

Integrated Security, Defence and Foreign Policy Review: Written Submission to the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee

Submitted by Bath's New Vision group, May 2020

We are a group of active citizens in Bath and North East Somerset concerned with different aspects of human and planetary security, and how they can best be furthered within the UK and in the role it plays in the world. We believe that there needs to be much greater public involvement in government decision making, both locally and nationally. Hence this submission.

Submission summary:

The process of the Integrated Review

- Security should be understood and defined as the safety and wellbeing of human beings within the UK and in the world at large; these in turn are dependent on the security of other species and the wellbeing of our planet.
- Since all those who live in the UK and the Commonwealth have a stake in this security, they should have the opportunity to participate in the Integrated Review, and people elsewhere who are impacted by policies should have a chance to contribute.
- This Review needs to be radical and should start with a clean slate, without predetermined Commitments to NATO and nuclear deterrence.

Strategy in UK Foreign Policy

- In the face of pandemics, climate crisis and species extinction, shared security is the only kind there is.
- At this time of global crises the roles of both the FCO and DfID should be central. The UK should take a lead in moving the world away from the geopolitics of contest to policy that is ethically grounded and action for global cooperation.
- The focus on the trade in arms and military support within the UK's international trade efforts is not ethical and does not conform with international human rights law.
- The UK's international aid is a force for good in the world, through the alleviation of poverty and development of provisions for wellbeing. Its budget should be protected and its aid should not be linked to the UK's trade goals or military interests.
- The UK's greatest positive contribution to global security will be through its diplomacy and support for peacebuilding.

- Diplomacy and incentives have the power to end conflict peacefully and improve human rights, where coercion and military interventions fail and the future of humanity depends on global cooperation .
- Without a change in gender relations and the empowerment of women, peace and security will not be possible. Women’s human rights must be secured and their vital role in peacebuilding promoted.
- The United Nations must be strengthened and become the primary reference point for the FCO. Commitment to the UN is at odds with nuclear weapons possession.
- The UN Security Council has stunted the UN’s flourishing. Our foreign policy must be to work for its dissolution and support UN reform.

The FCO’s resources and capabilities

- Progressive cuts to core funding have greatly reduced the FCO’s capacity to do its vital work in its London office and overseas. Core diplomatic funding has now been cut to the lowest for 20 years.

Main text:

A. The process of the Integrated Review

1. Defining ‘security’ in human and planetary as well as national terms

The word ‘Security’ needs to be re-understood and defined. In the past, such reviews have focused largely on ‘defending the nation’ and its interests, and specifically on military means of doing so. The aim of this Integrated Review, as outlined in the Prime Minister’s announcement, was to ‘deliver a review that is in the best interests of the British people across the United Kingdom’, which would seem to indicate a concern for *human* security too. ‘National prosperity’ is, as we have learned, no guarantor of strong public services or individual wellbeing. Risks and threats are mentioned, but not the wellbeing and peace that are axiomatic in *human* security, as it is encapsulated in the provisions of the UN Declaration on Human Rights¹; also in UN Security Council Resolution 1325², now a key addition to the UN’s human rights framework, promoting ‘freedom from fear’. (It is chilling to learn that, in the midst of the 2020 global pandemic, UN chief António Guterres needed to call for measures to address a ‘horrifying global surge in domestic violence’ directed towards women and girls, linked to lock-downs imposed by governments responding to COVID-19).

¹ <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

² <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/1325>

2. Widening participation in the process.

It might therefore have been expected that a wider range of ministries would have been involved in the review process, including all those responsible for some vital aspect of the wellbeing of the UK population, so we would argue that much greater inclusiveness is needed. The current health crisis, the desperate plight of the NHS and social care even before the current pandemic, the poverty in which so many in this rich country now live, and the environmental crisis that threatens us all, surely make the case for wider inclusion of ministries, House of Commons Committees and all Parliamentarians, It is also time to involve the UK public not only through written submissions but through such mechanisms as focus groups and citizens' assemblies and surveys. Moreover, given the degree of responsibility for human security that is carried by Local Authorities, they should be given serious opportunities to contribute in relation to human security in the UK. Their expertise may also inform the work of the FCO and DfID.

