

THE MARITIME CONTRIBUTION

TO THE JOINT CAMPAIGN AND THE NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY

Lee Willett



RUSI
www.rusi.org



Royal United Services Institute

OCCASIONAL PAPER

About the Author

Dr Lee Willett is Head of the Maritime Studies Programme at the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies.

His current areas of focus include: policy, strategy, doctrine, acquisition, equipment capability and operational developments for the Royal Navy, but also other navies; the role of maritime security operations, with a focus on issues such as Somali piracy and Arctic security; and the future of nuclear deterrence, including the UK debate surrounding the replacement of its independent strategic nuclear deterrent.

Dr Willett has lectured widely to international academic, military, and defence-industrial audiences. Currently, he is a Visiting Lecturer at the University of Greenwich. He also is a member of the publications Editorial Board for the Royal Australian Navy's Sea Power Centre-Australia.

His most recent relevant publications include:

- 'The Navy in Russia's Resurgence', *RUSI Journal*, February 2009
- 'British Defence and Security Policy: the Maritime Contribution', RUSI Occasional Paper, June 2008
- 'The Royal Swedish Navy: An Outsider's Perspective', in Niklas Granholm (ed.), *Six Perspectives on Naval Strategy* (Sweden: FOI, December 2008)
- 'Maritime Security: A Choice or Obligation – and the Implications for the European Union', published in *The Question Marks over Europe's Maritime Security* (Security & Defence Agenda, 2007)
- 'Old Roles and New Capabilities for Maritime Coalitions in the New World Order', published in Andrew Forbes (ed.), *Sea Power Challenges: Old and New* (The Sea Power Centre – Australia and Halstead Press, 2007).

Prior to joining RUSI, Dr Willett was Leverhulme Research Fellow at the Centre for Security Studies, University of Hull and was seconded to the Naval Staff Directorate in the Ministry of Defence as a Research Associate. He holds a BA in International Relations, an MA in War Studies and a doctorate on Tomahawk's role in US-Soviet strategic arms control.

About RUSI

The Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) is an independent think tank engaged in cutting edge defence and security research. A unique institution, founded in 1831 by the Duke of Wellington, RUSI embodies nearly two centuries of forward thinking, free discussion and careful reflection on defence and security matters.

For more information, please visit: www.rusi.org

About the Maritime Studies Programme

The Maritime Studies Programme provides analysis, conducts research, contributes to a wide range of publications, and convenes meetings on issues relating to national defence and security policy requirements for the use of the sea, maritime security, the maritime operational environment, and the roles and capabilities of military forces based at sea.

Current research projects include:

- Maritime security - the political and naval issues relating to Somali piracy, the roles of navies in delivering security in the Arctic, and the political and military significance of combined naval approaches in addressing such issues
- Equipment capability - major Royal Navy equipment programmes, and those of other navies, in the context of changes in defence policy and defence budgets
- Strategic nuclear deterrence - the broad issues relating to the use of deterrence in the twenty-first century, and the UK's own programme to replace its independent strategic deterrent
- The role of navies in supporting defence policy and in delivering national and international security.

For more information, please visit: www.rusi.org/maritime

Executive Summary

This report analyses the discussions of a series of closed workshops, hosted by the Royal United Services Institute's Maritime Studies Programme, held in the spring of 2009. The workshops were attended by representatives of RUSI, the Royal Navy, the Ministry of Defence (MoD), other government departments and both Houses of Parliament; and by political researchers, industrialists from the naval ship building and commercial maritime sectors, specialist defence press, and analysts and academics. The workshops were supported by the Royal Navy, and were sponsored by Thales. The workshops focused on: the evolving role of sea power in the twenty-first century; the role of the Future Surface Combatant (FSC) in supporting British defence and security interests; the maritime contribution to UK national security; and the maritime strategy required to support international security.

The aim of the report is to draw out the key findings of the workshop series, and to determine the significance or otherwise of the maritime contribution to joint military operations, to UK defence strategy and policy requirements and to wider national and international security and stability. The UK is an island nation which relies on the use of the sea. The report examines this assumption in the context of the evolving UK National Security Strategy (NSS), and current Government thinking on the principles and drivers relating to a Future Defence Review (FDR).

The report argues that:

- Facing a watershed in UK defence and security history, the UK defence community currently is fixed in the eye of a perfect politico-strategic storm, caused by a combination of: an impending general election and a change in government; the likely considerable impact of the current financial crisis upon a defence budget which is already shrinking year-on-year in value; an imminent FDR; and strategic paralysis in defence thinking caused by operational overstretch, a lack of resources and a political imperative to focus almost exclusively on short-term operational issues.
- Britain is an island nation with a long-established history of operating at sea around the world, and is reliant on the use of the sea for its security and prosperity. However, its ability to protect its global interests is severely challenged.
- There is a current political awareness of maritime security issues, but ensuring the secure use of the sea for the safe passage of trade will remain a strategic matter of critical national and international concern.
- Although the world has moved on since the Cold War, traditional challenges endure and significant new risks have emerged in a multi-polar world which is highly unstable and unpredictable. While there are no evident, direct, state-led threats to UK territory, major states can still affect each other's interests. Military competition between major states exists in several different ways other than just direct conflict. Thus, understanding of and mitigation against the risk of state-led threats remains important. All major states are also building up their naval forces.
- The UK Armed Forces are operating on a wartime footing, but one supported by a peacetime mentality and budget.
- Defining the military contribution to national security – in particular how government and society view the use of the military instrument – is an essential element of a security strategy. Thus, as the NSS is refreshed, defence will need a more clearly defined and substantial profile in the NSS process.
- The UK faces neither permanent threats nor permanent enemies, but does have permanent interests. Making the case for defending interests, rather than defending against threats and enemies, is difficult.
- The UK has a series of critical national interests, including: defence of the realm; relations with the US, other partners and alliance organisations; maintaining the international status quo;

THE MARITIME CONTRIBUTION

retaining 'top table' political influence; securing international trade and critical resources; and national betterment and well-being.

- If some emerging actors choose not to follow the established norms which currently guide acceptable behaviour within the international system, should maintaining a rules-based approach to international security continue to be a critical national interest for UK?
- The UK should consider to what extent nations should seek international solutions to security problems, and whether there are issues to which only national solutions can apply.
- Like Iraq, Afghanistan remains a war of political choice whose direct relationship to UK security interests is not clear. Current operations in Afghanistan dominate the political agenda. Forces based at sea make a critical strategic contribution to such operations, but this contribution is undervalued at best and unnoticed at worst. The Afghanistan scenario is not a sound basis for long-term conceptual and force development, and the UK cannot allow itself to slip into wider strategic paralysis because of the pressing political needs of the Afghanistan campaign.
- Even prior to the current economic crisis, defence was not an area of government priority, and is not regarded by the government as a long term investment option to help rebuild the UK's financial strength.
- In the context of any FDR, fresh thinking is needed about how to identify and address UK strategic priorities, and how to resource and match capabilities to such priorities.
- The UK requires a better understanding of the need to possess a range of diplomatic, economic and military tools which can be adapted to be fit for purpose.
- The UK's two 'current' operations – Afghanistan

and, until very recently, Iraq – have proved to be so unpopular in political and public positions that questions about the future of a liberal interventionist approach increase the appeal of using forces based at sea to support the UK's global interests.

