

THE DEFENCE AND SECURITY REVIEW SURVEY



Royal United Services Institute

OCCASIONAL PAPER

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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

The Defence and Security Review Survey

This *RUSI Occasional Paper* details the results of a RUSI survey initiated soon after the UK government's Strategic Defence and Security Review of October 2010. The survey was conducted between 21 to 25 October 2010.

The Defence and Security Review Survey asked 2,015 people from the defence and security community whether they agreed or disagreed with ten key statements concerning the outcome of the defence review, future capabilities, national security and the UK's position in the world.

The data and expert commentary contained within this report are an invaluable resource for anyone seeking to determine the impact of the review on Britain's future security and its role in an increasingly uncertain global environment.

For further analysis, visit: www.rusi.org/defencereview

Cover photo: (c) Press Association/Jeremy Durkin

Members of the public gather to welcome soldiers of the Royal Anglian Regiment as they march through the streets of Norwich for their homecoming parade. The soldiers arrived in the city on the "Royal Anglian Regiment" Class 90 Electric Locomotive, newly named by train operator One Railway to honour the regiment, from London's Liverpool Street station.

Word cloud images: courtesy of Wordle.net



Occasional Paper, October 2010

The Defence and Security Review Survey

Introduction by Michael Clarke

Analysis by Malcolm Chalmers, Michael Clarke, Jonathan Eyal and Tobias Feakin

The views expressed in this paper are the authors' own, and do not necessarily reflect those of RUSI or any other institutions with which the authors are associated.

Comments pertaining to this report are invited and should be forwarded to: Professor Michael Clarke, Director Royal United Services Institute, Whitehall, London, SW1A 2ET, United Kingdom, or via email to director@rusi.org

Proposition One

The SDSR was a lost opportunity for a more radical reassessment of the UK’s role in the world.

No fewer than 68% of people felt that the SDSR was a lost opportunity for a more radical reassessment of the UK’s role in the world.

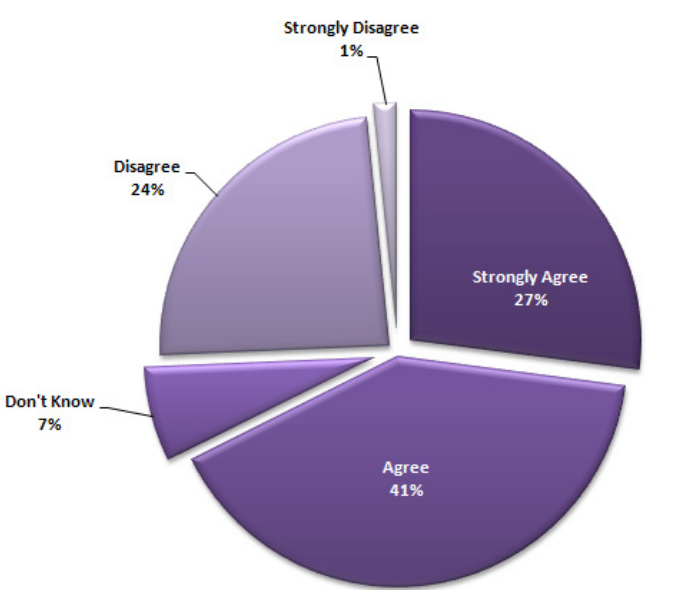
The Expert View

In April 2010, RUSI surveyed 2,024 people from the defence and security community, ahead of the General Election.

Our previous survey revealed that an overwhelming 88% of respondents felt the whole exercise should take a radical look at the UK’s defence and security. In the event, no fewer than 67% of them are now of the opinion that this opportunity has been lost, at least for the time being.

The expectations surrounding the SDSR – the fact that it has been coming for over two years, the pre-planning exercises, the anticipation of swingeing cuts in expenditure – all created a momentum in favour of radical agendas which the Review has only partially adopted. The National Security Strategy is certainly radical in its implications, but the SDSR has not seen the major structural shift in resources that many respondents either welcomed or feared.