3. Input from those affected by past UK foreign policy and action

In the course of the Integrated Review, submissions should be invited from individuals and organisations in the Commonwealth and other countries that have been affected by the UK's past policy and resultant action, whether that be the impact of overseas aid, trade and diplomacy or of responses to the refugee crisis, economic sanctions or military interventions. Such submissions could also include insights from those living in areas afflicted by violent conflicts, regarding how those conflicts can best be addressed. Though in recent years the strength of the diplomatic service has been sadly reduced, the UK has a strong history in this area. We have only to think of the transformative Belfast (or Good Friday) Agreement to be reminded of its power for good in the world.

4. Commitments to NATO and nuclear deterrence an obstacle to radical review needed

We were disappointed to read in the PM's statement that 'The Review will be underpinned by the commitments the Government has already made' to NATO and, in particular, to maintaining 'the nuclear deterrent'. This statement should not be allowed to limit the review's capacity to think freely and as necessary change direction in its strategy. The UK's and NATO's nuclear posture is increasingly at variance with the principles, values and standards of international law, especially relating to nuclear disarmament. The UK must finally move away from its colonial past and its focus on military might and 'power projection', or it will find itself on the wrong side of history.

B. Strategy in UK Foreign Policy

1. Priorities: global crises and key role of FCO and DfID

The most profound and unavoidable security threats now faced by the UK are the growing environmental crisis, a potential economic recession, pressure on scarce resources and future pandemics. Their global reach makes international relations and global cooperation

more crucial than ever, especially now that the UK has left the EU. The role of the FCO and DfID must therefore be central in the process of this Review.

2. Moving from the geopolitics of contest to ethical policy for global cooperation

Given the rapidity of change in recent decades, this review needs to be radical, based on fresh analysis and new approaches. At a time when global cooperation is needed more than ever, there is an urgent need to move away from the politics of contest and struggles for global dominance. Therefore, while the PM's mention in his statement of 'problem-solving' and 'burden sharing' is very much to be welcomed, it *must not* be limited to current allies. Ethics and the common good must be to the fore. Human rights matter but they are clearly disregarded by the UK and NATO when they continue to ally themselves with countries such as Saudi Arabia. The UK should indeed cooperate as widely as possible and use its moral standing (which in turn needs to be earned) to persuade and incentivise ethical behaviour elsewhere.

3. International Trade, ethics and the arms trade

The UK's international trade should, like all other activities, be ethical and based in the politics of common security. The FCO's priorities should not be undermined by the promotion and subsidising of the arms trade. Ethical foreign policy should totally exclude the supply of weapons from UK trading policy and ensure the enforcement of existing legislation against arms supplies to conflict zones where there is a significant risk of serious violations of human rights. The continuation of supplies to Saudi Arabia that are being used in the slaughter of civilians in Yemen is indefensible. The arms trade is not necessary to the British economy and should never be subsidised. The investment, equipment and skills currently committed could be transferred to the design, engineering and manufacture of products large and small for addressing the environmental crisis, for instance through the production of green energy.

4. Protecting the purpose and integrity of DfID and foreign aid

The UK International Development Act (IDA) 2002, asserts that development money is to alleviate poverty, and International aid has done much to achieve that in many developing countries. It should not be linked to the UK's trade goals and commercial interests to further the agenda of 'Global Britain' – as Development charities and NGOs fear it will. Nor should aid be militarised but focused on improving the lives of the population. We urge the Foreign Affairs Committee to use its influence to ensure that the FCO upholds DfID's work in the Review and the maintenance of its commitment to the principles of IDA 2002. We also urge the committee to join with INGOs and policy bodies to strengthen collective advocacy and action for real human security – shared security.

5. Soft power and influence through diplomacy and international aid

This Review should take extremely seriously the potential contribution of British diplomacy to the resolution of conflict, through its own diplomacy and, with DfID, through financial

support for the work of peacebuilding NGOs that work with and assist local actors who, in the last analysis, will need to build lasting peace.

