



HOUSE OF LORDS

Library Note

Debate on 4th February: The National Security Strategy

This Library Note aims to provide background reading for the debate to be held on Thursday 4th February:

“To call attention to the United Kingdom’s National Security Strategy”

This Note outlines the UK’s National Security Strategy, which was first published in March 2008 and updated in June 2009. It also gives details of the implementation of various new bodies and processes that have been established within the framework of the National Security Strategy, and considers the Strategy’s implications for the intelligence services and the military. Finally it outlines alternative national security strategies recently proposed by the Institute for Public Policy Research and the Conservative Party.

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Table of Contents

1. National Security Strategy 2008.....	1
2. National Security Strategy 2009.....	5
3. Implementation.....	7
3.1 National Security Forum	7
3.2 Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy	8
3.3 National Risk Register	9
3.4 Strategic Horizons Unit.....	10
3.5 Delays.....	10
4. Implications	11
4.1 Intelligence services	11
4.2 Military	12
5. Alternative perspectives	13
5.1 IPPR Commission on National Security in the 21st Century	13
5.2 Conservative Party Policy Green Paper on National Security	14

1. National Security Strategy 2008

In 2007, the Ministerial Committee on National Security, International Relations and Development (also referred to as NSID or the National Security Committee), a cabinet committee consisting of the heads of the security services, police and armed forces, and relevant cabinet ministers, was established. Reportedly, one of its first recommendations was that a national security strategy should be published.¹ This marked a departure from the way that national security policy had previously been treated in this country:

The concept and promulgation of a specifically titled ‘national security strategy’ has been very much symbolised by US practice following its post-WWII National Security Act. By contrast, recent UK practice, in a more fragmented fashion, was to have a ‘foreign policy’, a ‘defence policy’ and since 2003 a specific ‘counter-terrorism’ strategy, known as ‘Contest’, and an updated civil emergencies framework set out in the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.²

In March 2008, the government published *The National Security Strategy of the United Kingdom—Security in an Interdependent World*, the UK’s first ever single, overarching national security strategy, bringing together all these separate strands.³ (This document will henceforth be referred to in this Note as NSS 2008, to distinguish it from a later version of the National Security Strategy published in 2009.) The House of Commons Defence Committee heralded it as “one of the Government’s most important initiatives during this Parliament”.⁴

The introduction to NSS 2008 explains that a changing understanding of the nature of national security, and the threats to it, provided the rationale for producing a single national security strategy:

The scope and approach of this strategy reflects the way our understanding of national security has changed. In the past, the state was the traditional focus of foreign, defence and security policies, and national security was understood as dealing with the protection of the state and its vital interests from attacks by other states. Over recent decades, our view of national security has broadened to include threats to individual citizens and to our way of life, as well as to the integrity and interests of the state. That is why this strategy deals with transnational crime, pandemics and flooding—not part of the traditional idea of national security, but clearly challenges that can affect large numbers of our citizens, and which demand some of the same responses as more traditional security threats, including terrorism. The broad scope of this strategy also reflects our commitment to focus on the underlying drivers of security and insecurity, rather than just immediate threats and risks.

This is the first time the Government has published a single, overarching strategy bringing together the objectives and plans of all departments, agencies and forces involved in protecting our national security. It is a significant step, and the

¹ Intelligence and Security Committee, [Annual Report 2007–2008](#) (March 2009), Cm 7542, p 33.

² Frank Gregory, [The UK’s first National Security Strategy: A critical and selective evaluation](#) Real Instituto Elcano, ARI 74/2008 (July 2008).

³ Cabinet Office, [The National Security Strategy of the United Kingdom—Security in an Interdependent World](#) (March 2009), Cm 7291.

⁴ House of Commons Defence Committee, [National Security and Resilience](#) (December 2009), HC 149 of 2009–10, p 3.

latest in a series of reforms bringing greater focus and integration to our approach.⁵

The first part of NSS 2008 (chapters two and three) set out the guiding principles of the government's approach to national security, and its assessment of the major security challenges and drivers of insecurity:

Guiding principles

- Our approach to national security is clearly grounded in a set of core values
- We will be hard-headed about the risks, our aims, and our capabilities
- Whenever possible, we will tackle security challenges early
- Overseas, we will favour a multilateral approach
- At home, we will favour a partnership approach
- Inside government, we will develop a more integrated approach
- We will retain strong, balanced and flexible capabilities
- We will continue to invest, learn and improve to strengthen our security

Security challenges

- Terrorism
- Nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction
- Trans-national organised crime
- Global instability and conflict, and failed and fragile states
- Civil emergencies (eg infectious diseases, extreme weather, and man-made emergencies)
- State-led threats to the United Kingdom

