

**Security in an Uncertain World  
Speech to Brookings Institute  
Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> October**

**Introduction**

- Good afternoon.
- I am delighted to be here in Washington, the global centre of security studies, to talk to you about an issue of the utmost importance to both our nations.
- I am also grateful to the Brookings Institute for so generously hosting this event. There is probably no better venue in the world, nor a more appropriate and knowledgeable audience, to speak to about security in an age of uncertainty.
- This issue was the subject of the British Government's new National Security Strategy, published just last week, and the Strategic Defence and Security Review which spelt out how we would address the threats identified in that strategy and, importantly, how the necessary capabilities would be paid for.
- I know that some may be concerned over the cuts that are necessary but I hope today to reassure you that we will retain the necessary capabilities to combat the most pressing threats to our national security and that we will remain a first-rate military power and ally of the United States.
- We are intensely proud of our role in NATO and of our partnership with the US and we are conscious of the role we need to play and the capabilities we need to fulfil that role in the long term. But we are also conscious of the enormous budget deficit we inherited from the last government. We have no choice but to reduce public spending. That means we have to take tough decisions now so that we can build for the future.
- These cuts are not ideologically driven – if, as we hope, our economy improves in the coming years and more money is available to invest, then we will invest it. But we could not plan for a bonanza that might never come – that would be irresponsible with our finances and downright dangerous for our security.

**National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review**

- Today, I wanted to give you a flavour of our new strategy, and particularly to focus on the areas of relevance to the United States. It will come as no surprise that in our modern, interconnected world, the areas of overlap between our two countries are enormous.

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- And I also wanted to talk about some possible points of learning from our experiences for the United States. After all, we have faced a terrorist threat on home soil for significantly longer than you have. Finally, as someone who has been involved in intelligence, security and diplomacy for many years, I hope there might be some reflections from my own career that will be of use to you, our closest ally.
- As nations, we have a great history of learning from each other, from our language to our democracy. Since coming to power we have instigated a National Security Council, copying the American model. We have also appointed a National Security Adviser, again following your lead. Developing our own National Security Strategy was therefore merely the latest in that line of shameless plagiarism!
- But we have, of course, adapted the American structures to our own Parliamentary system. So our National Security Council brings together on a weekly basis all of the relevant Ministers who deal with national security – both at home and abroad – to take the key decisions together.
- Aided by the National Security Adviser, the National Security Council has directed and developed the National Security Strategy and the Strategic Defence and Security Review every step of the way.
- They have looked in the round at the big issues and have therefore been able to take the tough decisions based on all the relevant information. I am confident time will tell that this process has meant they have taken the right decisions.

### **US/UK Relationship**

- Our relationship with the US was absolutely crucial to building the analytical picture that allowed these decisions to be taken. That is because we share intelligence on a scale far greater than that of any two other nations in the world.
- Both of our countries benefit from the symbiotic relationship that our intelligence agencies have: without going into inappropriate detail, over the years serious terrorist plots have been foiled by the US authorities based on British intelligence, and other plots have been foiled by the British authorities based on US intelligence. Undoubtedly, many British and American lives have been saved by our intelligence relationship.
- But more than this, it is the ability to combine fragmentary and disparate pieces of intelligence from US and UK agencies, with different skills and different specialisms, that allows us to gain a full picture of the threat both our countries face. So in the end, the US Government's view of those threats is very similar to our own.
- This means that much of the thinking that has gone into our strategy is as relevant to the US as it is to the UK. Given the closeness of our alliance

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and the similarities of our economies and history, we will continue to face a similar spectrum of threats.

- Our aims too, are remarkably similar. In a changing world, with changing threats our interests have remained surprisingly constant. We are outward-facing nations and, as we have done for centuries, we still depend on international trade in goods and services for our prosperity and economic well being.
- Those economic interests are inextricably linked with the globalisation which has continued at an astonishing pace. We now live in a more open and more networked world than ever before. We should seek to encourage this development, not just because it is undoubtedly in our own national interest, but because it is lifting millions out of poverty and increasing the opportunities for freedom and prosperity throughout the world.
- Have no fear, in this changing world we will continue to play our part on the stage of world affairs. As a permanent member of the UN Security Council and a member of the EU and NATO, we will use our network of alliances to stand up for the values our country and yours stands for – the rule of law, democracy, free speech, tolerance and human rights.
- And above all, we will continue to be a valued partner of the United States, now - in Afghanistan and elsewhere - and in the future.