Professor Michael Clarke
Director, RUSI



Answer Options	Response (%)	Response Count
Strongly Agree	27.05	545
Agree	40.60	818
Don't Know	6.70	135
Disagree	24.07	485
Strongly Disagree	1.59	32

Proposition Two

The government’s spending review has struck a reasonable balance between cuts in the defence budget and cuts in other public services.

A fairly strong agreement of 65% of respondents felt that the spending review had struck a reasonable balance between cuts in the defence budget and cuts in other public services.

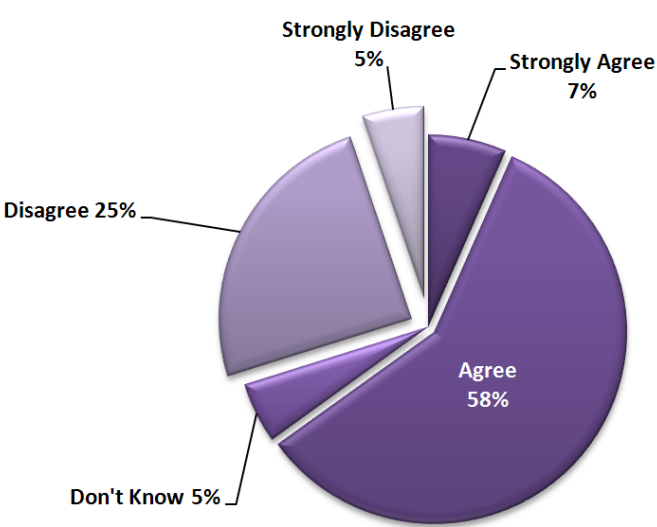
In a RUSI Future Defence Review (FDR) paper, Professor Malcolm Chalmers predicted a 10-15% real term MoD cut over six years, with a 20% reduction in service personnel, to meet spending targets, depending on ring fenced spending in other departments and possible tax rises.

The Expert View

It is a measure of the overall severity of the Spending Review that the MoD’s settlement was relatively generous compared with those of other major departments. The Treasury began by demanding cuts of between 10% and 20% in real terms. But the final settlement – fought intensely into the last week of the Review – left the MoD with a 7.5% real terms reduction. The only major departments with a better settlement were DFID and Health; and the MoD’s share in total departmental expenditure is now due to rise from 8.7% to 9.1%.

The MoD has also gained agreement to ‘back-load’ its required savings into 2013-14 and 2014-15. Despite understandable complaints that the SDSR had been unduly rushed, a postponement of final decisions until later this year would probably have left the MoD with a worse settlement. In the end, it was compelling evidence of the damaging effects of steeper cuts – together with the need to maintain Afghanistan related spending – that allowed the MoD to secure a settlement that was significantly better than at first anticipated.

Professor Malcolm Chalmers
Professorial Fellow, RUSI



Answer Options	Response (%)	Response Count
Strongly Agree	6.60	133
Agree	58.46	1178
Don't Know	5.11	103
Disagree	24.67	497
Strongly Disagree	5.16	104

Proposition Three

The government was right to make defence part of a wider review of national security.

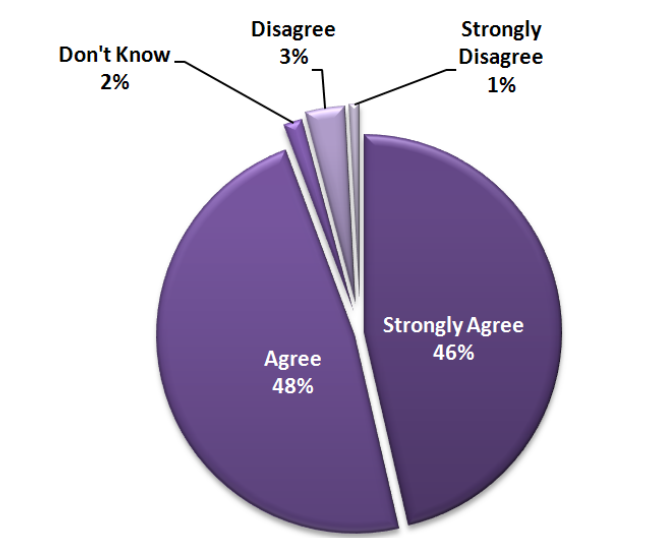
A staggering 94% of respondents backed the government’s decision of making defence part of a wider review of national security, with 46% saying they strongly agreed with the proposition.

