



THE LONDON SCHOOL  
OF ECONOMICS AND  
POLITICAL SCIENCE ■

**Global Governance public discussion**

## **Security: Present and Future Challenges**

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*The inter-relationship between global and national security is a feature of our connected world. Rapid change and uncertainty in the global strategic environment is bringing new security challenges. Emerging powers are morphing into future strategic competitors, competition for resources is increasing, non state actors are challenging state assumptions about security and the effectiveness of supranational institutions is being questioned.*

*Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope, the First Sea Lord, and professional head of the Royal Navy, considers the implications for states, now and in the future.*

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I really am delighted to have been invited by David Held and Mary Kaldor, on behalf of LSE Global Governance, to contribute to this discussion on present and future security challenges. Budget day and operations in Libya were not on our mind when we set this date 6 months ago. Occasions like this are particularly timely in the light of recent ongoing international events and provide important opportunities to both think afresh about the nature of the security challenges we face, and to debate our responses to them.

I would like to begin by paying tribute to the bravery and professionalism of what the British Armed Forces have accomplished, and are achieving, in support of UN Resolution 1973; established to protect civilians from attack by the Gaddafi regime. From the initial extraction of British Nationals a few weeks ago, to the effective establishment of a No Fly Zone over Libya now, the Armed Forces – and especially in these particular circumstances the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force – have, as you would expect, acted with appropriate restraint and great courage.

For the Royal Navy, the submarine HMS TRIUMPH has successfully played a role in the delivery of precision strike, with Tomahawk cruise missiles to write-down Gaddafi's air defences. A perfect illustration of the flexibility of our submarine force. Indeed, the recent events in Libya are a good example of our need to be able to respond flexibly to a dynamic security environment. In this sense, tonight's title – Present and Future Security Challenges – is particularly apposite. As such, I shall return to Libya shortly, and I'm pretty certain you will return to it in questions.

This evening I want to consider how the UK secures its strategic interests in a rapidly evolving global environment. In doing so, I will make the point that flexibility of mind and flexibility of method need to be central to the UK's approach to responding to the future security challenges of our modern world.

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So, what does our global security environment look like? Well, there's no doubt that it's a dynamic one, as – in many ways – it always has been. One only has to look back to when the Cold War – with its veneer of simplicity – dominated a more bi-polar security environment, to see the extent to which the security environment has been transformed into an ever more complex one.

Why? In large part because, as this audience will recognise only too well, the conveyor belts of globalisation are – in all their forms – accelerating us closer and closer together. Today, we are connected globally in many many different ways. In 2000, just 12% of the world's population possessed a mobile phone. UN figures tell us that technological innovation has boosted this figure to more than 60%. In 1995, there were 16 million web users globally. Today it is more than 1.7 billion.

The integration of economies across the world is increasing too. The UN estimates that in 1990, the total amount of global investment overseas was \$2 trillion. In 2008 that figure had risen to around \$18 trillion.

Just as there are fiscal imperatives to build closer ties with more economic powers, so globally there is a requirement to build more bridges as power becomes distributed more widely – as the circle of international decision-making becomes more multi-lateral. Indeed, the international architecture is already responding to an increasingly multi-polar world; the G8 has been replaced by the G20 as the main forum for international economic co-operation; NATO has increased to 28 members; and the EU now consists of 27 countries. Viewed collectively, these examples alone mean that events in one region or country are inevitably having increasingly profound effects elsewhere in the world.

So if the last 30 years really are anything to go by, it follows that the next 30 years will, propelled by continuous globalisation, be characterised by rapid change and increasing global interdependence.

Analysts and commentators are quick to remind us of other factors that do, and will continue to, shape the future security environment. The UN predicts that the world's population will increase from the current 6.9 billion to about 9.2 billion by the year 2050. And that, by the year 2030, population increase will mean that global demand for food and energy will rise by up to 50% and water by up to 30%. These are staggering figures across a population of 9.2 billion, but it is not just resource scarcity that is likely to increase the prospect of conflict. The consequences of climate change, from which none of us are immune, are likely to have a disproportionate impact on the developing world, adding further stress to already fragile states in particular.

But it's not just these states that present challenges to security and global governance; the same might also hold true of course for the more powerful nations. And the Non-State Actor, perhaps while wearing the trappings of statehood, will also become an increasingly influential player.

So, when viewed from many angles, the global security environment is, and will remain, a dynamic one. One that is complex. One that is multi-dimensional. Recognising this, the UK's recently written National Security Strategy concludes that, 'the risk is likely to become increasingly diverse'. I think events in the last 3 months underpin that.

