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*The 35th in our series of expert comment and analysis, by our regular commentator, **General Sir Richard Barrons**, Commander Joint Forces Command (2013-2016), now Co-Chairman of Universal Defence & Security Solutions, and GSF Advisory Board member. As always, the views expressed are those of the author and not of Global Strategy Forum unless otherwise stated.*

A Defence & Security Scorecard For The Integrated Review

The UK Government's Integrated Review of Defence, Security, Development and Foreign Policy is well into the bipolar phase: every dog in the fight has submitted their thoughtful wish list and the Treasury has issued thumbscrews in return. There have been pulses of activity around this Review throughout 2020, pausing to manoeuvre around the all-consuming claims of COVID-19 and the unshakeable Whitehall coda that Nothing Happens in August. Nothing so far has looked like conclusiveness, but conclusions - at least some early and big ones - are surely coming based on the ramping up of trails, wails and leaks now appearing in our Press.

So here is one abbreviated checklist of what a good outcome for Defence and Security aspects could look like. It feels today like the UK has chosen, one way or another, to lie on the floor for a bit and look up at the world

in a condition of unnecessary but multiple discombobulation. This is presumably not how we wish to remain indefinitely - and this Review is fundamental to raising ourselves to our feet again. One of the reasons for our national prostration is that the world is now being so disobliging in ways we have struggled to counter, so the checklist is about launching the essential transformation to be able to have our proper say in this new global context, extending our reach beyond desultory tinkering and whining.

Policy and Strategy for a Harder World

There are many indications in the public propositions set out by various actors in this Review so far that it really will register the neon-lit inflection point in the UK's security and prosperity flashing at us. This must be the Review that conclusively closes off the post-Cold War era and charts the course for the UK in a much more uncertain, challenging and risk-strewn world. It must set aside the comfortable assumption that our defence and security is guaranteed in perpetuity to be



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richly and resolutely led and paid for by the US as the single superpower. In acknowledging that the 21st century henceforth will be dominated by the rise of China as a dominant economic and military global force, and that this alters in ways we may want to influence but cannot control how a different 'Rules-Based International Order' is constructed and operates. The Review must define what the new China means for our sovereignty and security. The UK relies on a stable, sufficiently regulated world for so much of its food, energy and prosperity that isolation is not an option, and nor is wishing that the strategic context froze in 1990.

Previous reviews have certainly acknowledged the shift back to the predominance of risk from state conflict relative to terrorism, but now it is necessary to recognise the potential for these risks to be existential rather than marginal. This includes nuclear weapons which have proliferated and are once again being described by some states as 'tactical' options. The tussle for dominance between East and West will play out on a tableau significantly discoloured by the effects of global population growth and climate change. Divisions within and between states as a result of ecological and environmental trauma will very likely create profound instability and confrontation once people find that more reasonable alternatives no longer apply. This will be compounded by how the Fourth Industrial Revolution displaces millions from even long-standing employment and challenges entrenched social, cultural, and political norms that suddenly feel vulnerable. This is so much more of a complex, tough strategic conundrum than just wrestling with a resurgent Russia and a fractious European

Union, but neither of those issues have gone away either.

So the Review must establish the policy framework by which the UK sustains its sovereignty, security and prosperity in a world where we will only have a modest say. It must accept that we live in a condition of permanent competition and confrontation, which will occasionally spill into conflict with very high stakes, and proceed from there. This is the Review that ditches defence and security built around the 20th century notion of peace or war. We need to know now how we will protect ourselves in this different setting. It will certainly include a revitalisation of our 'collective security' arrangements such as NATO, and NATO needs to deal with the wider emerging risks to the Alliance's members as much as UK. The NATO that worked in the Cold War and cruised through lesser challenges in the Balkans, Iraq and Afghanistan now has to deal with not only Russia and its new capabilities but also the potential for hard-edged intervention to become necessary again well beyond the Alliance boundary, because there is nobody else to turn to.

New Capability for a New World

This Review, like its recent predecessors, has to come to terms with the way technology and method in defence and security have already changed in ways that the UK has not matched, and will clearly need to change. If the debate sticks at only considering how to reconcile the current imbalance between the defence programme and the resources allocated to it (perhaps £13 billion short over 10 years) all it will do is tidy up and expedite the descent into exotic equipment tokenism



and obsolescence. If the Review fails to equip intelligence agencies and government machinery with the digital tools and refreshed organisation and operating procedures to exploit it, then it will continue to fall short in meeting how harm is already projected at the UK, let alone what may happen next. This is the Review that charts how the UK modernises and transforms its defence and security through the thoughtful application of combinations of digital age technology and method, in order to be effective at an affordable price against 21st century risks.