- Political leaders traditionally have understood the role navies have played in international rule-making. Today, it can be argued that an increased role for the existential presence of legitimate force, such as that provided by navies, is useful in making and supporting such rules – and particularly in deterring long-term threats, either specific or systemic. In such a context, the security of the use of the sea is a matter of national and international obligation.
- There is a range of potential circumstances in which the UK might need to rely on the free use of the sea, and on the role a navy plays in securing that free use. The risk is that the UK's reliance upon the use of the sea is so significant that the emergence of any threat to such free use will have serious strategic consequences.
- The UK no longer has enough naval ships to meet critical national strategic requirements. The assumptions in stated UK Military Tasks should be reviewed in order to consider including emerging strategic roles, such as maritime security. Classifying such roles more clearly as a Military Task would enable the UK to more properly address the issue of funding force structures and capabilities to support them.
- The UK has spent £14 billion to date on operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Government plans to spend, at the last count, £14 billion on naval ships in the next ten to fifteen years. This raises the question of whether the UK is striking the right balance of investment between supporting current operations and investing in a force structure which will support UK interests in the longer term.

The report concludes that:

- The UK has yet to address the question of how much it is prepared to pay to support the commitments it requires and the influences it desires.
- At a time of enduring global commitments and increasing instability, there is a lack of national strategic vision in the UK which, compounded by the mismatch between increasing commitments and reducing resources, challenges the Government to balance the inevitable focus on short-term policy and operations with understanding of and investment in the future.
- The current financial circumstances should not be allowed to force the UK into inappropriate strategic or military capability choices. In making

future strategic choices, the UK should consider options which optimise political and military flexibility for the minimum cost. If government spending is incapacitated, building a large part of the UK defence and security framework around a versatile, flexible force based at sea is a strategic option which may deliver larger and more appropriate levels of political and military influence than other strategic alternatives.

- Focusing on assets and policies which can reduce the risk of conflict in the first place offers preferable political solutions to using military force to pre-empt or terminate military confrontation. In delivering cost-effectiveness in support of policy, especially in preventing rather than fighting wars, maritime forces have a case – providing cost-effective choice at a time of strategic necessity.

THE MARITIME CONTRIBUTION

Introduction

The United Kingdom defence community currently is fixed in the eye of a perfect storm. This politico-strategic storm has been created by a number of factors. These include the certainty of a general election, with the attendant changes in government appointments; and the likelihood of a shift in political focus and priorities as a consequence; the certainty of significant spending restrictions following the disastrous national economic implications of the worst financial crisis the UK has faced since the end of the Second World War and the retreat from Empire. Finally, the impending defence review ushers in further uncertainty as to when it will happen and what it will conclude.

The situation has all the makings of a watershed for defence and security in the UK's strategic history. Sir Michael Howard has argued that 'strategy is a matter of priorities'.¹ The UK's ability to protect its global interests is severely challenged. This paper considers the roles that Britain's maritime forces – and, in particular, the Royal Navy – can play in protecting the immediate and longer-term interests of an island nation, one with a long-established history of operating at sea around the world and one which is reliant on the use of the sea for its security and prosperity.

Strategic Instability, 'Strategic Decay' and Economic Incapacitation: The Current and Future Strategic Environment²

As a result of the economic downturn and consequent government measures to shore up the economy, the national debt is now so significant that a shortfall estimated to be as large as £45 billion in the government's budgets will severely restrict the spending power of the current and future administrations.³ The economic crisis could dominate the UK's strategic direction for years to come. The most optimistic estimates predict that the UK faces at least 'two Parliaments of pain', in which spending cuts and tax rises will be inevitable in the medium term as a consequence of financial collapse and the government's short-term fiscal stimuli.⁴ The UK relies on the use of the sea for the transport of the bulk of its trade, with critical UK resources transported in the floating warehouses

and mobile pipelines which are the commercial shipping industry. The value of maritime trade to the UK has habitually found itself behind the tourism and finance sectors in terms of its economic importance to the UK. However, the meltdown of the global banking system and the loss of the resources generated for the UK by its financial sector means that protecting the UK's 'just in time' reliance upon the use of the sea to support the bulk of its national trade is more significant now in economic terms.

The UK is also embroiled in one (and, until very recently, two) major wars within a global strategic environment which is highly unstable and unpredictable. The world has moved away from the mutual deterrence framework which defined relations between great powers in the Cold War. No deterrent framework (either direct or by proxy) exists to bring such conflicts to a swift conclusion. The UK Armed Forces are required to operate on a war footing. Yet the UK continues to conduct such operations on a peacetime budget and with a peacetime mindset.

It is, apparently, not part of the government's recovery plan to invest in defence as part of its effort to re-build the country's economy. Indeed, on the contrary, it seems likely that the defence budget will take a significant hit. If this is so, how much of a hit could UK defence reasonably absorb and what are the implications and options to result from such a hit?

The current period of significant global instability – which could be inflamed in the short term by the international financial predicament and in the longer term by the impact of climate change – could incapacitate UK government spending. In light of this, focusing a large part of the defence and security capability and effort around a versatile, flexible force that employs sea basing is a strategic option for the UK – one which may deliver larger and more appropriate levels of political and military influence than other strategic alternatives. Any government should seriously consider the strategic cost effectiveness of a navy and its capacity to deliver a range of political, economic,

military and wider social effects. It can exercise hard and soft power across the globe by virtue of the access afforded by the free use of the sea.⁵

The National Security Strategy

To respond to the growing global instability with a co-ordinated, inter-departmental approach, the government produced the UK's first National Security Strategy (NSS) in 2008: *The National Security Strategy of the United Kingdom: Security in an Interdependent World*.⁶ This approach is a significant step forward in strategic thinking, and helps to define a more coherent policy and strategy framework.

The NSS and its formulation have raised several questions. Its focus, which is largely on counter-terrorism issues, makes little or no reference to the contribution of defence to security. Also, for an island nation, it is surprising that the word 'maritime' receives just a single mention.⁷ Defining the military contribution to national security – in particular how government and society view the use of the military instrument – is an essential element of a security strategy. The current government has committed itself to refresh the NSS annually. A second version is due to be published later in 2009. If this updated version is to provide a framework on which to construct defence policy, defence will need a more clearly defined and substantial profile in the NSS process. The second version is expected to have more of a focus on the UK's maritime security context.⁸ It should address the contribution of, and priorities within, the maritime component in contributing to UK security.⁹ This shift in perspective reflects a current political awareness of maritime security issues provoked by political and economic concerns relating to organised crime and terrorism at sea; energy security; and piracy off the coast of Somalia.

The intention of the NSS review process as a whole is to take a risk-based approach to UK security strategy, providing a taxonomy of risks against which likely threats can be measured. The new version should take a broader and longer-term perspective on the UK's security context and of emerging potential threats to UK interests. Promoting greater

levels of national and international integration and co-operation, it should underscore the importance of defence capability by linking the core principles of the first edition (including the role of global interconnectedness and the significance of the core interests of the UK citizen) to emerging threats.

