

SNP SUBMISSION TO THE INTEGRATED REVIEW

The United Kingdom's exit from the European Union offers a chance for the UK to reflect on its role in the world: its relations with regional and global partners, its global interests and its national goals.

As part of this review, HM Government must ensure that it builds consensus beyond the governing party in Westminster, beyond Whitehall and beyond London. It must look to the devolved administrations and to civil society to build a coherent foreign policy that properly represents the values and interests of Scotland and it must ensure that input from all constituent parts of the United Kingdom is given equal merit.

The foreign and defence interests of Scotland have been long ignored by the UK Government. This can be seen nowhere more clearly than in the decades-long neglect of the United Kingdom's own backyard – the North Atlantic and High North – in favour of attempting to project its power and influence globally. The era in which the United Kingdom was able to do so is long gone. Instead, the UK must demonstrate its commitment to regional and neighbourhood security while carving out a place for itself on the world stage through an active commitment to multilateral institutions and international law.

At home, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has pushed human and economic security to the fore of UK policymaking, demonstrating the importance of national resilience and reminding us that fully funded public healthcare systems and a strong democracy keep the Scottish people safe from modern threats – not weapons of mass destruction harboured miles from Scotland's biggest population centre. Indeed, as we enter a new age of hybrid warfare, this review offers HM Government the chance to re-evaluate what security and defence means in a globalised and digital world.

We believe there are three key aspects to this:

- **An effective Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office**, which is simultaneously capable of providing proper consular assistances to citizens and of making coherent policy that protects Scottish interests and projects our values abroad.
- **A resilient state** which recognises the changing nature of the threats we face and is able to match and counter them through the efforts of governmental and non-governmental actors. This will involve a co-ordinated, cross-Government approach based on expanded understanding of national security
- **A modern Armed Forces** supplemented by a vibrant and diverse defence industry, backed by Government and fully supported with a highly competitive offering made to our serving personnel and veterans. Such an Armed Forces would be one which draws its strength from its active and visible commitment to the rule of law and to its values of accountability, transparency and integrity.

AN EFFECTIVE FCDO

DIPLOMACY AND THE INTERNATIONAL RULES-BASED ORDER

1. With the UK's exit from the EU, it is now more vital than ever that HM Government act to reverse the historic underfunding of the UK's diplomatic infrastructure. As Sir Simon Fraser, former Permanent Secretary at the FCO and Head of the UK Diplomatic Service, stated in 2018, the department is now "*way beyond any ability to do 'more with less'*".¹
2. It is vital that the HM Government's approach foreign policy is updated for the twenty-first century and to reflect the United Kingdom's constitutional frameworks: diplomacy can no longer be the preserve of a small, London-centric group. HM Government must look to examples such as Canada and Belgium and broaden its diplomatic strategy to include greater public participation and formal mechanisms for the UK's devolved administrations and local government to promote their identity and interests around the world.²
3. The devolved administrations have unique foreign policy interests that are not adequately served by the UK FCDO. In order for the devolved governments to fully advocate for their interests abroad, they should enjoy unfettered and unconditional access to diplomatic and consular services, including use of embassy buildings and resources for the advancement of their legislative agendas. This must be by right and not subject to concession or negotiation.
4. One of the key priorities for HM Government must be the signing of a comprehensive defence and security agreement with the European Union. Despite political changes, our common security interests remain the same and collaboration is in the mutual best interest of the EU and UK.
5. It is clear that lack of funding is increasingly inhibiting the FCDO's ability to fulfil its basic functions. With the UK no longer able to rely on the EU diplomatic network, HM Government must increase its spending on international engagements – diplomacy, development and defence – to 3% of GDP for it be able to protect and project Scottish interests and values.
6. The 2015 National Security Strategy contains a firm commitment to strengthening the rules-based international system and its institutions. In the Integrated Review, HM Government must explicitly recognise that the liberal international rules-based order is under threat and make a similarly unequivocal commitment to strengthening and upholding it.
7. The attempt to repatriate citizens during the COVID-19 pandemic showed up a spectacular lack of resource and capacity within the FCO in precisely the service that UK taxpayers are most in need of – consular assistance when problems arise overseas. As the Foreign Affairs Committee noted: "*the FCO was outpaced by events leaving many seeing it as out of touch with the needs of those in difficulty. Too many UK citizens were not provided with the support that they should reasonably expect to receive.*"³ HM Government should enshrine in UK law the right to consular assistance for all UK citizens.
8. The Scottish Government, Scottish MSPs and MPs, and large sections of Scottish civil society stand firmly against weapons of mass destruction. If we are to achieve a world without nuclear