The Triple Reset

As we are faced with new risks conveyed by new capabilities, the Review must reset our defence and security in three, integrated core pillars:

- **The restoration of *national resilience* against the effects of natural and man-made disaster; terrorism; sustained hybrid attack (including both cyber network/data intrusion and ‘cognitive assault’ on public will through systemic media manipulation); and the potential for physical, military attack employing weapons that are currently beyond our capabilities to match.**
- **The organisation, method, regulation and technology needed to fuse all the levers of national power into effective *hybrid campaigns* that influence the behaviour of competitors and opponents ill-disposed to the UK and to support our friends.**
- **The fundamental, transformational reset of *military power* so that it**

is capable of both protecting the UK homeland and of projecting force abroad (almost certainly in conjunction with allies and partners) in order to preserve or restore stability, avert humanitarian catastrophe, to deter, and to defeat threats that significantly jeopardise our security or prosperity.

Resilience

COVID-19 is vividly illustrating to us all just how fragile our society and daily life are when risks arise to the sustainment of a complex web of infrastructure, services, government, commerce, communication and social activity. We have seen glimpses of this fragility before in floods, terrorism, industrial action, and disease – we just didn’t take them seriously enough. We know we need to harden ourselves against a future that is very unlikely to be any more forgiving. The Review must create the capability that can keep the country safe, secure and basically functioning against all the potential forms of harm that have been well identified for some time. Specific measures are being well articulated in the submissions on the table: The development of the March 2018 fusion doctrine from an elegant statement of the problem to the establishment of the means to deal with it. This includes:

- Equipping government as all levels (central, regional, and local) with a common ‘digital backbone’ comprising data in secure cloud, AI, resilient secure networks and a common National Synthetic Environment (a Digital Twin replicating in scale and complexity how the UK is functioning in near real time). This backbone will enable resilience through



far enhanced situational awareness, decision support, planning, coordination, support, and training.

- The rapid establishment of a well-resourced National Security Academy to educate and train civil servants and politicians in a common understanding and lexicon with which to approach their combined leadership of defence and security. Without building greater collective competence, progress will rely on learning by bruising.
- A national strategy for cyber resilience that spreads responsibility and accountability between government, enterprises and citizens for the protection of national daily life. We can't all expect to ring up the National Cyber Security Centre when the lights go off, we all have a part to play and need to know what this is in advance, and to practice for it.
- The digital tools and associated education and training must be built to equip government to identify intrusions into our cognitive integrity and security through the manipulation of media, especially social media. It must be possible to identify where facts are being subverted and fake news disseminated, and where both are designed to mislead or destabilise civil society. This is also a challenge in which we all have a part to play in being resilient.
- A reset of national physical resilience to ensure continuity of government and daily life. This is likely to include the re-provision alternative, secure and hardened facilities

and networks, a reappraisal of what stocks and material should be maintained as a contingency reserve, and education and training for politicians, officials and citizens so that we all know what to do and what is expected of us when a major crisis occurs.

- The restoration of the ability of the Armed Forces and other services to assure the integrity of the UK airspace, waters and territory. This is no longer about fending off an invasion fleet as in 1940, it is about building the potential to be able to intercept salvos of the long-range precision conventional ballistic and cruise missiles that already dominate conflicts between states and will do so even more with the advent of hypersonic weapons. In addition, for example, if we can't physically protect the undersea cables that connect our economy and society to our allies, or defend the vital infrastructure that keeps us powered, fed and communicating we will be entering choppy waters relying on just hope, pluck and improvisation.

Hybrid Influence & Campaigning Abroad

We know very well that there are states today committing considerable resources to stealing our intellectual property, undermining our political discourse and social stability, and capable of cutting our access to vital services. We have shown some capability in responding to some stark events, such as the Skripal poisoning, but we have a long way to go to build a 'whole of society' approach to how the UK influences the rest of the world, including some hard-bitten adversaries, in how to play nice. This is not about military power, though this clearly plays a supporting role



in activities such as capacity building abroad and enabling other parts of government to act. Hybrid campaigning is about how we are able to integrate and apply not just *public sector* resources such as political, diplomatic, economic and development capacity, but also key aspects of the far more influential *private sector* such as law, banking, insurance, property, culture, and sport.