Drivers of insecurity

- Challenges to the rules-based international system
- Climate change
- Competition for energy
- Poverty, inequality, and poor governance
- Global trends
 - Economic
 - Technological
 - Demographic
- The interdependence of threats, risks and drivers.⁶

The second part of NSS 2008 (chapters four and five) set out the government's responses to these security challenges and drivers of insecurity, and plans for how to work more effectively across government to tackle them. The Cabinet Office summarised this section as follows:

We need to harness globalisation to meet the challenges it generates. We need broader alliances and a reformed international architecture to tackle common challenges. The strategy sets out our intention to:

- reform and strengthen NATO, EU, and the UN, for example working to make the UN Security Council more representative to give greater legitimacy to

⁵ NSS 2008, pp 3–4.

⁶ This author's summary, using section headings from NSS 2008, pp 6–24.

decisive international action, including looking at interim solutions if necessary;

- offer a “new bargain” to non-nuclear powers, inviting interested countries to a London conference this year to discuss a new system to help non-nuclear states safely acquire the new sources of energy they need, including through a global enrichment bond;
- build bilateral and multilateral cooperation on terrorism, for example with a new agreement signed with the UAE on freezing terrorist assets.

As well as recognising that the challenges are increasingly global and demand global solutions, the Strategy recognises that the roots of problems are often local, as are the effects, and sets out:

- a new Civil Protection network, replacing the old idea of civil defence, building and strengthening local capacity to respond to a range of circumstances from floods to terrorism;
- a new National Risk Register, publishing information previously held privately within Government, so the public can see at first hand the risks we face, and plan accordingly;
- an update on the Prevent work to help local communities resist violent extremism, to be published shortly.

The Strategy sets out how we will build a more hard-headed, long-term, integrated approach:

- It reinforces the cross-government counter-terrorist effort, including expanding the inter-departmental Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre, and work to strengthen protection at our borders and for crowded places.
- It confirms the shift in Foreign Office focus from Europe to key regions, for example the Middle East, with Embassies which used to do mainly consular work now doing political engagement and security support, for example in Saudi Arabia and Bangladesh.
- It reinforces the long-term focus on underlying drivers of insecurity: tackling the violent extremism which drives terrorism; conflict mediation; post-conflict stabilisation; and the effects on security of the long-term challenges of climate change and global poverty.
- It recognises that Government can't meet all these new challenges by itself, and commits to stronger partnerships with local authorities and communities and announces a new National Security Forum composed of business, academics, community organisations and military and security experts to advise Government.
- It commits to greater transparency and accountability in this increasingly important and visible area of policy, with an enhanced scrutiny and public role

for the Intelligence and Security Committee, including the first public hearings.⁷

In response to a parliamentary question about what additional resources were being made available to support each new initiative in the National Security Strategy, the Prime Minister said:

The comprehensive spending review, published on 9th October last year [2007], set out the Government's spending plans for national security. These plans included details of increased resources covered in the National Security Strategy, including continued rising real-terms investment in the armed forces; increased resources for diplomatic engagement in key areas; more spending on conflict prevention and stabilisation; and more spending on security, intelligence and counter-terrorism, where the budget has doubled since 2001 and will grow to £3.5 billion by 2011. The National Security Strategy sets out the framework for targeting those resources.⁸

The Intelligence and Security Committee "questioned whether the strategy will achieve any benefits in real terms, or whether it is simply a paper exercise".⁹ In his evidence to the Committee on this point, the Foreign Secretary said:

I see a number of benefits. First, it does join up the different aspects of national security or the way in which are tackling national insecurity... secondly, I think that it helps us check that we have the right degree of focus and drive in the key areas. Thirdly... part of the purpose... is to take the discussion out into the country so that there is a wider... understanding of some of the threats that we face... I think in those ways that the security strategy can help, but it would be wrong to say it's a massive change. It's drawn together some existing work... in that sense it is useful.¹⁰

Commentators in both the press and academia criticised NSS 2008 for offering a descriptive analysis of threats and risks, rather than a clear strategy for tackling them, and for failing to explain the relative priority assigned to the threats listed. A leading article in the *Times* summed up many of these criticisms:

Welcome as this recognition of the threats is, however, yesterday's long heralded announcement seems something of a damp squib. There is precious little "strategy" in the national security strategy, and no indication of how priorities will be decided or what money will be available to implement the new coordination. The statement is more of an assessment of what the threats are than an overview of how they will be tackled. It is also weakened, rather than enhanced, by tacking on long-term issues amenable only to "soft" power: climate change, poverty and mass migration. All may one day pose a threat to this country, and conflict over water or migration is no less dangerous than the risk of nuclear proliferation. But these threats cannot be assessed with the focus needed to fight crime and terrorism. Without a sense of priorities or clearer allocation of resources, the new strategy raises fears but gives little idea how these should be answered.¹¹

⁷ Cabinet Office, [Government publishes first National Security Strategy](#) (19th March 2008), press release, CAB/033/08.

