



HOUSE OF LORDS

Library Note

United Kingdom's Role in Supporting International Security and Stability

This Library Note has been prepared in advance of the debate in the House of Lords on 3 December 2015:

[...] that this House takes note of the United Kingdom's role in supporting international security and stability in the light of the Strategic Defence and Security Review.

In light of the recent publication of the Government's [National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015](#) (NSS-SDSR) published on 23 November 2015, this short Library Note provides a brief summary of key points from the NSS-SDSR and of the Prime Minister Mr David Cameron's statement on the review, in relation to the Government's strategy in supporting international security and stability. It also provides a short summary of the Government's strategy for official development assistance, [UK Aid: Tackling Global Challenges in the National Interest](#), which was also published on 23 November 2015. The Note summarises the debate which took place in the House of Commons following Mr Cameron's statement on the NSS-SDSR, along with a selection of initial comment on the review, upon its publication. It concludes with a selection of further reading on matters relating to the United Kingdom's role in supporting international security and stability more broadly.

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National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015

Overview

On 23 November 2015, the Government published the [National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015](#) (NSS-SDSR). In his forward to the NSS-SDSR, the Prime Minister, David Cameron, acknowledged that the context within which the NSS-SDSR sits in 2015 is different to 2010—when the previous NSS and SDSR were published in separate documents—stating that:

From the rise of ISIL and greater instability in the Middle East, to the crisis in Ukraine, the threat of cyber-attacks and the risk of pandemics, the world is more dangerous and uncertain today than five years ago.¹

The NSS-SDSR acknowledged the interconnected nature of national security and international security, with Mr Cameron also adding in his foreword that the Government cannot choose between conventional defences against state-based threats, or the need to counter threats that do not recognise national borders, writing that: “[t]oday we face both types of threat and we must respond to both types of threat”.²

The NSS-SDSR stated that the Government’s priorities over the next five years will be to:

Tackle terrorism head-on at home and abroad in a tough and comprehensive way, counter extremism and challenge the poisonous ideologies that feed it. We will remain a world leader in cyber security. We will deter state-based threats. We will respond to crises rapidly and effectively and build resilience at home and abroad.

Help strengthen the rules-based international order and its institutions, encouraging reform to enable further participation of growing powers. We will work with our partners to reduce conflict, and to promote stability, good governance and human rights.

Promote our prosperity, expanding our economic relationship with growing powers such as India and China, helping to build global prosperity, investing in innovation and skills, and supporting UK defence and security exports.³

The Government set out three high-level National Security Objectives in the NSS-SDSR through which the delivery of the National Security Strategy will be organised: to “protect our people”; to “project our global influence”; and to “promote our prosperity”—the latter a new objective since the 2010 SDSR.⁴ A number of key areas were highlighted under each of these objectives.

¹ HM Government, [National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015](#), 23 November 2015, Cm 9161, p 5.

² *ibid*, pp 5–6.

³ *ibid*, pp 9–10.

⁴ *ibid*, pp 11–12.

Protect our people:

- Meet the NATO pledge to spend 2 percent of our GDP on defence in every year of this Parliament, guarantee a real increase in the defence budget every year of this Parliament, and create a Joint Security Fund which will grow to £1.5 billion by the end of this Parliament.
- Invest in agile, capable and globally deployable Armed Forces and security and intelligence agencies to protect the UK and project our power globally.
- Exploit the full spectrum of our capabilities and work with our allies to respond robustly to the re-emergence of state-based threats.
- Deter potential adversaries, including through renewal of our nuclear deterrent.
- Prioritise the fight against terrorism, radicalisation and extremism at home and overseas.
- Protect the cross-government counter-terrorism budget.
- Put in place tough and innovative measures, as a world leader in cyber security.
- Strengthen our capabilities to disrupt serious and organised crime and to prosecute criminals.
- Increase our communities' resilience to threats and hazards; and improve the government's crisis management architecture.⁵

Project our global influence:

- Spend 0.7 percent of GNI on Official Development Assistance, which we have enshrined in law, and to make a new commitment to invest at least 50 percent of the Department for International Development's budget in fragile states and regions.
- Expand our world-leading soft power and our global reach to promote our values and interests, using our diplomats and development assistance, and through institutions such as the BBC World Service and the British Council.
- Invest more in our alliances, build new, stronger partnerships and persuade potential adversaries of the benefits of cooperation, to multiply what we can achieve alone.
- Strengthen the rules-based international order, helping to make both established and newer multilateral institutions fit for the 21st century.
- Build stability overseas, upholding our values and focusing more of our development effort on fragile states and regions.

⁵ HM Government, [National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015](#), 23 November 2015, Cm 9161, p 11.