The NSS focus is on systemic trends and risks, rather than on specifics, and on monitoring these trends and adapting approaches as appropriate. These trends are grouped into six principal areas:

1. State-led threats – Great powers (those who have the political, economic and military ability to threaten UK territory and interests directly and indirectly) and smaller states, as well as the role of states of different sizes in supporting the activities of non-state actors
2. Counter-terrorism – this includes an increasing focus on potential terrorist threats in the maritime environment. The attacks on the tanker *MV Limburg* in the Gulf of Aden in 2002, on the US *Arleigh Burke*-class destroyer *USS Cole* (DDG-67) in the port of Aden in 2003, and on Mumbai in 2008 highlight clearly the terrorist threat at and from the sea to commerce, military forces and populations
3. Counter-proliferation – particularly in relation to weapons of mass destruction. There is an appropriate balance to be struck between proliferation, deterrence and disarmament. Too much disarmament by certain states at the wrong time may reduce the potential impact of deterrence while increasing incentives for proliferation
4. Wider global instability – including the strategic impact of state failure
5. Civil emergencies
6. Serious organised crime – the UK's Armed Forces have a variety of roles in dealing with serious organised crime, for example in building an intelligence picture and in targeting specific activities. Significantly, the Royal Navy can

THE MARITIME CONTRIBUTION

support the work of organisations like the Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA). By carrying out its day-to-day job at sea, the Royal Navy can build up a strategic intelligence picture which it can share with other agencies. For specific issues such as counter-narcotics operations, it has a critical role to play because the majority of drugs arriving in the UK travel at some point by sea.¹⁰

Other critical strategic drivers being considered by the NSS include:

- Environmental protection – including the protection of critical natural resources such as fish stocks, the protection of people, and the impact of climate change
- Energy and other critical resource scarcity and competition – some analysis suggests that the non-arrival of just one Liquid Natural Gas tanker at the Milford Haven terminal will see the lights going out in UK homes and factories within a week
- Global economic trends.

If the NSS is to be successful in the longer term approach, it must balance commitments with resources to address each of these risks effectively. A crucial balance is between prevention and response.

State-on-State Threats

It is widely assumed that there is currently no direct state-led threat to the UK. For example, the original iteration of the NSS stated that '[t]here is a very low risk of military attack on the United Kingdom in the foreseeable future.'¹¹ However, as Secretary of State for Defence John Hutton remarked recently, 'this does not mean we can afford to ignore this danger altogether'.¹² The interconnected nature of today's world means that – particularly for a state with global interests to support – a crisis involving two other states can have a direct effect on UK interests. Furthermore, there is a need to prevent the re-emergence of state-led threats (and to deter the consequences of any such re-emergence) by retention and development of adequate military capability for conventional deterrence.

The Russian invasion of Georgia, while not affecting UK territory directly, showed clearly how wider UK interests can be affected by such actions. Events in Georgia highlighted the extent to which large states retain a significant capacity to influence the interests of other large states.¹³ Notwithstanding the international condemnation and consternation sparked by Russia's actions and despite assessments that the West might be entering a period of worsening relations with Russia, the Russian resurgence does not appear to have impacted upon UK government thinking about the potential contribution of the maritime component and of the Royal Navy to UK defence and security.¹⁴ Russia has the ability to influence several major issues of Western strategic focus, such as operations in Afghanistan, Iran's nuclear programme, and energy competition.

Military competition between major states exists in several different ways other than just direct conflict. The US acknowledges the continued risk of state-on-state conflict. It continues to list war between major states as a higher risk than other states do.¹⁵ Of course, the strategic situation of the US is different in some respects from the UK. For example, it has the prospect of an emerging peer competitor. China tends to dominate assessments of this particular issue, but the US may face several regional peer competitors rather than one global peer competitor.¹⁶

Some analysis suggests that the West may be in an 'inter-war' period with Russia following the Cold War. For example, climate change is opening up access to Arctic sea ways and resources. The risk of conflict in the region involving NATO states is significant. All the states bordering the Arctic Ocean are NATO members with the exception of Russia. Others argue that the US, Israel and other allies are already in a pre-conflict phase of a state-on-state confrontation with Iran, over Tehran's alleged sponsoring of operations in Afghanistan, Iraq and the Lebanon and the growing storm over the Iranian nuclear programme. In any case, prudence suggests that deterring state-on-state war should remain a benchmark against which major states should gauge their requirements for retaining or reconstituting military capability, either individually or collectively.

Furthermore, developing other methods of conflict prevention, for example through building deterrence capacity for each of the Armed Forces and for defence as a whole, will help to reduce the risk of conflict in the first place.

The UK's Critical National Interests

A significant variable here is the future political direction of the US. The US faces similar challenges to the UK of coping with the economic downturn while trying to continue to operate with a degree of normality on the world stage. Will the positive, constructive global approach of the Obama Administration be sustainable through the economic crisis? In defence terms, President Barack Obama's first term will be defined both by Afghanistan and the extent to which the defence budget will be affected by financial constraints.

Supporting Alliances and Alliance Interests

The UK is committed in the long term to membership of key international alliances and institutions, notably NATO and the EU, but also in a wider global context with membership, for example, of the Five Power Defence Arrangement (FPDA). The NSS highlights the importance of international institutions and alliances to the UK in preventing the re-emergence of state-led threats, and in deterring such threats if they do re-emerge.¹⁷

Questions such as the appropriate level of any UK political or military contribution to such alliances, and the proportion of risks and burdens (for example in delivering maritime security) that the UK should bear alone or in partnership with allies, are critical at a time of overstretch and economic downturn. For example, the UK takes a leading political and military role within both NATO and the EU. The UK needs to understand how it can best influence the policy agendas of these institutions to ensure that UK interests are taken into account. It must also decide upon a capacity for military contribution that will ensure on the one hand that UK views are influential and on the other that the UK contribution can be reasonable and affordable. This difficult judgement raises the question of whether the UK should consider strategic role specialisation within a trans-Atlantic and European context. Some

specialisation as a leading expeditionary power has happened by default. Could further refinement of the UK's role deliver capability and influence more affordably?

Maintaining the Status Quo in a Rules-Based International System

Of fundamental importance to the current global security construct is a rules-based international system. The financial crisis has shown not only how vulnerable this system can be, but also the need for clearer definition and regulation of the global financial framework. Recent strategic challenges, such as the upsurge of piracy in East African waters and the Russian invasion of Georgia, have highlighted the extent to which questions remain about the durability of a rules-based system – especially in terms of the apparently limited political options available to the international community to respond in situations where states or actors choose not to adhere to the rules. Thus, the UK may face threats in the future from actors who do not appear to acknowledge the existence of international rules.

It is arguable that what Professor Sir Lawrence Freedman defines as 'norm-based' deterrence – the deterrent effect of the strength of the rules-based international system which reinforces 'certain values to the point where it is well understood that they must not be violated' – is itself in jeopardy.¹⁸ With such risks in mind, should maintaining a rules-based approach to international security continue to be a critical national interest for UK?

Top Table Leverage

Whether as a principal ally of the US, a lead member of NATO and the EU, a Permanent Member of the UN Security Council, or a member of the G8, maintaining an eminent position – a top table seat – in each of these contexts has the potential to give the UK political leverage to protect its interests. Part of the UK's perception of its own position is its profile as a proactive, global 'force for good'. Only three countries, the US, the UK and France, can claim an enduring role on the world stage.¹⁹

THE MARITIME CONTRIBUTION

However, retaining such a seat comes at a price. Doing so requires a degree of capacity to perform certain political, fiscal and military tasks – and, thus, the possession and commitment of certain resources. Whatever the UK's aspirations, can it *afford* to maintain a global military profile? Importantly, what global role does the British public wish the UK to have in this respect? Bearing in mind national disquiet over the 2003 invasion of Iraq and uncertainty among the public as to purpose and prospects in Afghanistan, the nation may no longer have the appetite to continue with a policy of liberal intervention and the global role that it is intended to reinforce. It would not, however, be a simple matter to walk away from global commitments. For example, the UK's dependence on global resources and trade will continue. Thus, this context prompts the discussion of what military options provide best value for money in terms of the range of political, economic and military effects they can generate.

International Trade and Critical Resource Security

As noted above, the UK is an island nation with considerable strategic reliance on the sea. It depends on international trade in the global system to secure a large proportion of the resources it requires. Its dependence is very much greater than comparator Western powers. Ensuring the secure use of the sea for the safe passage of trade will remain a strategic matter of critical national and international concern.