¹ House of Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee, [The Role of the FCO in UK Government](#), 27th April 2011; British Foreign Policy Group, [Running Out of Credit? The Decline of the Foreign Office and the Case for Sustained Funding](#) June 2019

² The Government of Québec, [Québec's International Vision](#), 2020

³ House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, [Flying Home: The FCO's consular response to the COVID-19 pandemic](#) Third Report of Session 2019-21

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weapons, it is imperative that HM Government and its international partners commit wholeheartedly to multilateral nuclear disarmament.

9. The loss of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty constitute a significant blow to the global nuclear disarmament regime and to broader international security. It is vital that the remaining treaties which constitute the nuclear disarmament regime be preserved and strengthened and HM Government should lead the way in seeking the collective agreement and ratification of the TPNW among European states.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

10. Development, diplomacy and defence are the three Ds upon which the United Kingdom's international reputation is built. HM Government's approach to international development must reflect this.
11. Inside and outside of Parliament, the SNP has consistently advocated for the need to preserve the 0.7% aid spend commitment and place people at the centre of development spending, with aid targeted at helping the world's poorest and most vulnerable people. To use international development spending as a means to "*advance Britain's political and commercial interests*", as the Prime Minister has previously suggested, would be to undo years of goodwill and soft power gains.⁴
12. As it proceeds with the merger of DFID and the FCO, HM Government should attempt to learn from the 2013 merger of AusAid with the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.⁵ HM Government must ensure that the UK's international development infrastructure does not suffer the same fate – of a staff exodus and worse performing programmes – and that the focus of international development spending remains on ending global poverty and reducing inequality.
13. In its support to developing countries, HM Government should look to debt relief as a key tool, as recommended by the World Bank and the IMF who have both expressed concern over imminent debt crisis among low-income countries. The United Kingdom must work with its partners in the G20 to secure the cancellation of debt payments for countries in the Global South suffering from the economic impacts of coronavirus.
14. As the climate crisis worsens, HM Government must recognise that it is the poorest countries – those who have done the least to cause it – who will bear the brunt of its effects. HM Government should adopt the concept of 'climate justice' to guide its climate spending in line with the approach of the Scottish Government – described by the UN rapporteur on climate change as "*exemplary*"⁶ – and the recommendations of the International Development Select Committee, which called on the UK Government to "*explicitly adopt these approaches and be guided by them in policy development and programme design*".⁷

⁴ Independent. [Multibillion foreign aid budget should be spent to advance Britain's 'political and commercial interests', Boris Johnson says](#), 11th February 2019

⁵ Richard Moore. [Strategic Choice: A future-focused review of the DFAT-AusAID integration](#), February 2019

⁶ BBC News. [Scotland's climate change process 'exemplary'](#), 10 March 2016

⁷ House of Commons International Development Committee Report, [UK aid for combating climate change](#), 30 April 2019

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15. There is no short-term economic advantage that will ever be able to outweigh the impact of climate change on our society and our world. HM Government must ensure that any trade deals struck includes adherence to the Paris Agreement on climate change as one of its conditions.
16. As the climate crisis worsens, the need for international development assistance will only increase and spending on mitigating climate-related disasters could threaten to displace spending on healthcare, education and similar projects. HM Government should ensure that 30% of overseas aid funding is ring-fenced for climate spending.
17. HM Government should develop a new cross-government atrocity prevention strategy to prevent identity-based violence and mass atrocities at home and abroad.