### **Risk Management**

- Before I discuss the threats we have identified and the capabilities we have committed to procure in response, I wanted to make a more general point about risks. It is something which I believe is reasonably well understood by the public on our side of the Atlantic. That is that even with the skill of both countries' intelligence agencies, and even with our carefully targeted resources and your vast military and intelligence apparatus, we can never entirely eliminate all risk.
- It is utterly unrealistic to believe that any number of measures or any amount of money will ever leave us completely safe. As the IRA once ominously said in a statement directed at the British Government: "you have to be lucky every time, we only have to be lucky once".
- Our strategies are intended to eliminate, as far as is possible, the element of luck. We deliberately try to manage the various risks we face – directing scarce resources at those which would be most damaging or are most likely to come about.
- That is precisely what the reviews I will discuss today are intended to do, now and in the future, but let us not pretend that any amount of resources or any number of reviews and strategies will ever allow us to protect everyone and everything all of the time.

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- The risk of overseas conflict can never be eliminated, the risk of a terrorist or cyber attack in a free society can never be eradicated and the risk of natural disaster can never be entirely removed.
- Linked to this general argument is the specific point that we should not assume that any terrorist incident that happens must necessarily have been a failure by the security and intelligence agencies or the government. Such a view only plays into the hands of the terrorists themselves. Risk can be managed and reduced but it cannot realistically be eliminated.
- The very openness of our society, the freedoms and civil liberties that we hold so dear, will preclude us ever being completely protected by the state. And for me, that is a trade off entirely worth making.
- So let me now discuss some of those risks and how we intend to manage and reduce them.

### Threats and Response

#### *Military*

- In the immediate future, Afghanistan will be our first and foremost priority. There will be extra resources to meet the full costs of that campaign – have no doubt we are committed to the strategy. But the purpose of our strategic review is to allow us to prioritise the types of risk that we may face after we have left Afghanistan as well.
- Our aim is to equip our armed forces, our police and intelligence agencies to tackle the threats we face today and the threats we will face in the future.
- We have made had to make hard choices about which capabilities to protect, which to cut back, and which to enhance. But we have done this based on a sound understanding of our future strategic priorities. And this has allowed us to focus on what matters for the future, and cut back on less vital contributions.
- Twenty years after the Berlin Wall came down, the equipment our armed forces have available is still too rooted in a Cold War mind-set.
- Plenty of main battle tanks, but not enough protected vehicles to move our troops on the insurgency battlefield.
- More fighters and bombers than we need, but not enough transport to get our expeditionary troops to and from the war zone.
- We have taken the tough decisions necessary to equip our armed forces to face the future threats.



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- So we will continue to be one of the very few countries in the world able to deploy a brigade sized force anywhere around the globe and to sustain it indefinitely.
- We will reduce our heavy armour and artillery but we will introduce new armoured vehicles, more helicopters and new strategic lift aircraft to make the Army more mobile and more flexible. Our outstanding special forces will receive even more investment to make them even more effective.
- In the short term, we believe we will be able to deploy airpower from friendly bases near to potential conflict zones. However, in the long-term we believe it is right to retain the capability to deploy airpower from anywhere in the world – a capability that only aircraft carriers can provide.
- That is why we have decided to retire the Harrier aircraft and to complete the construction of two large aircraft carriers. We will adapt the operational carrier to allow it to fly a version of the Joint Strike Fighter. Crucially, that will allow our carrier to operate in tandem with the American Navy and for American aircraft to operate from our carrier and vice versa.
- We will also retain and renew our independent nuclear deterrent.
- The Royal Air Force will in future be based around two of the most capable fighter jets anywhere in the world: the Typhoon and the Joint Strike Fighter, complemented by a growing fleet of Unmanned Air Vehicles, modern air-to-air refuelling aircraft and an enhanced strategic air transport fleet.
- Overall our defence budget will continue to rise in cash terms, we will continue to have the fourth largest military budget in the world and we will continue to meet the NATO target of 2% spending on defence throughout the next four years.