⁸ HC *Hansard*, 31st March 2008, col 553W.

⁹ Intelligence and Security Committee, [Annual Report 2007–2008](#) (March 2009), Cm 7542, p 34.

¹⁰ *ibid*, p 34.

¹¹ [Security blanket: More of a framework to cope with uncertainty than a strategy](#) *Times*, 20th March 2008.

2. National Security Strategy 2009

The National Security Strategy of the United Kingdom: Update 2009—Security for the Next Generation was published on 25th June 2009.¹² (This document will henceforth be referred to as NSS 2009). Introducing this annual update to the National Security Strategy, the Prime Minister said:

The 2009 update fulfils the Government's commitment to report on activity and progress over the past year, from counter-terrorism, to military and civilian support to Afghanistan, to peacekeeping and conflict resolution in a range of countries, and to combating H1N1 influenza.

The report also updates our assessment of the security challenges facing the United Kingdom, including a detailed analysis of the implications of the current global economic downturn, which has shown—and this view is shared by our key partners and by external experts—that so far the nature of the security landscape has not altered fundamentally, although we will need to remain vigilant, especially against the dangers of instability in already poor regions, or any trend towards protectionism. The events of the past year have also reinforced the importance of a strongly internationalist approach, and the strategy update sets out detailed and ambitious plans for strengthening the international response to the long-term global security risks arising from climate change, poverty, and energy shortages, building on the concerted global action to stabilise the world economy over the past year.¹³

NSS 2009 adopts an expanded strategic framework in comparison with its predecessor by specifically outlining the government's planning assumptions (chapter four) and by differentiating between threat drivers (why there are challenges to national security), threat actors (who or what is threatening UK interests and citizens) and threat domains (how threats arise) (chapters five, six and seven). These are identified as follows:

Threat drivers

- Global trends—the economy, technology, demography and migration
- Climate change
- Competition for energy
- Poverty, inequality and poor governance
- Ideologies and beliefs

Threat actors

- State-led threats to the UK
- Global instability and conflict, and failed and fragile states
- Terrorism
- Trans-national organised crime
- Civil emergencies, including pandemics

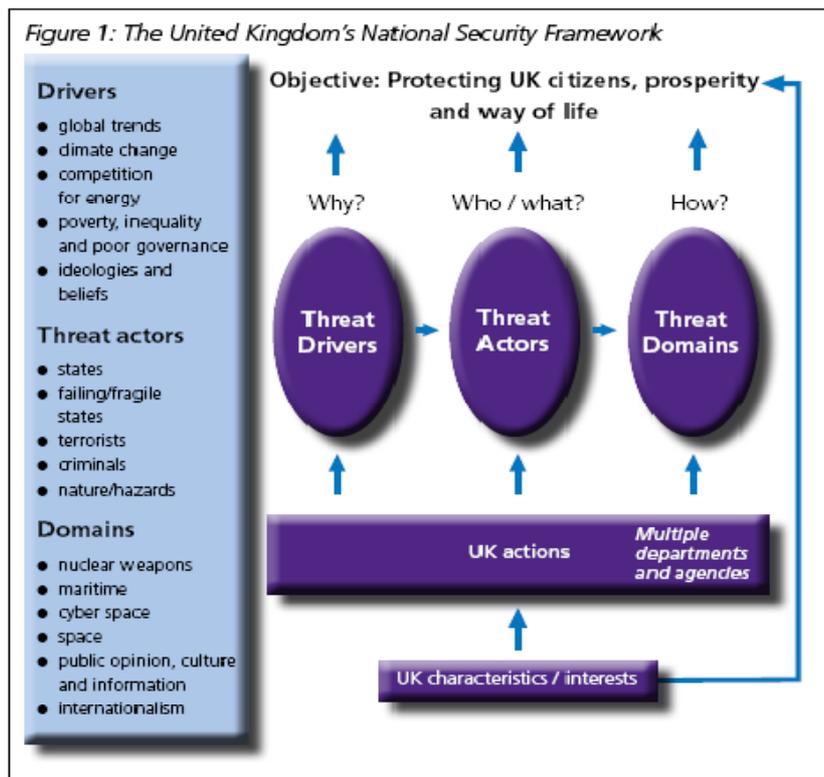
¹² Cabinet Office, [The National Security Strategy of the United Kingdom: Update 2009—Security for the Next Generation](#) (June 2009), Cm 7590.

