[70] HC Deb 12 July 2004, c1132

Following comments made after the CSR, an article in Aerospace International argued:

> The Chancellor, Gordon Brown, has pledged an increase of the defence budget by £3.7bn by 2007-8, an increase of 1.4% a year. A sum of £1bn will be available for developing new military technologies and the costs of the Iraq war will be met from the Treasury's special reserve […] In return, the MoD is expected to find £2.8bn in efficiency savings, which for the RAF, could translate to a reduction in personnel, aircraft numbers, and the closure of some bases.[71]

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[71] "UK MOD boosted by 1.4% rise but has to save £2.8bn", *Aerospace International,* 3 August 2004