- Help others overseas to develop their resilience and preparedness, and respond more effectively to the impact of conflict and crises.⁶

Promote our prosperity:

- Champion an open and rules-based international trading environment, to build sustainable global prosperity.
- Maximise prosperity opportunities from our defence, security, diplomatic and development activities.
- Work more closely with the private sector and allies to increase our innovation and strengthen its contribution to our national security.
- Support the UK's defence, resilience and security industries to grow, including through exports and through investment in skills.⁷

In a statement to the House of Commons on 23 November 2015 on the publication of the NSS-SDSR, Mr Cameron made clear the Government's view that it was now in a position to invest more in security than in 2010 due to "renewed economic security".⁸ Mr Cameron added:

As a result, the United Kingdom is the only major country in the world today which is simultaneously going to meet the NATO target of spending 2 percent of our GDP on defence and the UN target of spending 0.7 percent of our GNI on development, while also increasing investment in our security and intelligence agencies and in counter-terrorism.⁹

Key commitments highlighted in the statement included: increasing the size of deployable armed forces; increasing the number of an expeditionary force of 30,000 to 50,000 by 2025; maintain the UK's "ultimate insurance policy" of continuous at-sea nuclear deterrent, and replace its four ballistic missile submarines; major additional investment in world-class intelligence agencies to "detect and foil plots from wherever they emanate in the world"; and more than double spending on aviation security around the world.¹⁰ Mr Cameron also noted major new investment in surveillance drones. He acknowledged the Government would work with its allies to deal with common threats such as terrorism and climate change and would play "full part" in alliances around the world, including those in Europe, in addition to seizing opportunities to reach out to emerging powers.¹¹

UK Aid Strategy

Mr Cameron's statement on the NSS-SDSR also announced the publication of the Government's strategy for official development assistance, [UK Aid: Tackling Global Challenges in the National Interest](#) (November 2015). Released on the same day as the NSS-SDSR, this

⁶ HM Government, [National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015](#), 23 November 2015, Cm 9161, pp 11–12.

⁷ *ibid*, p 12.

⁸ HC *Hansard*, 23 November 2015, [col 1049](#).

⁹ *ibid*, [col 1049](#).

¹⁰ *ibid*, [col 1050](#).

¹¹ *ibid*, [col 1052](#).

strategy details the Government's aid strategy, including investing more to tackle the causes of instability, insecurity and conflict, and to tackle crime and corruption with a view to working towards eliminating extreme poverty by 2030. The strategy also committed to strengthening resilience and responses to crises—such as more support for the response to events in Syria and other countries in the Middle East and North Africa region.¹² The strategy also committed to efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change, and to use Official Development Assistance (ODA) to promote economic development and prosperity in the developing world.¹³ In his statement, Mr Cameron added:

At its heart is a decision to refocus half of DFID's budget on supporting fragile and broken states and regions in every year of this Parliament. This will help to prevent conflict, and, crucially, it will help to promote the golden thread of conditions that drive prosperity all across the world: the rule of law, good governance, and the growth of democracy. The conflict, stability and security fund will grow to over £1.3 billion a year by the end of this Parliament, and we will also create a new £1.3 billion prosperity fund to drive forward our aim of promoting global prosperity and good governance.¹⁴

Mr Cameron further noted that the Government would use the development budget and the diplomatic service to tackle global poverty, and to project the UK's influence and address the causes of the security threats.¹⁵ With regard to international stability and security, he also added that the Government would identify £500 million a year as a crisis reserve and invest £1.5 billion over the Parliament in a global challenges research fund for UK science to pioneer new ways of tackling global problems like anti-microbial resistance, as well as investing £1 billion in a new fund for the research and development of products to fight infectious diseases—known as the Ross fund—and £5.8 billion in climate finance to assist poorer countries switch to greener forms of energy.¹⁶

Reaction to the Statement in the House of Commons

Following the Prime Minister's statement on 23 November 2015, the Leader of the Opposition, Jeremy Corbyn, expressed disappointment that, in his view, there was “insufficient analysis” in the NSS-SDSR with regard to global threats, “including inequality, poverty, disease, human rights abuses, climate change and water and food security”.¹⁷ Other Labour MPs raised questions over whether the integrated approach of the NSDR–NSS would effectively address global terrorism. Keith Vaz MP—chair of the Home Affairs Committee—said:

Last week, the global terrorism index showed that last year 32,600 people were killed in terrorist attacks in 67 countries. In his statement, the Prime Minister is integrating what is happening in this country with our strategy abroad. He mentioned Tunisia, for example. How will the Tunisian Government be assisted by a national security strategy in our country, bearing in mind that what happens on the streets of Tunisia or Sana'a, in Yemen, ends up on the streets of London?¹⁸

¹² Department for International Development, [UK Aid: Tackling Global Challenges in the National Interest](#), November 2015, p 3.

¹³ *ibid.*

¹⁴ HC *Hansard*, 23 November 2015, [col 1051](#).

¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ *ibid.*, [col 1052](#).

¹⁸ *ibid.*, [col 1060](#).