¹³ HC *Hansard*, 25th June 2009, cols 70–1WS.

Threat domains

- Nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction
- Maritime security
- Cyber security
- Space
- Public opinion, culture and information
- Internationalism—global responses to global problems.¹⁴

The interaction between these different elements of the strategic framework is illustrated in Figure 1.¹⁵



NSS 2009 sets out what the government had done in the past year and what its future priorities are with regard to each threat driver, actor and domain identified, although it does not assign relative priorities to the various categories. The Cabinet Office summarised the government's achievements over the preceding year as follows:

There has been significant progress against the commitments made last year in the original National Security Strategy.

- The UK continues to play a leading role in tackling conflict, conflict prevention and stabilisation. Afghanistan and Pakistan remain critical to our security and our strategy for the region published in April sets out how we are improving security, and also in parallel—through joint military-civil working—helping to improve governance and development.

¹⁴ This author's summary, using section headings from NSS 2009, pp 49–106.

¹⁵ NSS 2009, p 31.

- We have increased our preparedness and resilience for managing a flu pandemic which has been put into action in our response to the current swine flu outbreak. This is just one part of our wider work to prepare for civil emergencies which included the publication last year of the UK's first ever National Risk Register.
- The Government has strengthened work to tackle terrorism and in March we published the United Kingdom's updated strategy for countering international terrorism—CONTEST—which continues to lead the world in ensuring an effective and comprehensive response to terrorism.
- We have led action at home, within the EU and with international partners to tackle climate change and ensure agreement of an ambitious, effective and equitable global deal on climate change in Copenhagen in December.¹⁶

Gordon Brown highlighted the inclusion of strategic thinking on different threat domains as an innovation of the updated National Security Strategy:

The report covers the different 'domains' in which security challenges must be addressed, and identifies cyber space as one increasingly important domain in which individual, commercial and state security can be threatened, whether by other states, or terrorist or criminal networks. We are therefore publishing, alongside the overall strategy update, the UK's first national cyber security strategy, outlining improvements to Government structures, additional funding, measures to enhance our ability to detect attack, better risk assessments, programmes to develop cyber security industrial capabilities and workforce skills, and support and advice for individual citizens.¹⁷

The publication of NSS 2009 attracted little comment. Both press coverage and parliamentary discussion focused instead on the launch of the accompanying *Cyber Security Strategy of the United Kingdom—Safety, Security and Resilience in Cyber Space*, in particular the creation of a dedicated Office of Cyber Security and a new Cyber Security Operations Centre at GCHQ.¹⁸

3. Implementation

3.1 National Security Forum

NSS 2008 stated that: "We will establish a national security forum, including people from central and local government, politics, academia, the private and third sectors, and other bodies, as well as people with relevant security experience" to "seek to encourage the participation of a much wider circle of expertise in addressing national security issues".¹⁹

¹⁶ Cabinet Office, [National Security Strategy—2009 update published](#) (25th June 2009), press release, CAB046–09.

¹⁷ HC *Hansard*, 25th June 2009, cols 70–1WS.

¹⁸ Cabinet Office, [Cyber Security Strategy of the United Kingdom—Safety, Security and Resilience in Cyber Space](#) (June 2009), Cm 7642. See HC *Hansard*, 25th June 2009, cols 939–47 and HL *Hansard*, 25th June 2009, cols 1706–16 for parliamentary discussion of the Cyber Security Strategy.

¹⁹ NSS 2008, p 59.

On 19th March 2009, Gordon Brown announced that:

So that the Forum can begin work immediately, the Government is initially establishing an interim National Security Forum. This interim advisory body will have a life of no more than twenty-four months from its first meeting and will be supported by staff drawn from the National Security Secretariat in the Cabinet Office. The permanent Forum will be recruited by open competition in 2010.²⁰

The Prime Minister went on to explain in his statement that NSID would commission advice on particular security issues from the National Security Forum. The Forum was due to hold its first meeting later that day to discuss the national security implications of both the economic downturn and the competition for energy supply.