POLICY COHERENCE

18. The most immediate precursor to the Integrated Review was the Modernising Defence Programme which sought to build on the 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review – itself an update of the 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR), an exercise which had not been undertaken since the 1998 SDSR. Parliament, policy makers, industry and serving personnel among others are poorly served by such an inconsistent approach, and this review should therefore be bound by statute to appear in a regular form on a suitably regular basis.
19. HM Government should look to our Nordic neighbours and adopt the multi-year, cross-party defence agreements that they use to find a common, long-term and durable solution to their defence and security needs. Used commonly by our allies, multi-year defence agreements like the Danish Defence Agreements and those created by the Swedish Defence Commission create a framework agreement among political parties for a common approach to defence procurement that gives security to industry and removes complex and long-term decisions from politicians wedded to short-termism.
20. As well as being victim of short-termism, UK foreign and defence policy has at times also been dangerously disjointed. Different government departments routinely work in ways which contradict or undermine each other and their failure to coordinate not only results in fragmented policies but allows important issues to fall through the cracks. The Integrated Review provides a welcome and timely opportunity to resolve this.
21. The United Kingdom’s relationship with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia illustrates what the Lords Select Committee on International Relations has described as the “*tension*” between Government departments when it comes to foreign policy.⁸ This ‘tension’ descended into farce in July 2020, with Lord Ahmad in the FCO “[welcoming] the Secretary-General’s call for a global ceasefire” during the COVID-19 pandemic on Tuesday 2nd and the Secretary of State for International Trade announcing the resumption of arms sales to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on Friday 5th.⁹ As well as addressing the circumstances which lead to such contradictions, HM Government must immediately cease sales of arms and military equipment to countries on its human rights priority watchlist.

⁸ House of Lords International Relations Committee, [Yemen: giving peace a chance](#), 16 February 2019.

⁹ Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, [‘Maintaining international peace and security’](#), 2 July 2020

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22. The SNP welcomed the imposition of the new human rights sanctions regime against the most serious human rights abusers, including Saudi citizens linked to Jamal Khashoggi's 2018 murder. However, the message this sends to Kingdom of Saudi Arabia from the Foreign Secretary was immediately undermined by the Defence Secretary's reaffirmation of the bond between the Kingdom and the UK and the International Trade Secretary's resumption of arms exports.
23. Moreover, the efficacy of these targeted sanctions against human rights abusers are greatly watered down without a joined-up policy that also clamps down on the activities facilitated by the British Overseas Territories, which have long been havens for the corrupt and criminal to dodge sanctions and launder money. If the UK Overseas Territories do not impose publicly accessible registers of ownership by the end of 2020 – which have been deemed by the Foreign Affairs Committee to be *“a matter of national security”* – the Foreign Secretary should use the powers given to him in the Sanctions and Money Laundering Act 2018 to impose them.¹⁰
24. Further evidence of HM Government's failure to coordinate can be seen in the case of Russian disinformation and political influence campaigns targeting the UK. Despite this clear threat, the Intelligence and Security Committee noted in its Russia report that the issue of defending the UK's democratic processes has been *“something of a ‘hot potato’, with no one organisation recognising itself as having an overall lead”*.¹¹ HM Government must address this; it can begin to do so by appointing an ambassador for hybrid threats.
25. The vulnerabilities of the UK's political system can also be seen in the case of corporate appointments. Despite the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport stating that the decision to remove Huawei from the UK's 5G network was *“made in the national security interests of this nation”*, neither the Home Office nor the Cabinet Office have made any move to prevent the recruitment of figures from the highest offices of HM Government and the Civil Service into its boardrooms of firms backed by hostile foreign powers.¹² This revolving door must be urgently closed through a ban on former Ministers and senior crown servants taking up roles with companies closely linked to hostile states.