### *Terrorism*

- But importantly, this has not just been a defence review. It has also been a security review. That is because defence and security, in the modern world, are inextricably linked – we are fighting a military campaign in Afghanistan to enhance the UK and the world's security from terrorist attack.
- Since the end of the cold war we have not been under threat of conventional military attack from hostile states. If this illusion of security ever existed in the corridors of power of London and Washington, it was emphatically shattered by 9/11.
- Al Qa'ida's attack demolished the argument that the end of the cold war represented the end of history. We have been living in history ever since.

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Al Qa'ida explicitly challenges Western liberal democracy, ideology and power – they see their murderous terrorist campaign as a clash of civilisations.

- Whether we agree with their analysis or not, we must respond by standing up for the values of liberty and democracy that bind us together. The UN, the EU and others are powerful advocates for those Western values – we must use them.
- Of course, terrorism did not begin on 9/11. As a nation that has been under threat of terrorist attack for some time, the British public realised this only too well. But just as international terrorism did not start with 9/11, the terrorist threat connected to Northern Ireland did not end with the IRA ceasefire in 1994.
- A calculated campaign of violence from residual terrorist groups linked to Northern Ireland continues. They have no reasonable political programme and their support base is extremely small and localised. Nevertheless, it is worth reiterating to this audience that their terrorist activities have increased in the last 18 months and the security situation is unlikely to improve in the short term. There have been 37 attacks this year, compared with 22 in all of 2009. And only last month MI5 raised the threat level to Great Britain from terrorist groups connected with Northern Ireland to Substantial, meaning that an attack is a strong possibility.
- Just as the terrorist threat to the UK from Northern Ireland has evolved, so the threat from international terrorism to the West as a whole has evolved and diversified in recent years.
- American drone strikes and Pakistani military activity have undoubtedly put pressure on Al Qa'ida's leadership in the tribal areas of Pakistan. But they have shown startling resilience before and we continue to see threats emanating directly from the region, even under such intense pressure.
- As well as that longstanding threat, we know since the attempted bombing of an airliner over Detroit that Al Qa'ida's affiliate group in Yemen has both the intent and the capability to attack us. The involvement of the extremist preacher Anwar Al Awlaqi is of particular concern given his use of the English language and therefore his ability to attract a broad spectrum of followers in the West through the internet.
- Those websites, would categorically not be allowed in the UK – they incite cold blooded murder and as such are surely contrary to the public good. If they were hosted in the UK then we would take them down. But this is a global problem. Many of these websites are hosted in America and we look forward to working even more closely with you to take down this hateful material.
- I understand that this is a complex area. Many would argue that freedom of speech means allowing people to say things that any reasonable person

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would find abhorrent. But when you have incitement to murder, when you have people actively calling for the killing of their fellow citizens, and when you have the means to stop that person doing so then I believe we should act.

- Somalia is the other major area of current concern, although the threat from groups in North Africa and those linked to the conflict in Kashmir can not be discounted.
- Somalia shows many of the characteristics that made Afghanistan so dangerous before the fall of the Taleban. There is no effective government, there is a strong extremist presence and there are training camps attracting would be jihadists from across the world, including from the US and UK.
- All of these threats emanate from areas of the globe which are fragile, unstable and lack the rule of law.
- And that is why we will increase our overseas aid to 0.7% of Gross National Income by 2013 and will use 30% of that aid to support fragile and conflict-affected states. By supporting responsible and accountable governments and strengthening security and justice overseas we will, in turn, support our own national security.
- That is why we are also investing in our capability to tackle terrorist threats "upstream" – that means while they are developing in an unstable area of the world, rather than after they have returned to our shores. Doing that involves all of our intelligence agencies working together, using their unique capabilities to exploit human, technical and foreign sources.
- But of course, these efforts overseas need to be combined with proportionate and effective counter-terrorism and security policies at home.
- The context in the UK is quite different to that in the US and there is a great deal we can learn from your approach. Over several decades successive governments failed to help immigrants to the UK, many of them from Muslim majority countries, to integrate properly into our society. The mistaken approach of multi-culturalism only added to that disconnect.
- As a nation built on immigration, the US did much better. We will follow that lead by standing up for British values and ensuring proper integration.
- But it will take more than just fixing the mistakes of the past to keep our country safe. We already have a comprehensive strategy for countering terrorism but we will be looking at aspects of that strategy to ensure it is appropriate for the future. So, for example, we will review our approach to preventing radicalisation and we will look again at our counter-terrorism legal powers.