The Expert View

As demonstrated by this proposition, the concept of a comprehensive national security review which incorporated both the defence and security sector was indeed the correct decision by the present government. However, the question could be asked: are existing government structures ready for such a wide-ranging remit? From the review it is still not clear through which departmental mechanisms the security and defence elements intertwine. The National Security Council obviously contains both defence and security elements, but how is this being replicated at a departmental level and indeed will it?

Also lacking from the review is a clear vision of what type of nation the UK perceives itself to be both internationally and nationally in the coming years. This philosophical keystone is surely something that should have been defined prior to reshaping our security spending and structures rather than the other way around.

Dr Tobias Feakin
Director, National Security and Resilience Department,
RUSI



Answer Options	Response (%)	Response Count
Strongly Agree	46.40	935
Agree	47.94	966
Don't Know	1.54	31
Disagree	3.28	66
Strongly Disagree	0.84	17

Proposition Four

The SDSR has maintained an appropriate balance between ground, air and sea capabilities.

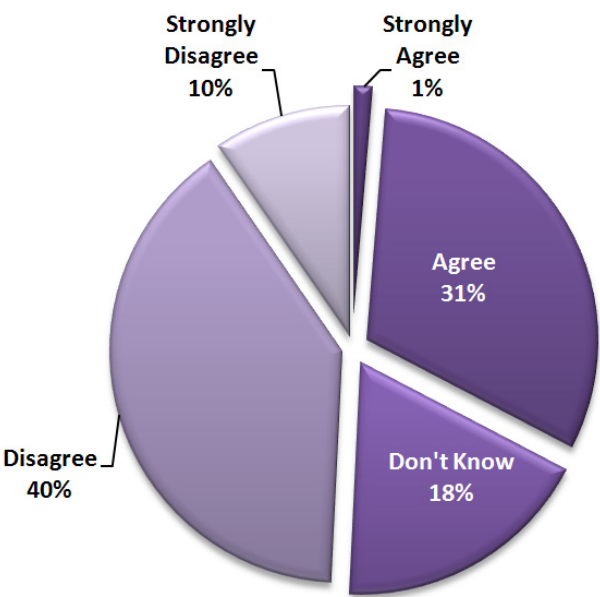
Although no clear consensus could be reached from the proposition that the SDSR had maintained an appropriate balance between ground, air and sea capabilities, with 50% of respondents saying it had not and 32% saying it had, just 1% of people strongly agreed that the SDSR had achieved this aim.

The Expert View

It is no surprise that our respondents were ambiguous about the balance of capabilities that the SDSR has produced. The short-term problems that defence planners faced were so severe and with so little time to make the force structure fit into the national security concept, the SDSR cut forces where it could to meet immediate financial targets and maintained more of the existing force structure than many had anticipated. So the real transformative questions for the forces are still to come.

The eventual balance between air, ground and maritime capabilities has still to be determined. If more respondents (50%) felt that the SDSR has not maintained an appropriate balance between the three environments, this is probably because they fail to see in it a genuinely new direction for UK capabilities. The SDSR has been more of a holding operation. This would certainly be consistent with the more popular view among more than two-thirds of respondents that the exercise was a ‘lost opportunity’ for a more radical re-assessment of the UK’s role in the world.

Professor Michael Clarke
Director, RUSI



Answer Options	Response (%)	Response Count
Strongly Agree	1.29	26
Agree	31.36	632
Don't Know	18.11	365
Disagree	39.65	799
Strongly Disagree	9.58	193

Proposition Five

Given the contractual obligations that it has inherited, the UK government has made the right decision on future carrier strike capability.

A slight majority of 51% of people agreed that, given the contractual obligations that it had inherited, the UK government had made the right decision on the future carrier strike capability, although of that number only 11% strongly agreed.