¹⁰ House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, [Global Britain and the British Overseas Territories: Resetting the relationship](#), 13 February 2019.

¹¹ Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament, [Russia](#), 21 July 2020.

¹² Oliver Dowden, [Hansard](#), 14 July 2020.

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DEVELOPING THREATS IN THE HIGH NORTH

26. Scotland and the UK are North Atlantic nations – the most northerly not to sit on the Arctic Council – yet in both the 2010 and 2015 SDSR there was no mention of this, outside a very broad commitment to NATO. This anomaly must be addressed, and the centrality of the North Atlantic to the geostrategic interests of Scotland and the United Kingdom must be explicitly stated.
27. The 2018 Arctic Policy statement was a welcome continuation of the UK’s undertaking to provide regular updates on its policy towards the region. We welcomed this at the time and hope that the desire to uphold ‘*environmental protection, international cooperation and the rules-based system*’ expressed in the foreword can be continued.¹³
28. The news from the 2015 SDSR that the UK was to reinvest in Maritime Patrol Aircraft was most welcome after the disastrous decision to scrap the Nimrod MRA4 programme in 2010. While the recent commencement of works at RAF Lossiemouth to house the fleet was also welcome, there must be a feasibility study into increasing the number of Boeing Poseidon P-8s above the current order of 9, which many consider to be too low for the effective execution of the various tasks the squadron will be expected to undertake. With the final delivery of Poseidon P-8s not due until 2024, it will be some time until the MPA fleet reaches a genuine Initial Operating Capability, and so the UK will continue to rely on NATO partners providing MPA assets.
29. Lossiemouth should also become a hub for the ‘Northern triangle’ of P-8 capability in the GIUK gap: USAF out of Keflavik, RNoAF out of Andøya and RAF out of Lossiemouth, and opportunities for increased sharing of strategy and training should be explored.
30. More broadly, cooperation with states in the Northern European neighbourhood, particularly in the post-Brexit context, must be increased. Maritime partnerships with NATO allies like Norway and Denmark in the North Atlantic and Norwegian seas should be enhanced, as should those with non-NATO allies like Sweden and Finland in the Baltic.
31. Commitments to common NATO tasks, such as Standing Maritime Groups, must be prioritised over ‘out of area’ operations of dubious benefit, like FONOPS in the South China sea. The United Kingdom cannot continue to ignore its own backyard while attempting to project hard power across the world – it must take a more active role in protecting regional security in the High North.
32. Scotland’s close links to Northern Europe have been reflected in Scottish Government policy, such as in their Nordic / Baltic Policy Statement. These unique interests must be acknowledged by HM Government and UK Government departments must have a clear and codified responsibility to consult with the Scottish Government when making regional policy.

HYBRID WARFARE AND TOTAL DEFENCE

33. In its July 2020 report on Russia, the Intelligence and Security Committee declared that we are in “*an era of hybrid warfare*”¹⁴, a form of conflict which can be characterised by the (often simultaneous) use of covert and overt tactics enacted through military and non-military means

¹³ HM Government, [Beyond the Ice: UK Policy towards the Arctic](#), 2018.

¹⁴ Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament, [Russia](#), 21 July 2020.

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to undermine and destabilise an opponent by both coercive and subversive methods. Such methods will continuously evolve and defending against hybrid attacks requires building national resilience among the whole population.