National Betterment and Well-Being

This national priority includes ensuring prosperity, influence and stability for the UK people. Maintenance of the free flow of trade into and out of the UK is a crucial factor in securing this.

Current Operations

Afghanistan is likely to be a dominant military issue for the next Parliament and into the medium term. The extent to which maritime forces contribute to operations there is an important matter for this paper. The Afghanistan campaign began as an essentially maritime intervention, enabled by carrier and submarine strike operations, because of the lack of land access into theatre and the need for rapid military effect. Maritime forces continue

to play a vital role today, through the deployment of Royal Marines and Naval Air Squadrons, and significant numbers of specialists in headquarters and support operations. However, the conduct of operations in, and the regularity of deployment to, Afghanistan means that the specialist operational and tactical capabilities of such units often are underemployed in theatre and degraded by a lack of training opportunity at home.

The sea is also the strategic conduit for logistics support, 95 per cent of which is delivered to theatre by sea into the Pakistani port of Karachi. Thus, force protection at sea remains a critical strategic capability for the effective execution of the campaign. The maritime component could also provide further capabilities if needed, for example air defence coverage.

The Afghanistan campaign is the dominant military problem at present in terms of resources. Its relationship to direct UK security interests is not clear. In any event, a solution to the Afghan problem would not remove the UK's principal security challenges. For this reason the Afghanistan scenario is not a sound basis for conceptual and force development.

The instability of Pakistan, a nuclear power, has significant implications specifically for the UK in relation to home grown and imported terrorism. Both the US and the UK are significantly increasing financial support for Pakistan, but there is no indication at this stage that this will have any early effect on a deteriorating security situation. Any British military engagement in Pakistan could be problematic because of the social relationship between the two nations; this would also certainly be a major impediment to gaining public assent to a campaign in Pakistan. Balancing this constraint against the need to maintain the US relationship and sustain UK international influence will be challenging for a government of any political position. An available option in this case is to take advantage of the stabilising capabilities offered by forward-deployed sea-based forces, which can reduce the risk of crisis and conflict in the first place.

The challenge for the current government is, of course, to support current operations while investing in the future. Afghanistan is the war of today, but there will be other wars tomorrow. Michael Codner argues that ‘the nation’s strategic vision for the longer term must not be clouded by arguments that [UK] forces should be tailored for garrison commitments to global counter-insurgency forever.’²⁰ Whether or not the current strategic situation in Afghanistan will be improved by US reinforcements, the UK cannot afford to slip into a state of wider strategic paralysis because of it. It should be borne in mind too that, ultimately, Afghanistan – like Iraq – is a war of choice: the UK government took a political choice to return to Afghanistan in 2006 at a greatly increased level. Future wars may invoke obligations on the UK government. There is of course the matter of reputation. An international perception of the UK’s strategic defeat in Afghanistan would seriously undermine its international influence and prestige.

The General Election and a Future Defence Review

One might conclude from the first iteration of the NSS that there is a lack of national strategic vision relating to the importance of defence to UK security. There is clearly a mismatch between UK strategic commitments and the size of its defence budget. The highest levels of government do not seem to view defence as a priority for attention, although the commitment to Afghanistan is to a major war by any definition, even if in practical terms the UK is only contributing forces to support a medium-scale operation. The Ministry of Defence (MoD) is in a state of planning blight with a stalled financial Planning Round process. There is a general perception of a government system in strategic decay, to use Paul Cornish and Andrew Dorman’s label.²¹ There was a crisis in the defence budget before the economic downturn. The Treasury will see even the bottom line for British defence in its current manifestation as unaffordable.

The Secretary of State for Defence, John Hutton, is trying to reduce defence expenditure to a more manageable level, to re-invigorate both the conceptual and capability framework within which

the UK Armed Forces operate, and to eradicate the Single Service in-fighting which is both as fierce as it has ever been and inevitable given the lack of money and planning blight. However, the difficult situation in Afghanistan has stalled any effort to address critical defence issues root and branch. There is growing Service, industrial and independent clamour for the government to undertake an early defence review and to take fundamental decisions on acquisition processes and programmes. Yet, with a General Election now less than twelve months away at most, no major decisions will be likely until next summer at the earliest. Even then, major equipment decisions will only be taken once the defence review process is complete in whatever form that review takes. The Conservative Party has committed itself to a defence review if and when it next enters into government. The Labour Government will undertake some form of substantial review process, and preparations are underway in the MoD for this likelihood.

Any review will be saddled with a legacy policy matrix of ongoing operations, treaty obligations and other commitments and capabilities. Against this backdrop, some fresh thinking is needed about how to identify and address UK strategic priorities. Formulating an appropriate and effective defence strategy begins with forging security policy, and must also be coherent with foreign policy. The NSS should provide the cross-government strategic framework within which to shape the core principles for any Future Defence Review (FDR). This will be the first time that a defence review will have been conducted in the context of a government-wide NSS.

An FDR will provide an opportunity for the government, the MoD and other government departments and agencies to ask the right questions relating to the importance of defence and security to the UK at a national level, and the role of the Armed Forces as a whole therein. The problem the UK will continue to face, however, is the possibility that the Review will conclude that the UK continues to have global strategic interests which it must support, but that it will have neither the desire nor the ability to protect and support these interests

THE MARITIME CONTRIBUTION

properly in policy and financial terms. Critical UK strategic interests must be determined up front. It will then be possible to identify how these should be protected and supported and what the priorities should be. Anything else will just be what Professor John Baylis terms 'serial, disjointed, incrementalism'.

The context and content of FDR will be affected by a range of issues, including:

- The changing strategic circumstances, including perhaps a new range of issues and a new range of actors
- Systemic risks to the established rules-based international order
- The rise of particular groups of actors: major state actors, such as China, India and Iran, as well as the re-emergence of others, such as Russia; the emergence of a diverse set of non-state actors. Such states may offer direct and indirect threats to UK interests
- The impact of the Obama Administration
- The impact of current operations
- The rise of various forms of fundamentalism
- The continued risk of major state conflict
- The changing context and nature of deterrence
- Increasing nuclear proliferation
- Balancing military and civil contributions to security and defence
- Climate change
- Global resource competition
- The credit crunch and possible fatal weaknesses in the principles of globalisation.

An FDR process should include an assessment of the affordability of policy and military choices. However, there is a strong argument that the current financial circumstances should not be allowed to force the UK into inappropriate strategic or military capability choices.

The Defence Budget

The government has argued that it has shown significant commitment to defence with a steady year-on-year increase in the defence budget. However, since SDR there has always existed a mismatch between policy and plans on the one hand and budgets on the other. Defence inflation continues to increase at a greater rate than inflation, with future equipment programmes taking too long to bring into service. Current operations on a scale not foreseen in SDR eat into the budget, chewing up current equipment at a faster rate than even a budget topped up with contributions from central funds can keep pace with. As a result, the net value of the budget has been decreasing for some time. It is most unlikely that any future defence budget will compensate for this decrease, with a reduction in the budget itself being the distinct probability.

The Maritime Contribution to UK Defence and Security

In the development of FDR, the three Services need to engage jointly in discussing the contribution of defence and of the Armed Forces as a whole to addressing the UK's security priorities. Each Service also will need to define its contribution to joint operations and wider defence and security policy. The FDR debate has come at a difficult time for the Royal Navy, in some senses. At a time of re-alignment of priorities and re-structuring of budgets, the Royal Navy has several large equipment programmes underway. The Royal Navy has been somewhat marginalised in defence and wider politico-strategic debates because Afghanistan is seen as a land operation, with the maritime contribution often unrecognised. Yet, for an island nation with global strategic interests, the use of the sea remains vital to the UK. Whatever the case, if an FDR is to be effective, all strategic and military options – including a maritime-focused choice for any future expeditionary strategy – will need to be considered.