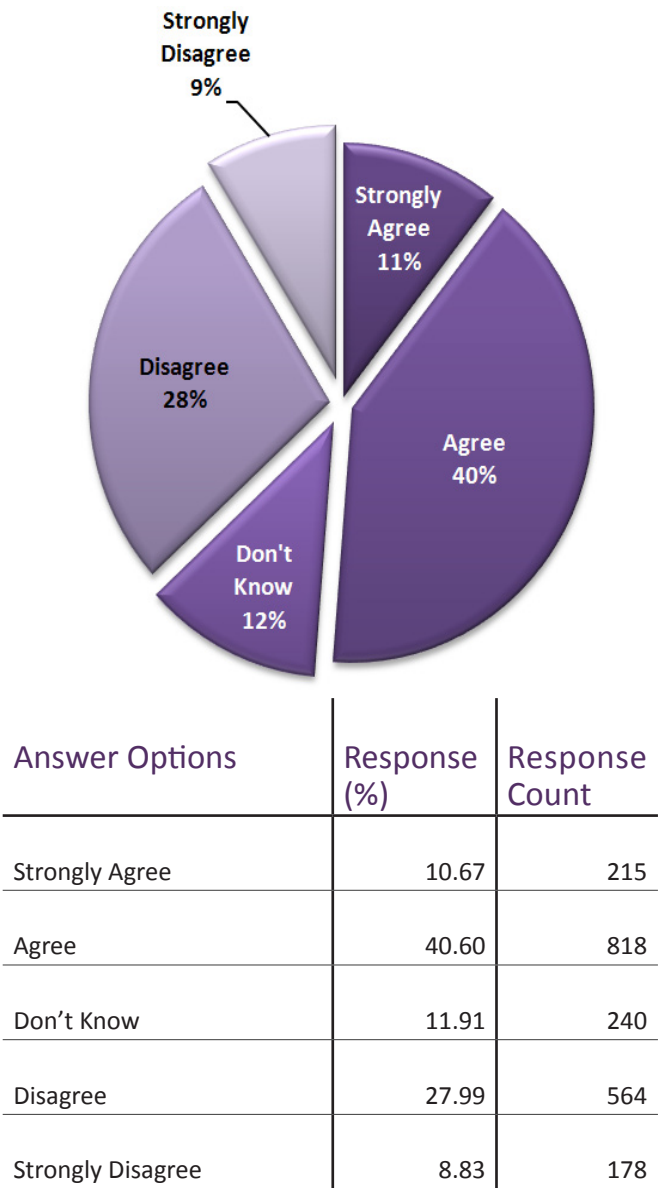
The Expert View

The saga of carrier procurement, taken as a whole, is a sorry one. But, given the nature of the inherited contracts, the government’s position is a reasonably coherent one. The decision to install a catapult and arrestor wire configuration (‘cats and traps’) on the operational carrier will have significant operational benefits, and should have been taken some time ago.

At the same time, the decision to leave open the option of mothballing or selling the second carrier is a pragmatic adjustment to limited resources, and could in any case be reversed if necessary. Perhaps the most controversial element was the decision to decommission HMS *Ark Royal* and (probably) HMS *Illustrious*, together with the Harrier fleet – leaving the UK without a carrier capability for a decade or more. Some argue that, in order to afford the maintenance of these assets, Tornado should have been scrapped instead.

The decision taken suggests that the government’s commitment to a carrier capability, even after 2020, remains conditional and resource-bound. Carrier advocates will continue to have to make the case that maintaining a one-carrier fleet is both vital and cost-effective.

Professor Malcolm Chalmers
Professorial Fellow, RUSI



Proposition Six

The SDSR has eliminated the inherited over-commitment in the defence programme.

Almost a quarter of respondents were unsure as to whether or not the SDSR had eliminated the inherited over commitment in the defence programme, while a small majority (53%) were not convinced.