34. Hybrid warfare is a multi-layered threat that requires a response in kind. In order to coordinate these various strands of domestic and foreign policy, Finland, Sweden, Spain, Lithuania and Poland have appointed ambassadors for countering hybrid threats. In their roles, the ambassadors coordinate the activities of the foreign ministry relating to hybrid aggression, analyse the consequences of the hybrid threat environment for foreign and security policy, represent their country in the growing international cooperation and discussion on countering hybrid threats, and form part of the intragovernmental coordination effort to understand and counter hybrid threats.
35. In contrast, HM Government's response to key elements of hybrid warfare – including disinformation, political influence and cyber operations – is lacking in coordination and thus leaves the country ill-equipped to counter such efforts.¹⁵ We strongly believe that UK should follow the example of those countries mentioned and appoint an ambassador for hybrid affairs to provide the coordination required to effectively counter hybrid threats.
36. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has shown the centrality of our healthcare system to our national security and the safety of UK citizens. HM Government's approach to the NHS must reflect this through the establishment of a unit within the Cabinet Office which coordinates health security. This should be overseen by the ambassador for hybrid affairs.
37. A European Union External Action Service working paper on countering hybrid threats from 2015 notes that *“work to bolster the effective application of the rule of law, fight corruption or reform the funding of political parties are key ingredients in the defence against hybrid attack.”*¹⁶ Good governance has now become an issue of national security and HM Government's approach to international law and domestic governance, particularly institutional and electoral reform, must reflect this.
38. Questions of domestic governance, including funding of political parties and effective application of the rule of law, were repeatedly raised in the Intelligence and Security Committee's report on Russia. Additionally, the ISC's report highlighted that HM Government's *“failure to prepare”* for Russian interference in the UK's democratic processes stemmed from the fact that *“the Government had badly underestimated the Russian threat and the response it required”*.¹⁷ HM Government must develop a strategy for coordinating its defence of the UK's democratic processes in the future, with a future ambassador for hybrid affairs at the plan's centre.
39. The problem of state capture – for example through funding of political parties – has been shown to be a systemic vulnerability in liberal democracy. HM Government must recognise this and urgently reform the system of political donations in the United Kingdom.

¹⁵ Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament, [Russia](#), 21 July 2020.

¹⁶ European External Action Service, [“Countering Hybrid Threats”](#) (working paper) (2015)

¹⁷ Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament, [Russia](#), 21 July 2020.

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40. It is clear that United Kingdom remains highly vulnerable to hybrid threats and no concerted effort has been made to build national resilience. This is despite a pledge in the 2015 National Security and Defence Review that HM Government “*will expand and deepen the Government’s partnership with the private and voluntary sectors, and with communities and individuals, as it is on these relationships that the resilience of the UK ultimately rests*”.
41. Elisabeth Braw, Director of the Modern Deterrence project at RUSI, stated that this pandemic “*demonstrates the desirability of such a corps of citizens trained in the fundamentals of preparedness and emergency response*”.¹⁸ HM Government should seek to implement this at both a national level, as seen in Sweden with its Civil Contingencies Agency, the MSB, which develops population-wide preparedness, and a city level, like in San Francisco where the Department of Emergency Management helps prepare for disaster and manage their response and recovery.
42. HM Government should also look abroad for examples of more formal citizen resilience programmes. The Danish *Beredskabsstyrelsen* – the Emergency Management Agency – and the German *Bundesanstalt Technisches Hilfswerk* - Federal Agency for Technical Relief – are agencies made up in part or by a majority of volunteers which can be utilised by state authorities whenever a crisis occurs. These agencies are able to provide emergency services with a surge capacity in critical areas when required, meaning those key workers can focus on their primary roles. The ongoing pandemic has shown the urgent need for a similar body in the United Kingdom.
43. Such programmes as suggested in paragraphs 41 and 42 would help to bridge the civilian-military gap and ensure that every citizen of this country is aware of their role in providing a ‘total defence’ against hybrid threats, natural disasters or health crises.
44. At all stages of devising and enacting its resilience strategy, HM Government must involve the Devolved Governments and local authorities to the fullest extent. Resilience operations by definition will not function if they are enacted from the top down.