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### *Cyber*

- I thought it would be useful to talk a little more about the other "tier one" - that is the other most pressing risk to the UK – cyber attack.
- Cyberspace is now vital for our prosperity and way of life. But as well as huge economic and social opportunities, the internet brings threats from cyber crime, espionage, terrorism and even warfare.
- If a decade ago I had told you that "worms" are a major threat to government departments, you would probably have thought we had severe soil erosion problems caused by burrowing invertebrates. Now you will understand when I say that there are over 20 thousand malicious email worms detected on UK Government networks each month, with over one thousand deliberately targeting those networks.
- It is estimated that cyber crime costs the global economy over \$1 trillion a year. But the most sophisticated threat in the cyber domain is from established, capable states seeking to exploit communications networks to gather intelligence on government, military and economic targets. No credible power can now ignore the imperative to defend itself in the cyber realm.
- On cyber we will rethink our approach, revise our strategy and reinvest in our response. We start from a strong base. GCHQ, our equivalent of your NSA, is a world leading organisation in both information assurance – that is, securing our own communications networks – and in identifying and exploiting intelligence from other communications networks.
- But as one of the most pressing threats facing us, we need to do more. So we will introduce a transformative National Cyber-Security Programme, supported by £650 million – around \$1 billion dollars - of new investment over the next four years.
- Our wide-ranging cyber security strategy is focussed on defence against state-led threats; defence against non-state actors; tackling organised cyber crime; and partnership working with the private sector.
- At the heart of the strategy is the recognition of the need to enhance our cooperation on cyber security with our closest ally – you. We are currently developing a comprehensive Cyber Operations Memorandum of Understanding between our two countries which will develop, promote and support a shared vision for cyber space. This will help us to share information, intelligence and capabilities to enable the joint planning and conduct of operations in the cyber domain.

### **Communication with the Public**

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- I will end with a final general reflection. As governments and as nations, we must get better at communicating to the general public about national security risks and response.
- We should not be afraid of telling people that no government can ever fully guarantee their safety. We should not be afraid of explaining accurately to people the risks we and they face. And we should not be afraid to tell them about the measures we are taking to protect them.
- That is another aim of our new strategy. We always need to give the public as much information as it is safe to do so. We can never risk exposing sources or exposing live investigations, but we should always give the full picture of risks, of our strategy for tackling them and of the justification for our policies.
- Only by reminding people that risk can never be eliminated, but that government is doing as much as they can to tackle it, will they remain vigilant but also feel able to go about their daily lives.
- And it is not just the public who we need to explain our policies and our approach to - it is our allies as well. That is why I am here today.

### Conclusion

- I am sure you will all have already given thought to much of what I have talked about: the world has changed, the threats we face are changing and our response therefore needs to be flexible and adaptable.
- But whatever the nature or scale of that response, we must recognise – and we must explain to the public - that we will never be able to entirely eliminate all risks. With limited resources, we must prioritise tackling those risks which are most likely to happen or those which would have the highest impact if they materialised. As part of our enduring alliance, that is exactly what we aim to do.
- Security can never be one hundred percent assured. But risks can be managed, resources can be well directed and flexibility can be maintained. We will need to work together to do all three if we are to keep our countries safe in an uncertain world.

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