- The Review needs to articulate how our public sector advances from the present federated approach whereby Departments and Agencies cooperate in meeting a policy goal within the limits of forging a *de minimis* consensus around their individual views, to a NSC-mandated and supervised process by which a single government plan of campaign is enacted by Departments integrated into and conforming to a common design in which they deliver specified outcomes, with the freedom to decide how best to do it - but not whether to bother at all.
- The new Foreign Security and Development Office needs to be resourced with the people and the activity funding to compete effectively abroad. This is a small bill to pay, dinners just can't cost as much as ships, and essential to levelling the international playing field in hybrid campaigning.
- After a couple of false starts, this Review must also direct how the advancing to hybrid campaigning will be enabled by technology that is already freely available in the private sector. This means a secure data policy, the rapid adoption of AI to support not supplant officials educated in

its use, and networks that enable work at different levels of classification are not tied to a desk.

- In proceeding from the fundamental policy parameter that the UK depends upon collective security arrangements given its geography and relative power, the Review needs to expedite how hybrid campaigning is also placed on a collective footing just as much as military security. This may partly be an issue for NATO, but as the Alliance is largely confined by its members to military hard power, it also means entering into arrangements with like-minded states around the world. It does mean finding the right way post-Brexit to cooperate with the European Union as one of the most potent owners of non-military power in the world. Geography still counts.

The Transformation of Military Power

The UK Chiefs of Staff have articulated how they well understand that much of the capability that they operate now and have in their forward programme traces a lineage to the conventional forces that emerged dominant at the end of the Second World War, and that this won't do in the 21st century. As technology changes the character of confrontation and conflict, as it always does, the Chiefs recognise the progressive obsolescence of such a formula, describing aspects of their current position as 'Sunset' capability. They say equally clearly that the future of their Services lies in rapid modernisation and transformation on the back of the potential of the Digital Age, and they have begun to set out what their 'Sunrise' capabilities look like. Sunset



will help to pay for Sunrise, but still needs priming. The job of this Review is to cement the capability Sunrise into policy, money, programming, and acquisition, and it must also explain how we navigate the journey through the night. As it is clearly neither possible nor affordable to throw away the current inventory and just wait for the sun to come up, there must be a thoughtful way for how the current equipment and method are augmented, adapted, modernised and changed to become more useful and potent. The Review must establish the major handfuls of military change, including:

- The rapid creation of the digital backbone that will provide the foundational enabler for future military capability and operations. This Review will be the watershed at which military power is no longer built on metal platforms accessorised with communications and clever kit, but instead formed on a digital spine to which all other things are attached. The digital backbone is a combination of data in secure (hyper) cloud; AI; Single Synthetic Environments that replicate a country, a theatre or an alliance; and secure networks that no longer strangle operations with archaic levels of bandwidth.
- Mastery of the 'transparent battle space', the ability to see far more clearly what any opponent is doing everywhere and to anticipate better what they will do next, through the fusion of as many (open) sources of data as possible with a layered, integrated network of military collection assets such as satellites, drones, radars etc. This fusion will rely on the secure cloud, AI, SSE, and networks of the digital

backbone and the fullest connectivity to allies and partners. Information will be the lifeblood of interoperability.

- The rapid, thoughtful modernisation - accelerating to transformation - of the Royal Navy, the Army, and the Royal Air Force as they evolve swiftly from the present construct focused on tiny numbers of increasingly rare-breed and irreplaceable manned platforms to dynamic combinations of manned, unmanned and autonomous capability. This will not simply replicate how present-day forces move, manoeuvre and fight, but meet the new requirement to be able to operate in the 'transparent battle space', always subject to the dominance of long-range precision conventional fires and pervasive cyber risk. As it incurs lower acquisition and sustainment costs and endows a reducing requirement for expensive regular manpower, this transformation is the route to restoring not just effectiveness but also affordable mass, resilience and deception.
- This is also how the UK restores its air and missile defence, it is how the UK and is able to deter and defeat state opponents in concert with Allies. It will create the means for decisive action at sea, on land, in the air, in space and in cyberspace, advancing from the doctrine of 'jointery' to reach 21st century 'multi-domain integration'. All of this is ready in the thinking set out by the Chiefs of Staff, it just needs unlocking in the Review by political leadership and ownership and a credible resourcing model. Resourcing should recognise that this route buys the capability the UK really needs at a much



more sustainable price than the present unfulfilled and increasingly obsolescent analogue programme.