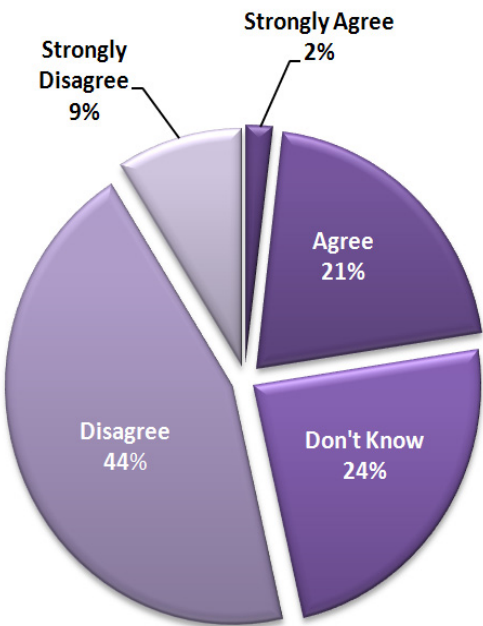
The Expert View

Understandably, without access to the full data, many simply do not know whether the government has eliminated the £38 billion ‘overhang’, a task made even more difficult by the need to make 8% real cuts on top.

The evidence released so far suggests that, provided one believes the optimistic assumptions made on efficiency savings (especially on civilian personnel), most of the overhang for the next four years has been eliminated.

But a significant overhang almost certainly still exists for 2015-2020, and is likely to be a focus of further disputation well before the next SDSR is due in 2015.

Professor Malcolm Chalmers
Professorial Fellow, RUSI



Answer Options	Response (%)	Response Count
Strongly Agree	1.84	37
Agree	20.74	418
Don't Know	23.87	481
Disagree	44.62	899
Strongly Disagree	8.93	180

Proposition Seven

The government is right to make capabilities for Afghanistan the main defence priority for the next period, even if this means that greater cuts have to be made in other areas.

Most respondents agreed that it was right for the government to make capabilities for Afghanistan the main defence priority for the next period, even at the expense of other areas, with 61% agreeing or strongly agreeing with the proposition.

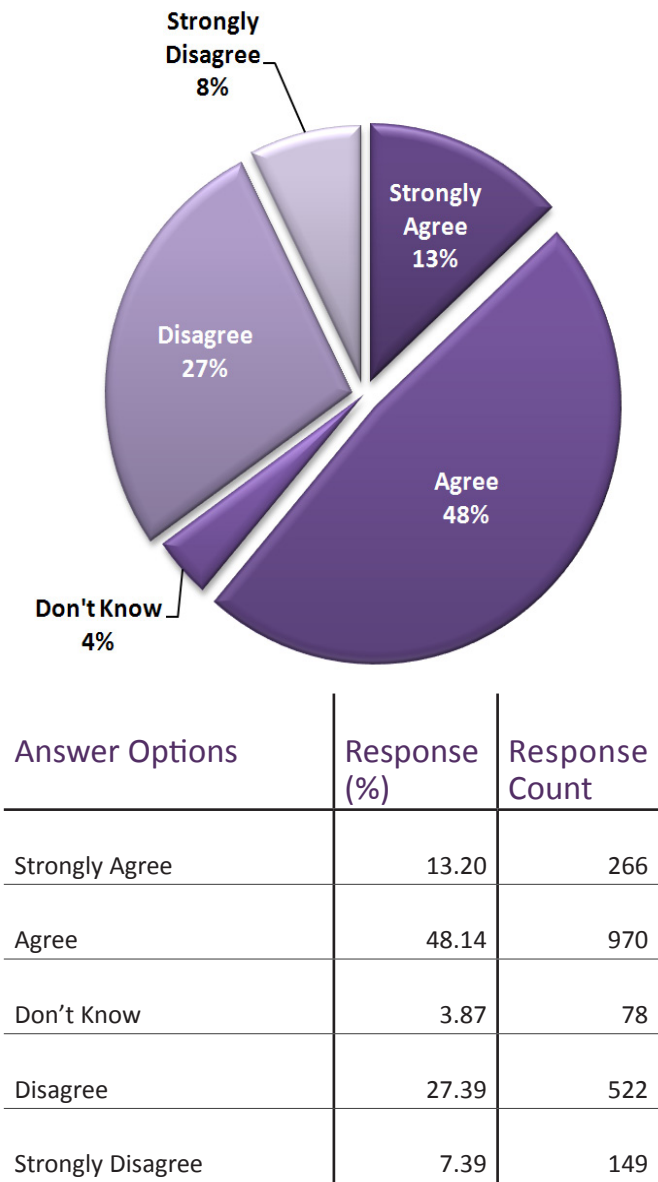
The Expert View

It is no surprise that around two-thirds of the respondents thought that the Afghanistan operation should be made the main defence priority in the Review. If anything, it is a little surprising that the proportion was not higher since this has been a major plank of the Government’s whole approach to the SDSR.