It has been argued that the UK aid budget has drawn funds away from the FCO but both development and diplomacy are essential if the UK is to play its much needed role in promoting sustainable peace and security at home and abroad. The soft power of diplomacy in bringing an end to 'the Troubles' through the Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland, where the British army had failed, is just one indicator of where government money is better spent.

6. Ethics, peace and cooperation

In the face of pandemics, climate crisis and species extinction, shared security is the only kind there is. Diplomacy and incentives have the power to end conflict and improve human rights where coercion and military interventions fail to persuade and hurt the very people they should protect, while deepening mutually damaging divisions. Support, persuasion and enabling cooperation for the common good are at the heart of the FCO's capacity for serving the interests of this nation and of the wider world. Economic and military coercion serve only to repress and divide, leading only to further damaging conflict. Global cooperation is more needed than ever and enabling inclusive discussion should be the priority for the FCO in the coming months and years, and it should receive the funding it needs to fulfil its true potential.

7. Women's human rights and their essential contributions to peace

Without a change in gender relations and the empowerment of women, peace and security will not be possible. They have a right to inclusion and justice in all spheres of life but are the victims of discrimination, coercion and domestic, sexual and war-related insecurity and violence. At the same time their role in creating and nourishing peace (see for instance <http://www.c-r.org/accord/women-and-peacebuilding-insight/women-building-peace>) is vital to a worldwide move away from violence. The FCO should act on the EU regional action plan of UNSCR [1325](#).

8. Commitment to the UN at odds with nuclear weapons possession

The UN, along with the Commonwealth and all individual countries, should be the FCO's first point of reference in international relations. As this committee will be aware, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which prohibits the manufacture, possession, deployment and use of nuclear weapons, was agreed in July 2017 by a considerable majority in the UN General Assembly but boycotted by the majority of nuclear weapons states and NATO umbrella states. The treaty is nearing the point at which it will come into force, becoming a new legal norm, filling the gap that has existed in international legislation against weapons of mass destruction.

This new treaty positions all the nuclear weapons states along with other 'rogue states' that act against the interests of the majority world and against the moral values of humanitarian

and human rights law. It is time for the UK to overturn its position and strategy on the retention of nuclear weapons and become a force for good in the world by leading the nuclear weapons states into the complete abolition and verified disposal of their weapons. They do not provide security against biological threats, cyber threats, terrorism or any other kind of threat. The Foreign Affairs Committee and FCO must do their utmost to help bring this about.

9. The UK's Security Council membership and the need for its abolition

The UN Security Council has, since its inception, obstructed the UN's main mission: to maintain peace and security in the world. The five permanent members have, as the main nuclear weapons powers and as leading arms manufacturers and suppliers, been totally unsuited to that role. They have become the body to authorise war rather than to prevent it, with member states having even launched wars themselves without a UN mandate. The UK, as one of those five permanent members, is well placed to initiate change and should now work for the abolition of the Security Council and the transformation of the UN into a genuinely global body of equal nations, so that it can at last play in full the role for which it was intended. Working in support and cooperation with the UN, as a genuine International Community, should become a central plank of UK foreign policy. The Commonwealth should be encouraged to play its own part in modelling and strengthening true internationalism within the UN.

C. The FCO's resources and capabilities

1. Underfunding of the FCO

According to a report published last year by the British Foreign Policy Group (<https://bfpg.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Running-out-of-Credit-HR.pdf>), the Foreign Office has suffered cuts for more than twenty years, under pressure from increased military spending 'and austerity'. Core diplomatic funding has now been cut to the lowest for 20 years, and overseas diplomatic staff numbers have shrunk by more than a thousand. One third of staff at Commonwealth embassies have been cut and Staff numbers in London have been reduced by a similar number. Since the UK joined the European Economic Community in 1973, spending on diplomacy has fallen by 80%. As the UK leaves the EU, this is the time to increase, not decrease, the UK's diplomatic capacity.

Experienced, resourceful and committed diplomacy, matched by high ethical standards in its own home policy and international dealings, are the greatest contribution that the UK could make to national and global security.