Perhaps none of this would matter, if we were in a position to declare a Monroe doctrine of our own, withdrawing from the world and doggedly defending our borders, while policing our water, air and cyber-space. Some have suggested indeed that this is an approach we should adopt, but it overlooks the strategic realities for the UK.

The UK is – and has long been – an outward looking, democratic country, one which trades globally and which relies on an international, rules-based system to ensure the stability upon which our security and indeed our prosperity depend. We leverage influence through memberships of multinational bodies – I have mentioned some already - the UN, the G20, the EU and NATO, to mention just a few. We have a global perspective matched by international responsibilities. Consequently, we are interdependent and interconnected and, in the words of the foreign secretary, live 'in a networked world'.

Another reality, although it is too often overlooked, and is that the United Kingdom is an island. We are also responsible for the security of 14 Overseas Territories, all of which – with the exception of the Gibraltar peninsula – are islands too. Being an island brings enormous benefits in security terms, but it also brings particular vulnerabilities.

According to the Chamber of Shipping, 95% of UK trade by volume and 90% by value is carried by sea. We cannot feed ourselves, so we import much of the food we consume. Figures from the Department of Energy and Climate Change tell us that the UK became a net importer of energy in 2004 and this dependency ladies and gentlemen we would all agree is unlikely to change. We live in a 'just enough, just in time' economy, one in which many goods, raw materials

and other commodities are warehoused at sea, in bulk and container ships. We are already hugely dependent on the free movement of maritime traffic – a dependency that the Chamber of Shipping envisages will only increase. If that flow of material is interrupted, there are implications across the board, and they are increasingly strategic. This is why the National Security Strategy assesses that a short to medium term disruption to international supplies of resources essential to the UK is a significant priority risk.

Given all these factors, I would contend that the UK has little choice but to engage in the increasingly globalised world if we are to maintain our prosperity and most importantly our way of life.

But that engagement, as it always has done, brings risk and reward in equal measure – indeed our own financial institutions stand testament to that reality. The risks may manifest themselves directly; terrorist attacks in our cities, pandemics, extreme weather, cyber-attacks on our national infrastructure, even direct military threats to our overseas territories or to UK nationals living abroad. They may manifest themselves indirectly, perhaps as the consequence of conflict elsewhere, or as a second order effect of direct threats to others – for example, UK nationals caught up in conflict abroad, interruptions to our energy supplies, the deliberate degradation of our environment, the denial of legitimate access to trade routes or resources, and so on and so on.

However much we regret it, and however much we would prefer to conceptualise it, conflict is likely to remain a feature of the security environment. As Leon Trotsky put it, ‘you may not be interested in war, but war is interested in you’. We can debate the relative likelihood of these things coming to pass, just as we can assess their likely impact. However, I hope we can all agree that they do have the potential to affect our security and – because security underpins the global trade and commodity prices upon which our economy depends – to affect our everyday life. Most particularly, they have the potential to impact on our strategic interests; the security of

our people, our economic well-being, our freedoms and our values. In sum, the things we take for granted.

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While some of these security challenges that I have spoken of have always been with us in one form or another, I would suggest that what is new is the speed at which they can combine to engage our national interests. That can manifest itself in ways we might not expect, because it doesn't necessarily sit within our familiar frames of reference.

Take recent events in the Maghreb and Levant as an example. It is said that the riots in Tunisia began when an unemployed graduate set himself on fire after police confiscated his fruit stall in the town of Sidi Bouzid. When he died of his injuries, local demonstrations morphed into national demonstrations, such that the Tunisian Government was ultimately deposed.

That led to the demonstrations and civil unrest in Cairo which fed fears that the Suez Canal could be closed. In response, oil prices – just as they have done in the past – rose, on this occasion to \$120 a barrel. But just try and imagine the economic consequences – to say nothing of the wider regional implications – were events in Libya to deteriorate even further than they have at the moment or additional political stresses arise in Egypt, let alone Bahrain. It is worth reflecting too on just how quickly and widespread demonstrations have reverberated around the Arab world; Tunisia, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Algeria, Jordan, Yemen, Albania, Syria, Lebanon and Libya.

The implications of a young Tunisian not having the correct paperwork to run a fruit stall were not foreseen, but they are no less real for that. They illustrate how quickly events can unfold in a way that is difficult to predict and which can affect UK interests in the short term – in this case, by posing a threat to our energy security and to the safety of UK nationals living, working and holidaying in the region – and potentially in the long term too. Or, as in Libya, simply impacting

on our high standards for the protection of human rights, against an unacceptable brutal oppressive dictator.