The sea is the great connector of the world. It is, in many ways, a physical manifestation of both globalisation and the World Wide Web. Its ungoverned, free and international nature ensures that most nations rely on its use for security and prosperity. Policy-makers are acutely aware of the potential for both incremental and sudden change in the strategic environment. Better understanding is required, however, of the need to possess a range of diplomatic, economic and military tools which can be adapted to be fit for purpose. The use of the sea can act as a stabilising force in times of change, connecting what happens at sea with events on land. In this context, navies can be effective instruments of diplomacy through their presence and through more robust forms of inducement.

Political leaders traditionally have understood the role navies have played in international rule-making, using the sea to enable the delivery of effect in support of policy both at sea and ashore. Today, there are arguments that an increased role for the existential presence of legitimate force, such as that provided by navies, is useful in making and supporting such rules. Naval diplomacy in particular can be an important contributor to a rules-based international system. In essence, the unique role of navies is their contribution to conflict prevention and to shaping the strategic environment. The freedom of use of the high seas means that this effect can be achieved at the place and time of political choice in a way that cannot be replicated in all circumstances with the use of air and land forces. Moreover, at a time of enduring global commitments, increasing instability and decreasing funding, the UK would do well to consider options which offer the optimum political and military flexibility for the minimum cost in making its future strategic choices. A navy, with the flexibility to operate in a sovereign capacity from international waters on land and in the air, as well as under, on and above the sea, has a case that bears careful consideration.

In this context, the Royal Navy does not necessarily need to argue its strategic utility solely in terms of its role in current counter-insurgency operations. It should instead base its case on its role in support of wider national and international interests, both

now and in the future. Yet it is very difficult to make the case for the strategic importance of delivering soft effects, in particular, at some indeterminate point in the future when public and politicians alike are focused on the hard, operational issues of a current war, and when spending imperatives are based around the delivery of hard, tangible outputs. However, the UK's two 'current' operations – Afghanistan and, until very recently, Iraq – have proved to be so unpopular in political and public spheres that questions about the future of a liberal interventionist approach increase the appeal of using forces based at sea.

Expeditionary Approach

For an island nation with global interests to support, an expeditionary approach is likely to be an important aspect of military strategy. In the grand strategic sense, an 'expeditionary strategy' and 'maritime strategy' are almost synonymous for an island nation, with maritime forces able to deploy at distance to deliver sustainable military access and capability into theatre. This both provides direct combat capability and supports other key strategic roles such as naval diplomacy and maritime security.²² Historically, in supporting such an expeditionary approach, maritime forces minimise the strategic risk and burden of a long-term commitment on land.

Ground forces can take and hold ground in a way that neither maritime nor air forces can do. However, as shown clearly by Afghanistan and Iraq, there are risks involved in deploying troops ashore: where the intervening state(s) find themselves taking responsibility for providing security infrastructure, the initial commitment shifts to an enduring, garrison one. It is important, therefore, that the land component of a truly expeditionary force has the agile specialist characteristics that imply short-term engagement i.e. withdrawal perceived as a normal and expected function, rather than as a situation implying failure.

Flexibility and Risk

Michael Codner argues that, when faced with a choice of defining the UK as either a continental or maritime power, the UK clearly would be the latter where maritime power is:²³

THE MARITIME CONTRIBUTION

[effect] delivered from a relatively secure island base across the seas, rapidly by air but predominantly by sea, selectively, proactively as necessary, and with long term factors in mind. These considerations include sustained alliances, friendships and co-operative relationships, deterrence, and benign influence in helping to shape the world security environment through diplomatic and military competence.

The assumption that a navy can provide flexibility to offset a wide variety of risks raises the questions of the type of naval force structure that is needed, and how much of such a structure can be shared across allies. The risk of major state conflict prescribes, for a principal maritime nation, a sovereign approach to the maintenance of some high-end warfighting naval capability. In particular, it must retain and develop the capability that smaller nations or those without a maritime geostrategic focus will not be able to provide. These capabilities include the provision of command and control for coalition maritime operations, sea basing which could include amphibious shipping and aircraft carriers, and the nuclear submarine element of sea control and land attack. For tasks at the lower end of the spectrum in which there is communal international interest, a multinational approach is an option for procuring assets required to support such tasks. Yet this option can risk denuding at a national level the naval contribution to diplomacy, as habitually exercised through presence, coercion and latent and active uses of maritime forces for supportive inducement.²⁴ It can also reduce the ability of a navy both to disperse maritime capability geographically in support of these purposes and to lead in the military contributions to maritime security.

The UK is economically dependent upon the use of the sea. The risk is that the UK's reliance upon the use of the sea is so significant that the emergence of any such threat to its free use will have serious strategic consequences for the UK. An important conclusion in the multinational alliance context is that the naval contribution of a nation with high dependency on the sea should be large and significant in comparison to others, so the nation is on the one hand discharging the duties of alliance appropriately, and on the other retaining control of a critical grand strategic vulnerability.

In the current strategic context, where there is a focus on countering irregular operations and counter-terrorism in particular, there is a significant need for capabilities delivered at and from the sea. Irregulars and terrorists see the sea as a means of moving people and materials, as a base from which to launch attacks and as a target environment itself.²⁵ Where the political agenda does not support the overt deployment of troops ashore, special forces and specialist infantry may require support from the sea for covert insertion into hostile territory (for instance, by submarine) or maritime back-up (for example, by aircraft or Tomahawk cruise missile strikes) in order to carry out counter-insurgency operations. Forward-deployed, able to use international waters to move to the place and time of choice – especially in the absence of access to a foothold ashore – and with the ability (in the case of submarines) to act covertly, naval forces can provide both the early and unique effect which is often required by circumstances and political leaders alike.

At a state level, all the major global powers – including China, India and Russia – are building up their maritime forces. At the opposite end of the operational spectrum from major combat operations, broad maritime security challenges – including general trends such as transnational criminal activity at sea, and specific instances such as Somali piracy and the opening up of the Arctic sea ways – mandate a maritime response, as an important part of an inter-agency approach. Whether such issues are dealt with at a national or international level, navies are typically the only forces that can conduct constabulary operations outside territorial seas of coastal nations.

Presence: A Positive Maritime Contribution

When North Korea tested a nuclear weapon in October 2006, Admiral Sir Jonathon Band (the First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff) was asked at a lecture at the International Institute for Strategic Studies if the Royal Navy would be able to respond to a government request to send a ship to show presence in the region. The First Sea Lord's response was both intriguing and illuminating. He argued that of course he would send a ship if asked by the government because it was his job to

support government tasks. He added that it would be the government's responsibility, however, to decide which other standing task it would decide to gap in order to make a ship available. He then went on to add, almost as an afterthought, that HMS *Kent* had pulled in to Pusan, South Korea, that very morning.²⁶ Clearly, having sufficient ships and submarines to do what the Royal Navy does around the world every day – and that is to go to sea – generates a persistent and consistent presence. The relevance of such presence to UK national security will be self-evident to many, but will depend on the grand strategic choices that an FDR will make with respect to the nation's global status and effect. It would have no place in a 'Little Britain' grand strategic choice that was secure and perimeter-focused.

Much of the focus on and analysis of the contribution of armed forces to defence and security tends to concentrate on kinetic effects. This is understandable as such 'hard' effects are the defining feature of the military. Success is also easier to measure than 'soft' power and deterrent effect in particular. Yet deterring long-term threats, either specific or systemic, requires a significant degree of credible presence, itself generating confidence that the UK can commit to be where it needs to be.