Margaret Gilmore, Senior Research Fellow at the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), viewed the creation of the National Security Forum as a positive development:

The line up of its members is formidable—its remit unique in Government. The National Security Forum could be dismissed by cynics as another initiative for politicians who want to be seen to be doing something—if it were not for the calibre of the new committee. A group which includes a Nobel prize-winner, a leading captain of industry, a retired intelligence chief, and a former Ambassador to Washington will surely not allow itself to be used as a political pawn in the run-up to a general election. It is a forum that will insist on being heard.²¹

The Intelligence and Security Committee has reserved judgement on the worth of establishing the Forum, stating: “How the role of the National Security Forum will develop, and what value it will add, remain to be seen”.²²

The Forum’s work constitutes advice to Ministers and as such remains confidential.²³ However, NSS 2009 reported that the Forum “has met twice since its establishment and its advice has contributed directly to the development of this update to the National Security Strategy”.²⁴

3.2 Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy

NSS 2008 also announced that one of the government’s future priorities for strengthening national security structures would be “consulting on a joint Parliamentary National Security Committee to help monitor the implementation and development of this strategy”.²⁵ NSS 2009 confirmed the government’s intention that a new Joint Committee would provide parliamentary oversight.²⁶ Following consultation with the usual channels, the proposal to establish the committee was agreed to by both Houses of Parliament in January 2010.²⁷

²⁰ HC *Hansard*, 9th March 2009, col 4WS.

²¹ Margaret Gilmore, [Determining the wider dimensions of the UK’s national security](#) RUSI Commentary (9th March 2009).

²² Intelligence and Security Committee, [Annual Report 2007–2008](#) (March 2009), Cm 7542, p 34.

²³ HC *Hansard*, 9th March 2009, col 4WS.

²⁴ NSS 2009, p 44.

²⁵ NSS 2008, p 60.

²⁶ NSS 2009, p 44.

²⁷ HL *Hansard*, 7th January 2010, col 211 and HC *Hansard*, 13th January 2010, col 809.

In its report on the proposal, the House of Lords Liaison Committee outlined how it is expected that the Joint Committee will function:

It is proposed that the Committee will have 12 Commons and 10 Lords Members. It is likely that seven of the Commons nominees will be the chairmen of existing departmental committees (Foreign Affairs, Home Affairs, Defence, International Development, Justice, Energy and Climate Change and Business, Innovation and Skills). It is intended that the Chairman of the Intelligence and Security Committee, who has always been an MP, will also be a member. The broad remit of Lords committees means that there is no current Lords sessional committee with a relevant area of scrutiny which might justify such ex-officio membership of the joint committee, though the Constitution Committee, the European Union Committee and the Science and Technology Committee have all produced reports touching on the matters raised in the Strategy. The Lords membership would therefore be selected in the usual way.

The Government's intention is that the joint committee would act with a light touch, and the high level nature of the Security Strategy document would in any event make it difficult for any single committee to attempt detailed oversight. Given this, and the potential for overlap with the work of other committees, we understand that one option might be for the joint committee to invite House of Commons departmental committees with an interest in aspects of the Strategy to undertake detailed consideration of specific areas, which could inform the deliberations of the joint committee. We emphasise that it would be open to the joint committee also to seek the views of any relevant House of Lords committees in the same way.²⁸

3.3 National Risk Register

NSS 2008 stated that one of the government's future priorities with regard to planning for civil emergencies and building resilience would be to publish a National Risk Register:

Wider knowledge of the risks described in Chapter Three [of NSS 2008] will enable communities to prepare better. We will therefore publish in summer 2008, and on an annual basis thereafter, a national-level risk register setting out our assessment of the likelihood and potential impact of a range of different risks that may directly affect the United Kingdom, and the safety and well-being of its citizens. That will help local authorities, communities, businesses, and others in preparing for emergencies. It will be updated annually and informed by longer-term national assessment of related climate change effects and risks.²⁹

The Cabinet Office published the first National Risk Register in August 2008.³⁰ Lord West of Spithead, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Security and Counter-terrorism, described it as "one of the great successes of the last [national security] strategy".³¹ Although the National Risk Register was supposed to be updated annually, the 2008 version is the only one currently available on the Cabinet Office website.

²⁸ Liaison Committee, [First Report of Session 2009–10](#) (December 2009), HL 18 of 2009–10, p 3.

²⁹ NSS 2008, p 43.

³⁰ Cabinet Office, [National Risk Register](#) (August 2008).

³¹ HL *Hansard*, 25th June 2009, col 1712.

3.4 Strategic Horizons Unit

One of the guiding principles in NSS 2008 was that “wherever possible, we will tackle security challenges early”.³² In line with this, the government stated that it was “committed to improving our ability to scan the horizon for future security risks, and to developing our capabilities for preventive action” and would therefore consider:

How to strengthen the Government’s capacity for horizon-scanning, forward-planning and early warning to identify, measure, and monitor risks and threats; and our capacity for strategic thinking and prioritisation, spanning traditional boundaries between domestic and foreign policy, defence and security, and intelligence and diplomacy.³³

The Prime Minister announced in July 2008 that a horizon-scanning unit would be established alongside the National Security Secretariat in the Cabinet Office.³⁴ The Strategic Horizons Unit began work in September 2008 and had five members of staff in June 2009.³⁵

3.5 Delays

The government has received criticism for delays in implementing proposals and commitments contained in both editions of the National Security Strategy. With regard to NSS 2008, the *Financial Times* commented in February 2009 that:

Most of the initiatives in Britain’s first national security strategy have been delayed, watered down or quietly dropped since Gordon Brown unveiled the first document to “safeguard the nation” in March [2008].