- The Review must reset what is required from the Armed Forces in terms of readiness and mobilisation. It may be possible to continue to rotate sections of the Armed Forces through a readiness cycle for as long as the threat conditions remain low enough, but it is once again essential to know how to bring all of it to readiness in a crisis. This presupposes that there will be a plan, stockpiles, and assured resilience from missile, ground and cyber-attack in the homeland and abroad as mobilisation occurs. Implicit in this is a profound re-drawing of what the UK requires from its Volunteer Reserves and industry, as they surely take a bigger role in defending the UK when necessary and manning equipment that is rarely needed, or rarely needed in a hurry, but still essential when the call comes.
- In support of this transformation and partly to unlock the remaining sources of 'strategic' (that is to say in the £ billions) efficiencies, this is the Review that finally breaks into the reform of defence acquisition, training, logistics and infrastructure.
- It is entirely specious to hope that merely reforming the acquisition organisation, the thing that does the shopping, will in itself result in the essential transformation of military power. Unless the Armed Forces are also led into Digital Age transformation, a better shopping organisation will only buy the wrong thing more often even if perhaps more cheaply. But the acquisition of Digital Age capability certainly requires a very different approach than the ways employed to buy nuclear submarines, aircraft carriers, and fast jets at leisurely pace and galloping prices. Enduring, flexible partnerships around software as a service will replace transactional relationships geared to long-run cyclical platform replacements, for example.
- It has been argued for 20 years that simulation will replace a lot (but never all) of real-world training. Real world training is not only expensive in terms of fuel, ammunition, spares and logistics, it's also increasingly difficult to replicate the realities of modern combat on Salisbury Plain or in the Channel. Technology has now caught up with the aspiration, particularly through the availability of scale and complexity through cloud computing and experience from the global games industry. So this is the Review that establishes how 30% of real-world individual and collective training is transferred over time into applications in the same Single Synthetic Environment in the digital backbone that underpins operations. Not only is this going to be better, it will also save hundreds of millions of pounds, dollars and euros every year – money they can buy more and better capability.
- Similarly, the introduction of better data supporting centralised and leaner approaches to logistics, mirroring more closely how other large and complex commercial organisations sustain themselves, is overdue. The Armed Forces



already have a sense in writing of how to do this, it now requires the politics to make it so and some money to seed it. The saving target should be set at around £1 billion a year.

- The defence estate – living, working and training – is widely acknowledged to be too large, too inefficient, too broken, and too obsolete in many areas, this is a major transformation target the Review should pick off. A programme of rationalisation that collocates as much as possible in premises fit for duty in the 21st century, including hardening against conventional missile and cyber-attack where necessary, will also release some good land for housing and other uses. Achieving this, and the long-term savings that it will unlock, will not be accomplished by instructing that the whole thing is done on a cost-neutral basis – certainly not in the early years, where investment in re-provision and movement will come at a cost.

Finally, the Review must articulate how this essential modernisation and transformation, the most significant for over 100 years, is linked to the UK's recovery from the immediate effects of Brexit and the prosperity hit of COVID-19. It should be obvious that if the UK leads the way in the transformation of defence and security capability and method for the 21st century, then this will be of great interest to our friends as well as

our opponents. By mandating in the Review how change will be accomplished well and at pace, it will create the substance for refreshing how UK now plays leading part with our allies bilaterally and in alliances such as NATO. In addition, by adjusting UK defence and security industrial policy so that it leads the way in how new equipment and services are provided to the Armed Forces it will quickly become the case that what is made for the UK will then be made in the UK for others who seize upon it. Unlike so much of the current inventory, there will be a global export market for Digital Age defence and security equipment and services, and the UK now has the opportunity to win first-mover advantage.

All of the above are propositions whose time has come and which the Review could enact if the Government chooses so to do. We should certainly know by Christmas what the result actually is, so we should all keep our fingers crossed that there will then be only one turkey on the table to consider.

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