¹⁸ Elisabeth Braw, ‘[The UK’s Integrated Review: The Centrality of Resilience Concepts](#)’ for RUSI

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RECRUITMENT AND WORKING CONDITIONS

45. A career in the Armed Forces should be one which people can take pride in pursuing and one which HM Government can offer with the confidence that it is doing everything it can to honour the sacrifice of those who risk their lives for the defence and security of their country. That the current offering from the HM Government falls far short of this is reflected in the 2020 Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey which found that fact that less than half of Service Members are satisfied with Service life.¹⁹
46. In 1995, the Government-commissioned Bett Report on Armed Forces career structures and conditions of service found that:
- “We have not been able to ignore a growing strength of feeling, apparent on our visits and in the responses to our survey, that the time may be approaching when some form of representation outside the chain of command may be required ... In a survey carried out as part of the Review, 66% of Servicemen had agreed to some extent with a statement that the Services would benefit from an organisation providing representation outside the chain of command”.*²⁰
- Twenty-five years later, and despite the precedent set by our NATO allies in Germany, Norway, the USA, Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands and Ireland, HM Government refuses to allow for the statutory creation of an Armed Forces Representative Body.
47. An Armed Forces Representative Body would allow service personnel the right to engage in collective bargaining and would be able advocate for its members on matters such as accommodation and housing, pay and benefits, medical services, welfare provision, career development, resettlement, and equipment. It would also be in a position to provide confidential advice and support independent of the chain of command, especially on legal and disciplinary concerns. HM Government must allow for and facilitate the creation of an Armed Forces Representative Body.
48. The UK is the only country in Europe and the only member of NATO to allow the recruitment of sixteen-year-olds into its Armed Forces, a point which has been raised the Defence Select Committee as far back as 2005 and as recently as 2014. While this position has long been morally indefensible, the 2017 Francois Report highlights that it is of increasingly less practical significance, noting that the *“increase in post sixteen-year-olds staying on in education”* has *“particularly affected recruiting in the Army”*.²¹ HM Government must raise the age of recruitment from 16 to 18 years old and aim to make the Armed Forces an employer of choice for adults seeking a rewarding and fulfilling career in service of their country.
49. When giving evidence to the Defence Select Committee in 2016, then-Chief of the General Staff General Sir Nicholas Carter reiterated the diminishing number of young people signing up to the Army: *“Our traditional recruiting grounds—here I am talking about white Caucasian 16 to 25-year-olds—have shrunk by about 25% over the past 10 years.”*²² His statement drives home the need for

¹⁹ National Audit Office, [Recruitment and Retention in the Armed Forces](#), November 2006; Mark Francois, [“Filling the Ranks”: A Report for the Prime Minister on the State of Recruiting into the United Kingdom Armed Forces](#), July 2017; National Audit Office, [Ensuring sufficient skilled military personnel](#), April 2018; Ministry of Defence, [2020 Regular Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey](#), May 2020

²⁰ *Independent Review of the Armed Forces’ Manpower, Career and Remuneration Structures: Managing People in Tomorrow’s Armed Forces*, Chairman: Michael Bett CBE (HMSO, 1995)

²¹ Mark Francois, [“Filling the Ranks”: A Report for the Prime Minister on the State of Recruiting into the United Kingdom Armed Forces](#), July 2017, p. 2

²² Sir Nicholas Carter. [Oral evidence](#): SDSR 2015 and the Army, HC 108 (June 2016)

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the army to diversify its recruitment base if it is to continue to be able to function effectively and properly reflect the country it represents.