Maritime Capability and Force Levels

Sea-based capabilities such as amphibious infantry, long-range strike and the mobile airfields that are aircraft carriers provide what John Hutton refers to as 'battle winning capabilities'.²⁷ During an FDR, it is likely that the future aircraft carrier (CVF) programme will again be a principal issue for two reasons. First, the relevance of carrier-based aircraft to current operations, for example in Afghanistan, will be questioned. Secondly, there is the affordability of the £3.9 billion bill for two new carriers in the context of the pressure to invest in land capabilities to support operations in Afghanistan, and the state of the defence budget and wider government finances as a whole.

These arguments against the CVF programme can be challenged. With regard to relevance to

current operations, the Afghanistan campaign was launched in 2001 from the decks of aircraft carriers.²⁸ The need to act quickly at the place and time of choosing, but with no access to land bases, made carrier-based air power the only available *modus operandi*. Moreover, even today, large-deck American *Nimitz*-class aircraft carriers (the kind of which the UK will possess with the delivery of HMS *Queen Elizabeth* and HMS *Prince of Wales*, under the CVF programme) are currently rotating through the Gulf in support of operations in Afghanistan. Their aircraft are spending a large amount of 'time on target' providing close air support not just to US but also to coalition troops on the ground – including British infantry units in Helmand province. In cost terms, £3.9 billion represents a significant level of capital investment, but the real issue is placing a value on the political and military opportunities gained by the presence of a flexible, large-deck carrier over the estimated fifty years of service life. The decisive factor in FDR should be the strategic option that is taken. However, it is worth bearing in mind that the carriers are now on contract with industry.

Cost is always going to be a significant political issue. As the UK looks to develop core future programmes, it needs to develop maritime capabilities that are sufficiently robust, modular, and flexible to adapt to meet changing front line requirements. They also must be affordable. Neither the MoD, the Royal Navy nor industry can afford to repeat the experience of the Type 45 *Daring*-class destroyer, where the full price of £6 billion provided the navy with only six out of the originally-planned twelve ships. Versatility comes at a premium. One of several possible capability approaches is to develop a basic fit to enable a ship to be brought into service quickly, but with the potential for equipment upgrades through modularity and incremental acquisition. The capability can then be upgraded and adapted as and when circumstances require and budgets allow.

The Future Surface Combatant

The UK's next generation surface warship, the Future Surface Combatant (FSC), is a family of ships composed of different sized vessels with different capabilities and roles, but with a design basis aimed

THE MARITIME CONTRIBUTION

at improving capability commonality and flexibility while driving down cost. FSC is an essential new programme for the Royal Navy, for any expeditionary strategic option, and for UK defence and security as a whole. It will discharge a range of core tasks, and is at the heart of the recapitalisation of the navy in ship numbers, capability and manpower. In the process of rationalising the UK's surface flotilla in numbers of ship types, the programme still faces some major procurement hurdles. Despite the fact that there is an approved, de-risked baseline design and cost model, these procurement hurdles include how many ships will be procured, of what type and with what capability, what options exist for international collaboration, what capability must be developed nationally to retain a degree of sovereign capability – and whether the approved plan can continue to survive ongoing planning and political wrangles.²⁹

The concept for the new ships maximises their modular flexibility with a view to drawing on and harnessing technological advances quickly as they become available. It will enable different types of ship to be fitted and re-fitted with a variety of capability packages depending on the mission requirements.³⁰ The MoD will be able to use the Type 45 destroyer, which is now coming into service, as a test bed for developing concepts and capabilities for FSC. In this way, the delivery of FSC capability will be both revolutionary and evolutionary. Evolution of capability will persist throughout the development of successive ships in the new class, so the last ship will be very different from the first. However, this new approach is conditional on significant change in the procurement process, improved efficiency in budget management, and a clear articulation of the strategic relevance of the ship. Important acquisition issues such as capability requirement capture, design, cost framework, a sustainable drumbeat, retention of technological expertise and key skills sets, and financial and programme risk are factors which will all need to be rigorously controlled if this major capital project will deliver to time, cost and requirement.³¹ A co-operative but appropriate partnership with industry will be essential, and this is well under way with the development of a Terms of Business Arrangement (ToBA) contract which the MoD will sign with its industry partners to commit

to a process for delivering the programme. The programme – one of the MoD's two novel Pathfinder programmes – appears to have started well.³² This common sense approach to FSC could be a good test case for other major MoD programmes. The programme will need to remain nimble to adjust to political and strategic change in the future.

High-end capability costs money, and lower-end capability requires numbers which cost money. The Royal Navy is expected at present to acquire a range of transformational capabilities, with CVF, the *Astute*-class submarines and FSC. The MoD needs, however, to have acquisition practices which provide increased flexibility in capability, reduced cost, and a resultant increase in numbers which achieve the right balance between high-end capability and numbers of ships. It no longer can afford to pay £1.1 billion for a surface ship – no matter how much world class capability that ship may have.

It bears mention that delaying programmes to save money can increase costs further down the line. For example, it has been suggested the government's decision to delay the CVF programme by two years to make a saving of £400 million in the early years will be offset by an additional £600 million bill in later years. The arrival into service of CVF is central to the Royal Navy's capability plans for the future, as well as for the ability of industry to continue with the FSC programme itself. However, assuming the continuity of an expeditionary strategy, there is a need to ensure a balanced fleet based on a task force concept of carriers, submarines, amphibious forces and surface ships.

There are two factors affecting the number of surface ships. The first is the requirement to secure the free and open use of the sea, including ensuring force protection of assets operating at sea including major strategic units such as carrier and expeditionary task groups. Second is the need to meet other tasks specified by any FDR conclusions. At present, there are twenty-one standing strategic tasks for surface forces, and only around twenty-one surface ships available to meet them. It is already acknowledged that there are insufficient

platforms to meet the number of standing strategic tasks. When the Prime Minister commits the UK to provide a warship to intercept illegal weapons shipments into the Gaza strip, the Royal Navy would of course oblige. However, it would need to gap its commitment to one of the standing strategic tasks. It also bears mention that other UK agencies do not include the Royal Navy's key capabilities in their planning, for example, to support counter-narcotics operations, because it is assumed that a diminishing navy will not have assets available.³³

The strategic need for security at sea – whether for national purposes or for the wider benefit of the international system – would be judged by an informed electorate to be a matter of obligation for a maritime nation. Yet the published standing and contingent UK Military Tasks on which force planning and funding are based contain no reference to naval presence, coercion and wider forms of inducement, protection of commercial shipping or wider maritime security.³⁴ The Royal Navy's contribution to meeting national and international maritime security requirements is growing larger. There is a strong argument therefore for adjusting UK Standing Military Tasks to incorporate a contribution to maritime security.³⁵

There is as yet no cross-government process for ensuring that defence capability requirements are integrated into wider national security requirements and are funded accordingly. Naval capabilities can support a broad range of national security interests on a global scale. At a time of financial constraint, the political and military flexibility of naval platforms should be considered in the wider security context alongside other military capabilities. Indeed, the cost of a robust and effective navy may not in relative terms be so large in the greater scheme of things, particularly when employed as a preventive tool.

It has been estimated that the UK has spent £14 billion on military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq to date.³⁶ The previous Secretary of State for Defence, Des Browne, stated last year that the government was committing to spend 'approximately £14 billion on naval equipment in

the next 10 to 15 years'.³⁷ This comparison raises the question of the relative value for money of UK investments in defence. The UK has committed itself to an enduring operation of choice in Afghanistan, even though its connection to the security of the nation is not wholly clear to the electorate. Yet the Afghanistan commitment costs the same amount of money in the short term as the UK is investing in the Royal Navy's prevention and deterrent capabilities that will support UK national interests for the next fifty years.