Even the prime minister’s pledge to update the strategy annually will not be met: the first update could be published as late as July, four months later than promised. [It was in fact published in June 2009].

The make-up of a new “national security forum” of outside experts, drawn from academia and the private sector is close to being announced.

But the creation of the 12-person body—designed to offer independent security advice—will be at least four months late and given only “interim” status.

The *Financial Times* understands that Lord West, the security minister, is poised to be the first chairman, a move likely to raise questions over the forum’s independence.

Charlie Edwards, a security expert at Demos, the think-tank, said he was dismayed to see that “so little has been achieved since the strategy was published”.

Consultations on enhancing the number and skills of civilian volunteers to help failing states are continuing. But Whitehall insiders said raising reserve numbers to 1,000 would be a “struggle” without more funding and a formal structure. Fresh proposals are expected.

³² NSS 2008, p 7.

³³ NSS 2008, p 58.

³⁴ HC *Hansard*, 22nd July 2008, col 111WS.

³⁵ HC *Hansard*, 26th June 2009, col 1178W.

There are also doubts over plans to encourage individuals to join new “community resilience networks”—dubbed a “Dad’s Army” style outfit in press reports. Officials are still consulting on how to take the project forward, and some insiders suspect the project might soon be forgotten.³⁶

Following the publication of NSS 2009, the House of Commons Defence Committee noted that it “deplore[d] the fact that the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy, announced almost eighteen months ago in July 2008, has not yet even been appointed, let alone met, and will now presumably have no effect until after the General Election”.³⁷

4. Implications

4.1 Intelligence services

According to the Intelligence and Security Committee, the introduction of a National Security Strategy did not herald a significant change in the work of the UK’s intelligence agencies:

The National Security Strategy does not create new areas of responsibility for the Agencies [ie the Security Service (MI5), the Secret Intelligence Service (MI6) and GCHQ] or the wider intelligence community. The Heads of the Agencies have indicated that they were consulted about the strategy and are broadly supportive of it, but that they do not envisage that it will result in any significant change in direction for them. The Cabinet Secretary told us that it does require the Agencies and departments to be “much clearer about the way in which they are working together and the way in which their strategies actually fit”, and the Head of Intelligence, Security and Resilience told us that the National Security Strategy will have a direct bearing on the way in which the requirements and priorities for the intelligence community are set in the future.³⁸

However, in a paper for the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), Sir David Omand, the former UK Security and Intelligence Coordinator, outlined a number of implications that he believed the National Security Strategy has for the work of Britain’s intelligence agencies. In his view, the NSS’s broad view of what constitutes national security meant firstly that:

Responsibilities are likely to accentuate the shift away from the highly restrictive ‘need to know’ culture of the traditional intelligence world to what US Director of National Intelligence, Mike McConnell, has called the ‘responsibility to provide’, a phrase that captures the spirit of the new approach to the provision of intelligence for the purposes of public protection.³⁹

Secondly, Sir David expected that the National Security Strategy would lead to increased demands for anticipatory, strategic intelligence, as well as greater volumes of operational intelligence which would allow the authorities to act to pre-empt threats. Furthermore, he

³⁶ [Brown fails to deliver on security plan](#) *Financial Times*, 9th February 2009.

³⁷ House of Commons Defence Committee, [National Security and Resilience](#) (December 2009), HC 149 of 2009–10, p 5.

³⁸ Intelligence and Security Committee, [Annual Report 2007–2008](#) (March 2009), Cm 7542, p 34.

³⁹ Sir David Omand, [The National Security Strategy: Implications for the UK Intelligence Community](#) IPPR, (February 2009), p 5.

predicted that the range of subjects on which the intelligence agencies would be expected to provide information was likely to increase:

It is not hard to see what should be key priorities from the point of view of the traditional political and military customers. But the broader definition of security we have moved towards means that there will be more customers, covering a wider range of government activity, that may benefit from intelligence support. The future threats identified in the National Security Strategy will have to be turned into specific statements of intelligence priority as part of the normal intelligence requirements process, and regularly reviewed and updated as part of the cycle of intelligence activity.⁴⁰