On 21 November 2015, the House of Commons Defence Committee published its report [Flexible Response? An SDSR Checklist of Potential Threats](#) in anticipation of the SDSR. The Defence Committee noted in the report its intention to evaluate the SDSR to see if it provides an “adequate structure for the Armed Forces to cope with and counter” each of the threats that the Committee had recognised, were the threat to actually emerge between now and the next SDSR.¹⁹ Responding to Mr Cameron’s statement on the NSS-SDSR, the chair of the Committee, Dr Julian Lewis (Conservative MP for New Forest East), reaffirmed what had been noted in the Committee’s conclusions—that it will be assessing the SDSR against a checklist of “threats and vulnerabilities” that were published in the report.²⁰ He added, however, that he was “sure that most Members will find at least some relief in the plugging of gaps such as naval aviation and maritime patrol aircraft, and especially in the emphasis on flexible and versatile armed forces to deal with our inability to predict crises before they are upon us.”

Dr Lewis also raised questions about the pay of the armed forces and, with regard to the proposed successors to the Trident nuclear submarines, for more information about when the Main Gate contracts (the investment point in 2016 where the main construction contracts would be signed) would be brought before the House for debate and decision. Mr Cameron replied by stating that the Government would keep the annual pay upgrade and the increments that armed forces have and that a package had been set out for new joiners. On the Main Gate decision, the Prime Minister noted that “we will be moving ahead with the four submarines and at the appropriate moment we will hold a vote in this House”.²¹

A number of MPs expressed concern regarding Trident, with Angus Robertson (SNP MP for Moray) stating that:

Trident replacement, a weapons system of mass destruction that can never be used, we learn that the cost of its replacement is ballooning and squeezing out defence alternatives. How expensive does Trident need to be for this Government to realise that it is a super-expensive vanity project that does not deter? It has not deterred terrorism, cyber-attack or conventional attacks on the UK, its allies and friends. Even at this late stage, I appeal to the Government and to the Labour party to realise that it is a huge mistake to renew Trident.²²

However, Mr Cameron argued that Trident is “clearly not squeezing out other defence requirements”, and suggested that the SDSR-NSS “clearly shows” that to be the case.²³

The statement on the SDSR-NSS was repeated in the House of Lords on the 23 November 2015 by the Minister of State for Defence, Earl Howe, and [further debate](#) followed.

Syria

The Prime Minister said in his statement on the NSS-SDSR that he would “make the case for Britain to join our international allies in going after ISIL at its headquarters in Syria, not just Iraq”, and reported that he would explain how “such action would be one element of a comprehensive and long-term strategy to defeat ISIL, in parallel with a major international effort

¹⁹ House of Commons Defence Committee, [Flexible Response? An SDSR Checklist of Potential Threats](#), 21 November 2015, HC 493 of session 2015–2016, p 3.

²⁰ HC *Hansard*, 23 November 2015, [col 1057](#).

²¹ *ibid.*

²² *ibid.*, [col 1058](#).

²³ *ibid.*, [col 1059](#).

to bring an end to the war in Syria”.²⁴ On 26 November, Mr Cameron made a [statement](#) to the House of Commons in response to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee’s report [The Extension of Offensive British Military Operations to Syria](#) (November 2015). The statement was [repeated](#) in the House of Lords by the Leader of the House, Baroness Stowell. Mr Cameron has made his [full response available to both Houses](#).

Reaction to SDSR-NSS

Responding to the SDSR-NSS, Professor Michael Clarke, Director General of the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), acknowledged that the review “has tried to shift resources and political weight in a balanced fashion” to both to “go to war but also to safeguard British society more efficiently”.²⁵ He questioned, however, the “inevitable time lags between announcements and implementation”, noting that the Government’s announcements had been made on the basis of a five-year programme, but that threats are likely to continue to change in “unpredictable ways”, with dangers present both in rushing processes and inherently in time it takes for things to take effect.²⁶ Professor Malcolm Chalmers, Research Director and Director (UK Defence Policy) at RUSI, noted that the review would be “best described as being a ‘steady as she goes’ review, providing a welcome element of stability in defence planning after five years of substantial reductions”.²⁷

The *Economist* has commented that the SDSR-NSS is “a step towards restoring Britain’s reputation as a serious military power”.²⁸ It said it should be recognised, also, that the SDSR-NSS reflected the fact “that it is no longer possible to dismiss state-on-state warfare as an outlandishly remote eventuality, the implicit assumption of the last SDSR in 2010”. Lord Dannatt (Crossbench), Former Chief of the General Staff, British Army, was reported in the *Telegraph* (23 November 2015) to have welcomed the report as “an honest attempt” to improve security across the world. With regards to cyber, he noted that “the important thing is that we are always trying to adapt” and added that “[f]or the rank and file, cyber will matter less—the really important thing is that our intelligence and surveillance capabilities are up there with the best”.²⁹

²⁴ HC *Hansard*, 23 November 2015, [col 1050](#).

²⁵ Michael Clarke, [‘External Defence and Domestic Security: A More Integrated Approach’](#), RUSI, 23 November 2015.

²⁶ *ibid.*

²⁷ Malcolm Chalmers, [‘Steady as She Goes: The Outcome of the 2015 SDSR’](#), RUSI, 23 November 2015.

²⁸ *Economist*, [‘Britain Reasserts Itself as a Serious Military Power’](#), 23 November 2015.

²⁹ Lord Dannatt, [‘SDSR: Lord Dannatt’s Reaction’](#), *Telegraph*, 23 November 2015.

Further Information

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