Conclusion

The independent strategic nuclear deterrence posture is the only current example of the realisation of a grand strategic approach by the UK government. The NSS and FDR offer an opportunity for some new thinking in extending a 'national security' approach to defence more comprehensively. Identification of critical national interests will be the first stage in this process. It remains to be seen whether the outcome will be a similar range of global security responsibilities that the UK currently expects to undertake. The risk in any defence review is that answers to particular questions may be uncomfortable. In particular, there is the issue of what the nation is prepared to pay on the one hand and the cost of protecting critical security interests on the other – in sum, how much the UK is prepared to pay to support the commitments it requires and the influences it desires. The role of international influence in delivering security and its affordability is a related issue. The UK is at present a global power whose commitments require specific and large-scale military capabilities. The consequent mismatch between national defence requirement and capability will endure at least until the UK tackles the twin issues of the strategic necessity and affordability of its global commitments and the importance of defence as a national security and financial priority.

Michael Codner has argued that 'uncertainty as to the longer term continues, and that the best choices for the United Kingdom's security will be those that address the widest range of futures'.³⁸ Navies are as important in deterring wars as they are in fighting them. The UK is debating the scale and nature of its future counter-insurgency operations in Afghanistan.

THE MARITIME CONTRIBUTION

However, while Afghanistan is the current war, the UK also needs to prepare for a future war – a conflict in which it could better use the conventional deterrent effect of a navy to prevent unnecessary embroilment. Yet focusing on the future does not appear to be a policy priority. In delivering cost-effectiveness in support of policy in the wider context of national security, maritime forces have a case. The existential deterrence provided by forward presence, when coupled with their inherent ability to shift smoothly between soft and hard power, means that maritime forces can provide a cost-effective strategic choice – providing maximum power and versatility at minimum cost – at a time of strategic necessity.

Paul Cornish and Andrew Dorman sum up, succinctly, the political position facing the MoD and government as a whole in formulating a future defence review. Defence policy-makers ‘can never expect the luxury

of a tabula rosa [sic.] but must instead function in an environment invariably constrained by a system of values, by a web of international commitments and by domestic and bureaucratic pressures that tend towards inertia, exerting a certain drag on any attempt to change policy.’³⁹ Defence is about politics, but politics is not about defence. Nevertheless, the current and next government must take responsibility for hard decisions on policy, operations and capabilities, and must not use the opportunities of the political cycle and of the political circumstances to absolve themselves from doing so. The military does not have this responsibility. Without strategic leadership there remains significant risk that enduring strategic priorities, inadequate budgets, lack of understanding of defence and security issues and strategic indecision will see the UK once again do little more than patch itself through this period of operations, strategies, elections and reviews.

NOTES

¹ Sir Michael Howard, 'Defence in the Round: the United Kingdom's Needs, Resources and Priorities', Royal United Services Institute conference, 27 November 2008.

² The term 'strategic decay', used in this context in relation to UK thinking on defence and security strategy, is drawn from: 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* (Vol. 85, No.2., 2009), pp. 247-261.

³ The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) estimates the black hole to be as large as £45 billion. See Ashley Seager and Patrick Wintour, 'Deepest Budget Cuts Since 70s to Fill '£45bn Hole'', *The Guardian*, 24 April 2009, <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2009/apr/24/budget-spending-cuts-alistair-darling>>, accessed 17 May 2009.

⁴ See Cornish and Dorman, op. cit., p. 248, including note 5; Institute for Fiscal Studies, 'Some Initial Reactions to Budget 2009', Press Release, 22 April 2009, <http://www.ifs.org.uk/pr/budget09_initial.pdf>, accessed 6 May 2009; Norma Cohen, 'IFS Fears "Two Parliaments of Pain"', *The Daily Telegraph*, 24 April 2009, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/a6d838ce-305a-11de-88e3-00144feabdc0,dwp_uuid=6c263fae-db24-11dd-be53-000077b07658.html?nclick_check=1>, accessed 6 May 2009. Some reports argued that Chancellor of the Exchequer Alistair Darling estimated that it will be a decade before the UK rebalances its books (see 'Taxpayer to Pick Up £60 billion Bank Bail-out Bill as Darling Admits it will take a Decade to Balance the Books', *Daily Mail*, 20 April 2009, <<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1171936/Taxpayer-pick-60bn-bank-bail-Darling-admits-decade-balance-books.html>>, accessed 17 May 2009.

⁵ The terms 'hard' and 'soft' power, in relation to the use of military force, were used by then Prime Minister Tony Blair in a RUSI speech onboard the Landing Ship Dock (LSD) *Albion*-class assault ship HMS *Albion* at HM Naval Base Devonport, Plymouth, 12 January 2007 (see Tony Blair, 'Defence of the

United Kingdom and Its Interests', <<http://www.rusi.org/events/ref:E45A6104E7E1A8/info:public/infoID:E45A611EFEA3F2/>>). The aim of the speech was to kick-start a national debate on the importance of defence and security to the UK, and it is notable that the Government chose a warship as the location from which to launch its campaign. It is far from clear, though, if the intended aim was achieved.

⁶ Cabinet Office, *The National Security Strategy of the United Kingdom: Security in an Interdependent World*, Command 7291, (London: The Stationery Office (TSO), March 2008). There is some debate over whether the NSS is in fact a strategy, as opposed to being a policy or a doctrine. The NSS identifies a series of negative trends which may impact upon UK security, but a strategy for addressing these requires both means and ends. A policy needs to enable a strategy which, in turn, needs to enable activity. This is the ideal, but is rarely the norm.

⁷ The 'maritime' reference relates to the Serious Organised Crime Agency's *Maritime Analysis and Operations Centre*, Lisbon (emphasis added). See Cabinet Office, op cit., pp. 32-33, para. 4.27.

⁸ The third workshop in the RUSI series was chaired by the Cabinet Office, as it sought to glean feedback on the maritime contribution to national security.

⁹ While the UK Government is taking much greater interest in maritime security issues and is working to improve cross-government co-ordination on the issue, there remain questions about how to organise and rationalise the Government's approach. The Department for Transport is responsible for the security of the shipping which carries UK trade through international waters, and currently is the lead government department for maritime security as a whole. The Home Office is responsible for the security of UK national waters, particularly through the UK Border Agency. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has a role in many political forums, for example on international piracy discussions. Yet none of these departments have the physical capability to provide such security. That capability lies almost exclusively with the Royal

THE MARITIME CONTRIBUTION

Navy, although the use of such is of course reliant on Government policy and requirement.

¹⁰ The two critical issues in counter-narcotics operations are locating and identifying drugs traffic, and then developing an appropriate legal framework, in both operational and legislative terms, for prosecuting it. Navies, with their latent intelligence-gathering capacity, are integral to the success of the issue, but legal complexities relating to the use of military force and the laws of armed conflict under which the military operates in addressing criminal activities means that naval forces often are not the preferred option for law enforcement agencies when considering appropriate assets for an operation. This raises the wider issue of whether a broad review of national and international legal parameters and their enduring relevance – or otherwise – to contemporary and perceived future security threats is required.

¹¹ Cabinet Office. *op. cit.*, p.10, para. 3.1.