Given increasing public expectation that the government will be able to provide threat warnings and advice on how risks can be minimised, “the intelligence agencies should not be surprised when public opinion demands inquiries by oversight committees into their work, into what they knew and what they might have been expected to know that could have allowed the attack to be anticipated”.⁴¹ On a related note, Sir David observed that “The intelligence community will continue to have to grapple with issues of proportionality and necessity over its methods, and over the use made of its intelligence”.⁴²

4.2 Military

Shortly after the publication of NSS 2008, the House of Commons Defence Committee announced its intention to “inquire into the Ministry of Defence’s contribution to the United Kingdom’s national security and resilience”.⁴³ The Committee’s report set out how the Ministry of Defence contributed to national security through its “niche capabilities”—typical military tasks which only the Ministry of Defence is able to carry out—and “augmentation capabilities”—providing extra manpower to deal with civil emergencies such as the aftermath of a serious flood or a foot-and-mouth epidemic. The Committee concluded that:

The United Kingdom faces many disparate threats, now rightly recognised as needing a combined response. The Armed Forces make a vital and unique contribution to national security and resilience. It is for this reason that this contribution must be appropriately understood, directed and resourced.⁴⁴

In its follow-up report in late 2009, the Committee emphasised the need to draw more explicit links between UK national security and resilience and the military strategic planning process:

We would also like to use this opportunity to stress the important contribution to UK national security and resilience of two forthcoming processes and documents: the imminent Defence Green Paper and the Strategic Defence Review which is expected to follow the 2010 Election. It is vital that the forthcoming Green Paper makes all the necessary and important connections between national security and our strategic defence capabilities. The next Government must, in its work on the Strategic Defence Review, make more explicit than is currently the case

⁴⁰ *ibid*, p 15.

⁴¹ *ibid*, p 5.

⁴² *ibid*, p 16.

⁴³ House of Commons Defence Committee, [The Defence Contribution to UK National Security and Resilience](#) (May 2009), HC 121 of 2008–09, p 3.

⁴⁴ *ibid*, p 7.

those connections and spell out clearly the role of the UK's defence assets in our national security.⁴⁵

Paul Cornish, Head of the International Security Programme at Chatham House, and Andrew Dorman, Associate Fellow at Chatham House, made a similar point in two articles in the journal *International Affairs*. They noted that NSS 2008 failed to make any link to the most recent defence white papers (from 2003 and 2004) which had envisaged Britain using its military capabilities in short-term operations. Given the sustained operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, they saw a “discrepancy between policy and reality”, which needed to be addressed at the level of strategic planning.⁴⁶ They went on to argue that:

The NSS represents a relatively novel attempt to establish a constructive relationship between a national vision, articulated on a cross-governmental basis, and the policy and strategy that are properly the responsibility of the defence establishment. The NSS is being revised, with closer involvement of the MoD, providing an important opportunity to consolidate the relationship between the national vision, on the one hand, and defence policy and strategy, on the other. If the revised NSS can set out even more clearly and robustly the national vision, then the forthcoming defence review might be able to spend less time on the high politics of Britain's place in the world and more time ensuring that the defence mission can be met.⁴⁷

5. Alternative perspectives

5.1 IPPR Commission on National Security in the 21st Century

The Institute for Public Policy Research, a centre-left think tank, published what it called “an independent national security strategy for the United Kingdom” in June 2009.⁴⁸ This was the work of the IPPR's Commission on National Security in the 21st Century, an all-party group of experts chaired by Lord Ashdown of Norton-sub-Hamdon (former leader of the Liberal Democrat Party and former High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina) and Lord Robertson of Port Ellen (former Secretary of State for Defence and former Secretary General of NATO), and was based on work conducted by the Commission over a two-year period.

The report's key recommendations include:

- A new approach to the situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan
- Proposals to improve the UK's energy security
- Measures to address radicalisation and the threat of terrorism here in the UK

⁴⁵ House of Commons Defence Committee, [National Security and Resilience](#) (December 2009), HC 149 of 2009–10, pp 5–6.

⁴⁶ Paul Cornish and Andrew Dorman, ‘Blair's wars and Brown's budgets: from Strategic Defence Review to strategic decay in less than a decade’, *International Affairs*, 2009, vol 85:2, pp 247–261.

⁴⁷ Paul Cornish and Andrew Dorman, ‘National defence in the age of austerity’, *International Affairs*, 2009, vol 85:4, pp 733–753.

⁴⁸ IPPR, [Shared Responsibilities—A National Security Strategy for the United Kingdom](#) (June 2009).