50. This will require a concerted effort to make the Armed Forces a more welcoming workplace for women and members of BAME communities. In particular, female representation in the Armed Forces at 10.9% is embarrassingly low and HM Government must do more to encourage the uptake of policies, like career breaks and flexible working, that would make the Armed Forces a more welcoming place for women.²³
51. This is not the only area in which the recruitment of the Armed Forces needs urgent reform. The outsourcing of soldier recruitment to Capita has been a clear failure: it has missed the British Army's annual targets for recruiting new soldiers and officers every year since 2013 amidst a series of delays, lowered expectations, overspends and an acceptance that the Ministry of Defence will not make the financial savings it predicted.²⁴ This contract must be ended and the Ministry of Defence's relationship with Capita terminated.
52. SNP MPs have previously called for the Armed Forces personnel and their families to be exempt from the restrictive immigration rules on the Minimum Income Threshold. These rules state that non-British workers must earn £18,600 to apply for their spouse to live in the UK, and £22,400 to bring over one child. A soldier's basic pay after training is £18,600 a year. HM Government must recognise that these restrictions on service members who risk their life for this country are immoral and impractical. They serve neither the UK Armed Forces or its members well and must be abolished for Armed Forces personnel.
53. There are currently over 6,000 personnel serving in the UK Armed Forces from foreign and Commonwealth countries, with more being recruited each year to fill technical and specialist roles in the Army.²⁵ HM Government should recognise the sacrifices these personnel and their families make for the United Kingdom and offer them a unique pathway to full UK citizenship following their service.
54. HM Government must make greater strides towards integrating service members in their local communities. This will have the benefit of helping departing and incoming personnel integrate into civilian and military life, and for all those leaving our Armed Forces to recognise and realise their skills and potential in a civilian environment. One significant step towards doing so would be to integrate Service Family Accommodation within civilian residential areas. Not only would this improve the offer of accommodation made to Armed Forces but would greatly help to bridge the civilian-military gap.
55. The 2020 Armed Forces Personnel statistics has shown that the trends for service personnel – like many of their counterparts in civilian life – continue to see Britain's reserve forces enjoying an increase in numbers as the regular totals decline.²⁶ The UK Armed Forces must embrace flexible working as far as possible; our allies abroad can provide many examples of best practice. The United States has since 2009 allowed its personnel to take three-year career breaks and return after studying or working outside of the Armed Forces. Originally introduced because

²³ Ministry of Defence, [UK armed forces biannual diversity statistics](#), 1 April 2020

²⁴ National Audit Office, [Investigation into the British Army Recruiting Partnering Project](#), December 2018

²⁵ Royal British Legion, [Commonwealth Visa Fees](#), May 2019.

²⁶ Ministry of Defence, [UK Armed Forces Quarterly Service Personnel Statistics, 1 April 2020](#), 4 June 2020

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the Navy was experiencing “considerable” trouble retaining female sailors, the programme has been highly successful in increasing retention rates among all service members.²⁷

56. The UK’s military community includes some 2.5 million veterans, some of whom suffer from disabilities or lack the skills and support to pursue their careers of choice.²⁸ HM Government’s decision to follow the Scottish Government in including veterans in the census was welcome – they should likewise follow the Scottish Government’s alteration of benefit rules to ensure that the War Disablement Pension is exempt from income assessments and that veterans therefore receive its full value.

PERSONNEL AND EQUIPMENT PLAN

57. Figures released by the Ministry of Defence in July 2020 show that there are 9,820 full-time military personnel stationed in Scotland.²⁹ This is well below the 12,500 personnel by 2020 promised by HM Government during Scotland’s independence referendum – a promise we still expect to be kept.³⁰
58. With the promised increase in troops there can be no further cuts to the Defence Estate in Scotland. Beyond the considerable economic and social impact that the loss of Army and Navy bases from Stirling, Fife and the Highlands will bring to their local communities, the loss of a visible military presence was highlighted in the 2017 Francois report as a key correlate with falling recruitment numbers.³¹
59. In Scotland, the Aerospace, Defence, Marine and Security sector was estimated in 2016 to directly employ 38,400 people.³² Any change in procurement policies that will have an impact on the broad defence footprint in Scotland and which could impact these jobs must only be done following consultation with the Scottish Government.
60. Scotland’s defence industry has traditionally seen the maritime sector as the traditional driver for growth. As HM Government disinvests in the Clyde progresses, it must explore ways of diversifying the maritime sector away from reliance on one sole customer and invest in newer sectors of the Scottish defence industry.
61. Scotland’s offshore waters amounts to a sea area of around 468,994 km². This comprises over 60% of the UK’s waters, yet the Royal Navy’s most Northerly surface warship base is on its Southern coast. Scotland hosts no major surface warships, a fact which means that scrambling the Fleet Ready Escort to Scottish waters takes more than 24 hours, as witnessed by the Kuznetsov carrier group ‘visit’ to the Moray Firth in January 2014. The Ministry of Defence should address this anomaly by permanently basing surface warships within Scottish waters.