For a range of reasons, the government has said, it is vital that British forces are seen to prevail in Afghanistan and that British operations are brought to a satisfactory conclusion before a reduction of combat forces commences after 2015.

Most respondents to the survey seem to agree with this reasoning, even at a time of austerity, though the a third of those who did not must be regarded as a significant minority view which probably reflects the controversial political nature of the Afghanistan operation in general.

Professor Michael Clarke
Director, RUSI



Proposition Eight

The SDSR should have done more to emphasise the role of the armed forces in homeland defence, even at the expense of other capabilities.

The responses were split quite closely as to whether the SDSR should have done more to emphasise the role of the armed forces in homeland defence, even at the expense of other capabilities. In the end 50% of respondents thought that the SDSR had not done this and 38% of people thought it had.

The Expert View

Military aid to the civil authorities is a difficult subject to broach for two reasons: economics and capacity.

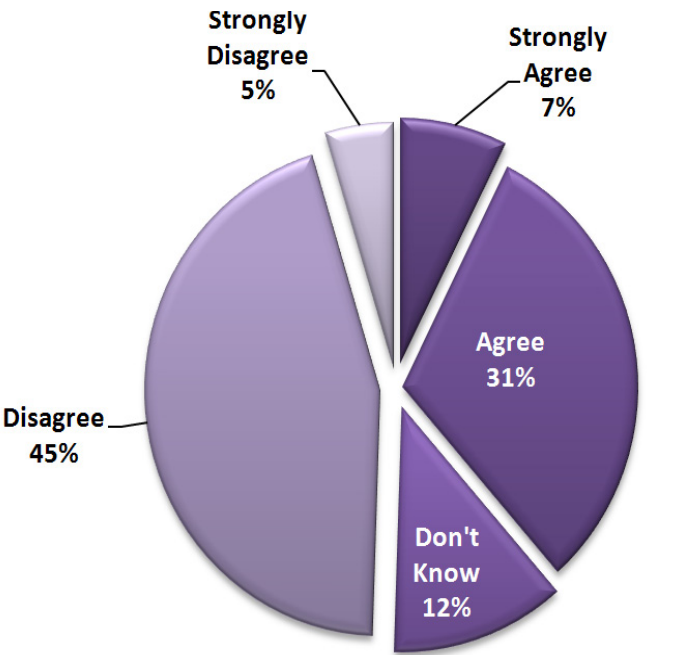
The military are only called upon to assist in the event that civil authorities do not have the capability to respond to a natural or man-made disaster.

We have seen so visibly British military forces assisting during the floods of the past two years. However, these responses are conducted during times of stretched capacity. Is it right that whilst engaged in overseas conflicts in Afghanistan and previously Iraq, the military should have to assist at home?

With the UK defence budget facing financial cuts of almost 8%, the additional burden of deploying personnel to aid civil authorities becomes one the Armed Forces can ill-afford, especially when stretched in other areas of equipment deployment.

Dr Tobias Feakin

Director, National Security and Resilience Department, RUSI



Answer Options	Response (%)	Response Count
Strongly Agree	7.34	148
Agree	31.22	629
Don't Know	11.96	241
Disagree	44.81	903
Strongly Disagree	4.67	94

Proposition Nine

The SDSR provides a welcome opportunity for deepening UK-France defence co-operation.

Although 45% respondents believed that the SDSR provided a welcome opportunity for deepening UK-France defence co-operation, nearly half as many people were unsure.

This reticence was charted in a recent RUSI FDR paper by Etienne de Durand prior to the Defence Review. The mutual suspicion within the general public and elites masked the long-standing bilateral security cooperation between France and the UK. In view of this, Mr Durand called for co-operation that avoided the temptation for grand political schemes and was formed on the basis of a progressive and pragmatic roadmap that ensures either financial savings or capability gains for the two partners all along.