- The call for a transformation in our approach to defence policy, and measures to strengthen both NATO and the European pillar of the transatlantic alliance
- Measures to strengthen and improve the institutions handling security at the centre of government
- Proposals for improved global governance
- A call to strengthen and deepen the legitimacy of the security strategy we pursue.⁴⁹

In an article in the *Times* introducing their report, Lord Ashdown and Lord Robertson wrote:

The trouble is we are not altering our approach or our thinking fast enough to keep up with this pace of change [in threats to security]. The security of Britain is no longer just the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence—it now impacts on all government departments and requires them to work together in ways they have neither the structure nor the cultures to do. We still find it much easier to continue spending on old priorities than to invest in meeting new, less familiar ones. But the sheer scale of the resource constraints we now face means it is going to be increasingly difficult, if not impossible, to fund what we are already trying to achieve, let alone face the new threats that confront us.

Business as usual is not an option.

Government needs to work smarter.

We urgently need a wide-ranging strategic security review, including but going well beyond defence. We also need a framework that enables aid, diplomacy, defence and other security policy instruments to work together in a single approach, rather than pull against each other as different parts of government jealously defend their patch.

At the heart of this new approach should be a national security council, chaired by the Prime Minister or another very senior minister, to carry out an overarching national security strategy. This should be supported by a single security budget ruthlessly targeted on threats, and capable of deploying resources where needed, rather than distributing them, according to historical chance, across numerous departments and agencies as happens now.⁵⁰

5.2 Conservative Party Policy Green Paper on National Security

On 15th January 2010, the Conservative leader David Cameron launched a ‘Green Paper’, *A Resilient Nation*, which set out his party’s approach to national security.⁵¹ In summary, the paper proposes:

A unified security approach

To deal with this new world, we need to see national security ‘in the round’. This means linking all the relevant parts of government in a new institutional structure

⁴⁹ [IPPR website](#).

⁵⁰ Paddy Ashdown and George Robertson, [The Cold War is over. We must move on, fast](#) *Times*, 30th June 2009.

⁵¹ Conservative Party, [A Resilient Nation—National Security Green Paper](#) Policy Green Paper No. 13 (January 2010).

that enables all the relevant expertise and power to be brought to bear in a coordinated way. We will therefore:

- establish a new National Security Council;
- draw up a new National Security Strategy; and
- conduct a new Strategic Defence and Security Review.

The National Security Council will:

- replace the Ministerial Committee on National Security, International Relations and Development and the Ministerial Civil Contingencies Committee;
- include representatives of relevant departments;
- be responsible for all national security policy decisions;
- have a range of sub-committees reporting to it;
- be supported by its own Cabinet Office secretariat, reporting to a National Security Adviser, and by a new National Resilience Team, reporting into the Cabinet Office;
- be supported by a strengthened central intelligence machinery; and
- have the capacity to create cross-departmental budgets to underpin the delivery of national security policies.

The first task of the National Security Council will be to oversee the drawing up of the new National Security Strategy.

The second task of the National Security Council will be to oversee a Strategic Defence and Security Review that implements the new strategy.

Some fundamental continuities

The new National Security Strategy, and the accompanying Strategic Defence and Security Review will be built on certain solid foundations—features that have been at the heart of bi-partisan policy over many years, including:

- NATO, EU cooperation and active involvement in international institutions;
- the nuclear deterrent; and
- continued determination to prevent proliferation of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction.

Changes needed

The new, integrated approach to national security will mean some major changes in the way we do business. In particular, it will involve:

- a liberal Conservative attitude to foreign policy which champions an enlightened vision of the national interest;
- reducing the need for military intervention by building a capacity for preventative action, including a greater role for diplomacy led by the FCO and for contributions from a wider range of government departments;
- a more integrated approach to post-conflict reconstruction – with a new Stabilisation and Reconstruction Force;
- a new focus on key parts of domestic security which have been ignored to date, such as border security;
- a more structured military contribution to homeland security;

- much greater emphasis on the resilience of the country's critical infrastructure; and
- a new concern with ensuring that security legislation does not compromise civil liberties, and with strengthening social cohesion.⁵²

In response, the Prime Minister said that:

I must also say that sometimes the Conservative party does not want to understand the measures that we are already taking. We have a National Security Committee in place. The Leader of the Opposition sometimes gives the impression that that does not include the chiefs of our security agencies, the Chief of the Defence Staff or all those people who are charged with addressing the security issues of our country, and wants to create some new committee that does include them. Those people are already on the National Security Committee [ie NSID]. We regularly publish a national security strategy and we have set up a national security secretariat in the Cabinet Office. We have a national security forum, which I met only last week and which gives us advice from experts around the world about our security. We also have a cadre of experienced conflict and stabilisation experts. All the things that the document he produced last week suggested should be done are already being done.⁵³

⁵² *ibid*, pp 3-4.

⁵³ HC *Hansard*, 20th January 2010, cols 311–2.