²⁷ *Air Force Times*, [Pilot program lets airmen take 'career intermission'](#), 22 December 2014

²⁸ Ministry of Defence, *Annual Population Survey: UK Armed Forces Veterans residing in Great Britain, 2017*, January 2019

²⁹ Ministry of Defence, Quarterly service personnel statistics: 2020, 1 April 2020. [Data sheet](#).

³⁰ HM Government, *Scotland Analysis: Defence* 1.28, p. 31 (October 2013)

³¹ Mark Francois, “Filling the Ranks” [A Report for the Prime Minister on the State of Recruiting into the United Kingdom Armed Forces](#) (July 2017), p. 12

³² Fraser of Allander Institute, [The Defence Industry in Scotland: A Report for GMB Scotland](#), July 2016

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62. The current total of 19 Royal Navy escorts – 17 if those ships alongside are taken into consideration – is a historic low, and there remain grave concerns that commitments towards Carrier Strike capability will be feasible for even one of the QEC carriers.
63. The upcoming tender for Fleet Solid Support ships for the Royal Fleet Auxiliary is an excellent opportunity for HM Government to demonstrate its commitment to taxpayer value and assuage concerns about national security by awarding the contract to a UK yard.
64. While HMNB Clyde remains one of the Royal Navy's three main bases, its main role is as the home of the UK's nuclear deterrent force which the Scottish National Party, along with a majority of Members of the Scottish Parliament, Scotland's MPs and large sections of Scottish civil society continue to oppose. The continuation of the Dreadnought programme is strategically and economically misguided and these weapons of mass destruction must be removed from Scotland.
65. Beyond the financial cost, the opportunity cost of Trident renewal is a heavy burden for the rest of the Armed Forces to bear. Scrapping Trident would allow this money to be better spent on conventional equipment, including ships and aircraft within the Royal Navy.

CHANGING NATURE OF WARFARE

66. The UK Special Forces (UKSF) do valuable work in some of the most dangerous theatres in the world. The need for secrecy during such operations is clear yet the UK's approach to Special Forces oversight remains, in comparison to many of our allies, highly restrictive.
67. We urge HM Government to consider the two options put forward by the Oxford Research Group: (1) introducing legislative scrutiny of UKSF by expanding the mandate of the Intelligence and Security Committee and (2) expanding the remit of House of Commons Defence Committee by providing it with the appropriate permissions to scrutinise UKSF.³³
68. HM Government maintains a policy of strict secrecy on matters relating to the use of drones which places significant restrictions on parliamentary oversight. It is vital that HM Government put in place clear rules to manage the use of British drones in addition to committing to greater transparency around operations.
69. Despite the concerns expressed by the UN Secretary-General and an increasing number of states, the UK has long opposed a ban on Lethal Autonomous Weapons. HM Government must reverse this policy and work with international partners to implement a global ban on LAWs.
70. The Intelligence and Security Committee, in its report on Russia, noted that there is a severe lack of coordination between the various intelligence agencies and organisations when it comes to countering cyber threats. HM Government must draw up a plan to ensure greater cohesion between the various members of the UK's intelligence community so that they can effectively coordinate and complement each other on issues of cyber interference.

³³ Oxford Research Group. *Britain's Shadow Army: Policy Options for External Oversight of UK Special Forces*