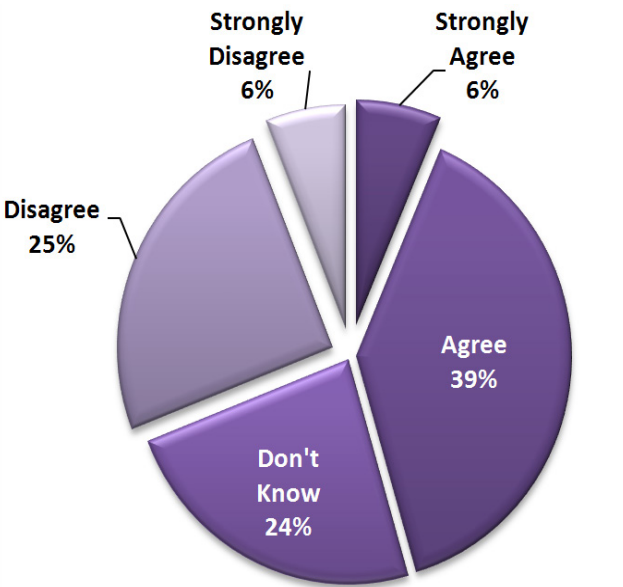
The Expert View

The survey indicates that, far from harbouring any animosity towards France, the overwhelming majority of our respondents accept the prospect of cross-Channel co-operation with equanimity; indeed, the lowest group of voters are those who ‘strongly oppose’ such cooperation.

Nevertheless, support for Franco-British defence tie-ups remains ill-defined: almost half of our respondents believe that the SDSR offered a good opportunity to strengthen military links with our biggest neighbour, but they did not express strong affinities to this topic.

The conclusion seems to be that governments in both Paris and London will have to work hard not so much in persuading their electorates, but more in transforming hazy notions of cooperation into reality.

Dr Jonathan Eyal
Director, International Security Studies Department,
RUSI



Answer Options	Response (%)	Response Count
Strongly Agree	6.40	129
Agree	39.11	788
Don't Know	23.57	475
Disagree	24.86	501
Strongly Disagree	6.05	122

Proposition Ten

After the SDSR, the US will take the UK less seriously in terms of military capability.

A small majority agreed that, after the SDSR, the US will take the UK less seriously in terms of military capability with 58% supporting this proposition.

The Expert View

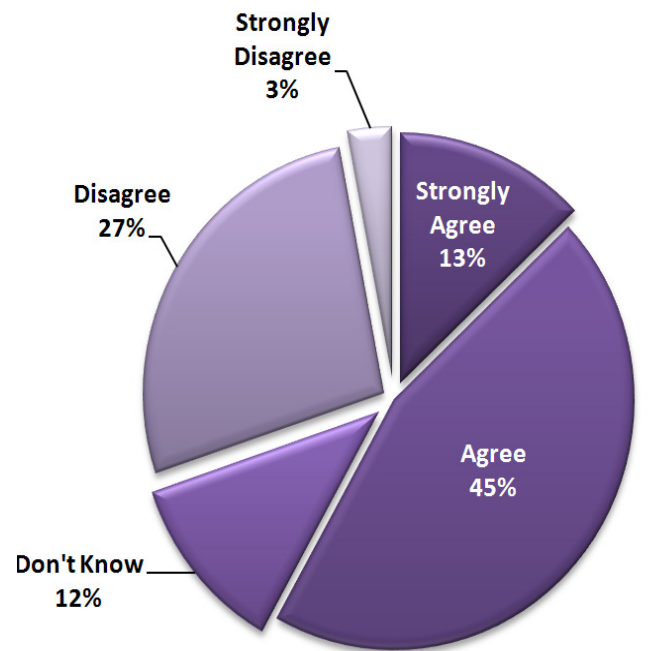
Overall, our respondents are not persuaded by the government’s claim that the SDSR has preserved Britain’s strategic partnership with the US untouched; just over half believe that a reduction in capabilities will change opinions in Washington about Britain’s usefulness as a military partner.

Still, opinions remain divided: almost a third of all respondents (the second-largest group) believe that US opinions about Britain’s military usefulness will remain unchanged, even after the conclusions of the SDSR are implemented.