Given all that, the principal challenge for the UK is to secure our strategic interests in a global environment that is not just increasingly complex, but one that is characterised by rapid and often unpredictable change. Indeed, the recent events in the Magreb – and Libya in particular – serve as a timely reminder for the UK Government – and I might say even the LSE – that the capacity of world events to surprise even the best prepared of us, should not be underestimated.

For those of us with responsibilities for delivering defence and security, getting to grips with the security environment is a pre-requisite to ensuring the range of outcomes needed to support UK policy and protect UK interests. So, how should we address these challenges?

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It's a question which, prompted by the Strategic Defence and Security Review, has been much-  
aired of late. Indeed, I suspect that in Whitehall it has generated more thought in the last 12 months than in the preceding 12 years.

Throughout my own substantially longer naval career, I have experienced first hand the range of security challenges associated with this shifting strategic environment, and have often been involved in shaping the responses to them. As a submarine commander in the 1980s, for example, my role was dictated by the realities of the Cold War and the deterrent strategy that under-pinned it. In the 1990s, warship command in HMS ILLUSTRIOUS exposed me to the practicalities of military interventionism, which reached its apogee in the year 2000, with the UK's intervention in Sierra Leone.

HMS ILLUSTRIOUS was, along with our Amphibious Task Group and contributions from our sister Services, instrumental in changing the situation on the ground to create a pause in the fighting. The elected Sierra Leone Government, under attack from the Revolutionary United

Front, was thereby preserved and we were able to help set the security conditions which allowed the UN to continue its mandate.

The UK's standing was significantly enhanced as a result and this allowed the expectation to flourish in some quarters that military force – precise, limited and supported by a clear mandate – could be the panacea to any number of further ills.

But past operational success is no guarantee of future performance. Indeed, events since then have served to remind us of the limits of military force alone in achieving security outcomes, not least in respect of enduring stabilisation campaigns.

So what has this Admiral got to say now about how the UK should address the security challenges of today and tomorrow?

Whatever the political rhetoric of the past, this country has neither the capacity nor the political appetite to respond to every conceivable threat. No country frankly has. But that is not to say that we shouldn't try and improve our capacity to do so, as far as is possible. A more imaginative, proactive stance on security should be within our means, provided we are prepared to look again at how we deliver it.

This requires us to do two things: to become more flexible in mind and to become more flexible in method. Let me explain.

Flexibility in mind – in our thinking – is the vital precondition to achieving a more realistic response to the speed and unpredictability of events which characterise the security environments of our modern world.



For example, whilst the 'whole of government' approach to the production of the National Security Strategy published last October is a welcome restatement of strategic principles, and whilst the establishment of the National Security Council to provide prompt, coherent and co-ordinated decision-making on all aspects of national security is a positive step, we need to continue to build on this.

If we are to truly balance resources with commitments, power with interests, I believe that we should be more prepared to employ all the levers of national power – diplomatic, economic, and military – in addressing the security challenges we face; and, if consensus can be achieved, to join with others – state and non-state.

Why? Because, as commentators such as Joseph Nye observe, whilst military power will always have its place, the networked world potentially allows us to achieve outcomes through more subtle use of all the levers of national power.

Whilst this is increasingly well-understood, I think that we should, given the networked context to which I referred earlier, be aiming to go further still. As the author Parag Khanna suggests, when government, business and NGOs work together, real progress can be made. For the networked world has the potential to truly galvanise dot.gov, dot.com and dot.org into generating a more dynamic and innovative response to future security crises. The need for smarter inter-agency planning and delivery – be it humanitarian aid or law enforcement for example – whether nationally or as part of an international effort, is the consequence of a growing shift towards thinking in much broader terms about what security means and how it can best be delivered. The introduction of the Comprehensive Approach a few years ago is, in my view, definitely worthy of reinvigoration.

To summarise, flexibility of mind means we need to consider the levers of power and other actors as individual melodic lines weaved into a complex counterpoint – where the interplay between the

lines is fused into an harmonious whole. Whilst history has yet to determine its verdict, I would suggest that, to date, the UK's response to recent events in the Middle East for example stands testament to an emerging maturity of approach to more intelligently fusing these lines.

This brings me to my second point. We need to achieve flexibility in method - we need to consider more imaginative fusions of both soft and hard power to achieve the desired outcomes and effect we desire.

There is a tendency to understand the UK Armed Forces' activity only in terms of their engagement in conflict. I think that is an inevitable consequence of the focus on the Campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, but the range of operations undertaken by the component elements of the Armed Forces is actually much, much wider than that.