¹² John Hutton, speech delivered at Institute of Public Policy Research conference on the UK National Security Strategy, Royal Society of Arts, London, 27 April 2009, <<http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/AboutDefence/People/Speeches/SofS/20090427InstituteForPublicPolicyResearch.htm>>, accessed 6 May 2009. The NSS itself added that ‘although the probability remains very low, over the longer term [the UK] cannot rule out the possibility of a major state-led threat to the United Kingdom’ (*Ibid.*, p.16).

¹³ Responding to such a crisis is precisely the kind of situation in which maritime forces have strategic significance in containing potential crises. Surface forces can be deployed as a visible statement of interest in the region. Submarines can be deployed to gather strategic intelligence on developments. Both of these core capabilities are being driven down in numbers in the UK. For an analysis of the implications of increasing Russian naval activity for UK interests, see Lee Willett, ‘The Navy in Russia’s Resurgence’, *RUSI Journal* (Vol. 154, No.1, February 2009), pp. 50-55.

¹⁴ In a *Sunday Times* article (31 August 2008) entitled ‘Navy Forced to Curb Role as Gordon Brown Imposes Cuts’, Michael Smith argued that ‘the Cabinet Office said there were no plans to change that assessment as a result of Russia’s attack on Georgia, although it could not rule out doing so in the future’, <<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/politics/article4641416.ece>>, accessed 13 May 2009.

¹⁵ In outlining a maritime strategic concept, the United States Navy’s current maritime strategy lists limiting regional conflict, deterring major power war, and winning the nation’s wars as its three core principles against which to develop its combat power: United States Navy, ‘A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Sea Power’, October 2007, pp. 8-10, <<http://www.navy.mil/maritime/MaritimeStrategy.pdf>>, accessed 13 May 2009.

¹⁶ Such regional peer competitors may be Russia in Europe, Iran in the Middle East, and China and North Korea in the Far East.

¹⁷ Cabinet Office, *op. cit.*, p. 44, para. 4.64.

¹⁸ Lawrence Freedman, *Deterrence* (London: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), pp. 4-5 & p. 65.

¹⁹ Russia has moved out of the global spotlight. China and India – whilst currently only regional powers – perhaps are moving into it. Arguably, the EU does not yet have the global influence that its formation suggests it should have.

²⁰ Michael Codner, ‘Defending in a British Way’, paper prepared for the Maritime Media Awards, November 2008.

²¹ Cornish and Dorman, *op. cit.*

²² See, for example, Codner, *op. cit.*

²³ *Ibid.* Logistic support provided by air potentially has a long sustainability footprint.

²⁴ Inducement is a more easily recognised term for suasion. *British Maritime Doctrine: BR1806* refers to armed suasion as ‘the use of military forces in support of diplomacy to influence the decisions of a government or quasi-governmental authority (such as the leadership of a faction). Suasion can be latent (as in presence and general deterrence) or active. Active suasion can be supportive (as in coalition building) or coercive in which case it can seek to deter or compel’. *British Maritime Doctrine: BR1806*, Third Edition, By Command of the Defence Council (London: The Stationery Office), p. 239.

²⁵ Such movements are, in many ways, far easier by sea than they are by air and land, as air transport has a more restricted capacity and both air and land travel is more easily regulated.

²⁶ Admiral Sir Jonathon Band GCB ADC, ‘Defence and the Royal Navy: Where Do We Stand?’, lecture at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, 16 October 2006.

²⁷ Hutton, *op. cit.*

²⁸ Five aircraft carriers – three American, one French and one British – were used to launch the operation ashore. The carrier strikes were supported by land attack cruise missile operations from American and British submarines.

²⁹ The MoD’s 2005 Defence Industrial Strategy (DIS) continues to provide the guiding principles upon which the MoD and industry develop equipment capability programmes, defining also the extent to which the capacity to develop such capability must be retained onshore in the case of each particular programme. As far as surface warships are concerned, DIS states that, while there is a need to retain the capacity to design, manage, equip, integrate, deliver, support and upgrade surface warships, and to retain a minimum ability to build such ships in the UK, there is ‘no absolute sovereign requirement’ to build all warship hulls onshore. See MoD, *Defence Industrial Strategy*, Defence White Paper: Command 6697 (Norwich: The Stationery Office, December 2005), pp. 70-71, paras. B2.21-25.

³⁰ For example, a modular, flexible approach will enable the same space on a ship to be used for a towed array sonar on one mission, a hospital on another, and a special forces mission planning room on another. Interesting ideas include an open architecture approach which will enable the ships to download mission package and capability upgrades directly via the internet.

³¹ In terms of key skills sets, these include: research and development technology expertise; engineers; commercial experts; and naval personnel both at sea and in the MoD acquisition structure. The MoD and the industrial base may already be down to minimum sustainable levels in some areas.

³² The other original Pathfinder programme was the land vehicle Future Rapid Effects System (FRES) programme. At this stage, FRES has been delayed, in part because the significant number of off-the-shelf vehicles which have been purchased for operations in Afghanistan have met the requirement in the short term at least.

³³ Assets for such tasks do not necessarily need to be high-end warfighting assets like a Type 45. A Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) ship, with helicopters and Rigid Inflatable Boat (RIB)-based boarding parties, provide the requisite capabilities for such operations. There is the added complication, though, that current Treasury rules mean that the agency requiring the capability is required to pay for it also.

³⁴ Some of the stated Military Tasks make reference to elements of maritime security, including supporting counter-narcotics operations and ensuring the integrity of UK waters. The Military Task of ‘Defence Diplomacy’ has a precise meaning that does not address the naval contribution to diplomacy and inducement.

³⁵ FDR may employ a different model to ‘Military Tasks’ to define UK military requirements. Whatever model is used will need to address comprehensively the full range of expectations on the Royal Navy.

THE MARITIME CONTRIBUTION

³⁶ Richard Norton-Taylor, 'Cost of War in Afghanistan Soars to £2.5 bn', *The Guardian*, 13 February 2009, <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/feb/13/afghanistan-iraq-bill-british-military>>, accessed 20 May 2009.

³⁷ Rt Hon Des Browne MP, *Hansard*, Column 1443, 3 March 2008, <<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200708/cmhansrd/cm080303/debtext/80303-0002.htm#0803035000967>>, accessed 13 May 2009. Browne added that 'since

1997, when the Government came to power, 31 new ships have been brought into service. [The £14 billion programme] constitutes historic investment in our Navy, which will significantly increase its capability. I am sure that future generations will thank us for that investment'.

³⁸ Codner, *op. cit.*

³⁹ Cornish and Dorman, *op. cit.*, p. 249.

THE MARITIME CONTRIBUTION

TO THE JOINT CAMPAIGN AND THE NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY

By Lee Willett

This report analyses the discussions of a series of closed workshops, hosted by the Royal United Services Institute's Maritime Studies Programme, held in the spring of 2009. The workshops were attended by representatives of RUSI, the Royal Navy, the Ministry of Defence, other government departments and both Houses of Parliament; and by political researchers, industrialists from the naval ship building and commercial maritime sectors, specialist defence press, and analysts and academics. The workshops focused on: the evolving role of sea power in the twenty-first century; the role of the Future Surface Combatant in supporting British defence and security interests; the maritime contribution to UK national security; and the maritime strategy required to support international security.

The aim of the report is to draw out the key findings of the workshop series, and to determine the significance or otherwise of the maritime contribution to joint military operations, to UK defence strategy and policy requirements, and to wider national and international security and stability. The UK is an island nation which relies to a great extent on the use of the sea. The report examines this assumption in the context of the evolving UK National Security Strategy, and current government thinking on the principles and drivers relating to a Future Defence Review.

Occasional Papers

Offering maximum flexibility of breadth and depth of analysis, RUSI's occasional papers draw mainly from conferences, roundtable discussions or commissioned research.