What we do not know, however, is whether these ‘optimists’ take this view because they genuinely believe that Britain still has something to offer to the US in safeguarding international security, or whether they simply assume that, in the absence of any other predictable military partners, Britain will remain America’s most loyal ally, almost by default, and regardless of the capabilities which the British can commit.

Dr Jonathan Eyal

Director, International Security Studies Department,
RUSI



Answer Options	Response (%)	Response Count
Strongly Agree	12.90	260
Agree	45.21	911
Don't Know	11.71	236
Disagree	27.20	548
Strongly Disagree	2.98	60

Survey Feedback

In addition to the survey, RUSI gave its respondents the option to comment on the issues raised by it. Over a third of the respondents (747) took this opportunity to make a variety of observations.

RUSI has also collated all of the responses, and presented them in a word cloud below.

The cloud gives greater prominence to words that appear more frequently in the comments from our survey.



Many of the comments questioned the removal of the Harriers from service when the carriers were being kept. The carrier capability gap of a decade was also extremely worrying to a lot of respondents.

The more impassioned responses argued that the review was a cost-cutting exercise in the guise of a strategic review that had failed to keep key capabilities or had missed an opportunity for a radical restructuring of the armed forces. However, there were numerous respondents that thought that the government had done a good job considering the constraints it was under.

Summary of Results

Proposition One

The SDSR was a lost opportunity for a more radical reassessment of the UK's role in the world.

Answer Options	Response (%)	Response Count
Strongly Agree	27.05	545
Agree	40.60	818
Don't Know	6.70	135
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Proposition Two

The government's spending review has struck a reasonable balance between cuts in the defence budget and cuts in other public services.

Answer Options	Response (%)	Response Count
Strongly Agree	6.60	133
Agree	58.46	1178
Don't Know	5.11	103
Disagree	24.67	497
Strongly Disagree	5.16	104

Proposition Three

The government was right to make defence part of a wider review of national security.

Answer Options	Response (%)	Response Count
Strongly Agree	46.40	935
Agree	47.94	966
Don't Know	1.54	31
Disagree	3.28	66
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Proposition Four

The SDSR has maintained an appropriate balance between ground, air and sea capabilities.

Answer Options	Response (%)	Response Count
Strongly Agree	1.29	26
Agree	31.36	632
Don't Know	18.11	365
Disagree	39.65	799
Strongly Disagree	9.85	193

Proposition Five

Given the contractual obligations that it has inherited, the UK government has made the right decision on future carrier strike capability.

Answer Options	Response (%)	Response Count
Strongly Agree	10.67	215
Agree	40.60	818
Don't Know	11.91	240
Disagree	27.99	564
Strongly Disagree	8.83	178

Proposition Six

The SDSR has eliminated the inherited over-commitment in the defence programme.

Answer Options	Response (%)	Response Count
Strongly Agree	1.84	37
Agree	20.74	418
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Proposition Seven

The government is right to make capabilities for Afghanistan the main defence priority for the next period, even if this means that greater cuts have to be made in other areas.

Answer Options	Response (%)	Response Count
Strongly Agree	13.20	266
Agree	48.14	970
Don't Know	3.87	78
Disagree	27.39	522
Strongly Disagree	7.39	149

Proposition Eight

The SDSR should have done more to emphasise the role of the armed forces in homeland defence, even at the expense of other capabilities.

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Agree	31.22	629
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A QUESTION OF SECURITY



BOOKS

The British Defence Review in an Age of Austerity

Edited by Michael Codner, with chapters by Michael Clarke, Malcolm Chalmers, Etienne de Durand, Keith Hayward, Geoffrey Till, and more

Available November 2010

This collection of expertly researched chapters analyses all the major themes of the British defence and security review.

For those concerned with what the review means for foreign policy and defence, or those interested in the logic underlying the review, this is an indispensable volume.

It covers every important facet of the review, from the spending constraints created by the financial crisis, to the decisions the country has to take on matters of war, peace and terrorism; the military equipment it should buy, the industrial implications of defence procurement decisions, the relationship with allies and partners, the intelligence sources and, not least, the moral and ethical dimensions of security policy in a globalised, yet disordered, world.

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