There is also a tendency to view the deployment of the military as a last resort, but I think that the military can be part of a more nuanced first resort, both in better understanding the security situation and in doing something to contain it. I think that Defence can do more in the coming years to shape our Armed Forces so that they can be used more effectively to help address security risks, earlier on, as part of our commitment to conflict prevention. Upstream engagement to prevent conflict.

In this regard, the role of deterrence – and by that I mean both conventional and nuclear – is of the utmost importance. The value of persistent presence in regions of interest – whether to signal national intent, gather intelligence and form insights, contribute to capacity building or to reassure others – cannot be underestimated. The need therefore to maintain a credible war fighting capability able to operate and be maintained at range is crucial. Why? Because you cannot deter effectively unless it is understood by those whose behaviours you seek to influence that you can intervene militarily with confidence. Because you cannot keep the peace unless you are physically there, and prepared to be able to stay there.

To aid your understanding of how the Armed Forces can – and in my view should – be optimised to deliver security outcomes, allow me to illustrate the broader, strategic effect of how the military can be used differently to deliver security.

You may not know that the Royal Navy has been operating in the Arabian Gulf, ashore, afloat, in the skies and beneath the waters since 1979. During the Tanker War of the mid-1980s, we were there providing escort protection to tankers laden with oil through the Straits of Hormuz while the Iran-Iraq war was being waged around us.

We were still there for the first Gulf War in 1991, when our ships and aircraft rapidly defeated the Iraqi Navy. We stayed to enforce the UN's economic sanctions against Saddam Hussein's regime before supplying and landing the amphibious forces that took control of the Al Faw peninsula, the gateway to Basrah, in 2003.

And while you will perhaps have heard about the drawdown of UK Armed Forces from Iraq in 2009, the Royal Navy has remained there, clearing mines, continuing operations to protect the vital offshore energy infrastructure and deterring the illegal and damaging smuggling of weapons and drugs in the region, as well as countering piracy. While we're at it, we have continued to devote resources to passing on our expertise in training the fledgling Iraqi Navy and Marines as well as facilitating détente between Iraq and Kuwait.

Consider how things might have developed had we not, over the last 30 years, been in the position to shape and influence events in the Gulf – to deter, contain and ultimately engage in decisive combat operations against our foe while supporting our friends, all in order to assist the delivery of UK national interests. The fact of our being there, and our wide utility, gave the UK choice in peace-time, and options in crisis. It continues to do so.

Consider these other examples: the operation to evacuate British nationals by sea from Lebanon during the Israeli-Hizbollah conflict in 2006 and, only a few weeks ago, from Benghazi in Libya; the response to the Haiti earthquake at the beginning of last year; the ongoing counter-piracy mission in the Indian Ocean and off the coast of Somalia; the interception of drugs bound for British streets in the Caribbean Sea and Atlantic; the protection of our fish stocks; and the conventional defence of the South Atlantic Islands and their associated resources.

All of these are examples of forces being used flexibly, not fighting wars, but being there doing their business in order that Defence contributes, in harmonious counterpoint with all the levers of national power and other actors, to delivering security for the UK. All are examples of a more elaborate application of both soft and hard power. Whilst I think there is room for more simultaneous activity, genuine flexibility depends on being organised and equipped to offer continuing policy choices to the Government at all stages of engagement with others.

So, for Defence, that means we need flexible forces, able between them to operate successfully across the full range of tasks that might be demanded of them, today and tomorrow: everything from delivering humanitarian relief to winning wars. Flexible forces offer real choices to Government in deciding how to respond to developing situations, but can also provide continuing influence to prevent crises from flaring up in the first place.

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I've already underlined the importance of deterrence in the broadest sense but, of course, this also means maintaining the nuclear deterrent. Whilst the strategic nuclear threat to this country is presently assessed as low, we cannot – as the Strategic Defence and Security Review acknowledges – ‘dismiss the possibility that a major direct nuclear threat to the UK might re-emerge’. Who is to say what the position will be in 20 years time? Recognising this, the Government remains committed to maintaining the nuclear deterrent in order to underpin the security of the UK and support collective security through NATO.

And if we want to be truly flexible, it also means that, whilst the Government understands the risks of taking a gap in the Carrier Strike capability in the near-term, the arguments for Carrier-borne aviation remain entirely sound for the uncertain world that we expect to face in the future. This is why the Government also remains committed to the future Carrier Strike programme.

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To conclude. Introducing greater flexibility in our thinking is the first step to truly galvanising dot.gov, dot.com and dot.org in generating a more dynamic response to future security crises. For Defence, introducing greater flexibility to our forces, their capabilities and structures is a sensible response to the speed and unpredictability which characterise the security environment of not just today, but tomorrow.

Flexibility in mind, flexibility in method.

Thank you very much for your intention.

**END**