

Rethinking Security

for a just and peaceful world

Richard Reeve
Coordinator, Rethinking Security

Richard@rethinkingsecurity.org.uk

Alex Ellis CMG
Deputy National Security Adviser – Integrated Review
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

07 July 2020

Dear Mr Ellis,

Re: Consultation with Civil Society on the Integrated Review

We note with interest the recent disclosures via parliament concerning the recommencement of the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy, including the release of your letter of 24 June to the Joint Committee for the National Security Strategy.

In particular, we welcome your commitment to wider consultation on the Review:

“We will be engaging with experts beyond Whitehall and wider stakeholders with an interest in our nation’s security and prosperity. This includes our allies and partners, building on our discussions with them on C-19 response and recovery. In this way we will ensure that some of the best minds in the UK and beyond are feeding into the review’s conclusions and challenging traditional Whitehall assumptions and thinking.”

We are pleased that this reiterates the Prime Minister's own commitment of 26 February to “utilise expertise from both inside and outside government” to strengthen the Review and to offer “constructive challenge to traditional Whitehall assumptions and thinking.”

As you may be aware, there was much criticism of the SDSR processes conducted in 2010 and 2015 for the lack of meaningful opportunities for civil society organisations and citizens to engage with the reviews. As far as we are aware, prior to the pause of the Review in April, the government did not communicate any process, mechanism or timeline by which such wider engagement would be conducted.

Rethinking Security is a network of experts on peacebuilding, security and disarmament policy and practice, which includes most of the most experienced and active NGOs working in the field. We also have connections to many groups and individuals at the local level with a keen interest in the review and a desire to engage with it. Among other original research, we have published a comparative

Rethinking Security

for a just and peaceful world

analysis of 20 national security strategies from European and North American countries, including recommendations on best practice.ⁱ

We are concerned that the Review should be able to access and be challenged constructively by this wealth of expertise. It is our view that consultation should be open to the public without exception to have its say. This should include an open call and accessible forum for submissions to the government by individuals and civil society groups. The consultation should be transparent and accountable with clarity over how submissions from the public are used.

We would therefore very much welcome your response to the following questions:

- What is the timeline for the restarted Review and its various phases?
- What is the government's plan to engage with and consult civil society on the Integrated Review?
- How will the results of consultations outside government be fed into the Review and its conclusions?
- By what mechanism may organisations and individuals not actively consulted by the government make submissions to the Review?

Thank you in advance for taking the time to respond to these questions. I enclose a copy of our recent evidence submitted to the Commons Defence Committee's inquiry into the Integrated Review and would particularly draw your attention to Section 6 on External Stakeholders and Consultation.

We look forward to engaging with you and the Review as it progresses.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Reeve, Co-ordinator, Rethinking Security

Rethinking Security is a network of academics, campaigners and non-governmental organisations including Campaign Against Arms Trade, Campaign For Nuclear Disarmament, Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy, Conciliation Resources, Forces Watch, International Alert, Medact, Movement for the Abolition of War, Northern Friends Peace Board, Oxford Research Group, Peace Direct, Quaker Peace And Social Witness, Quaker Asylum and Refugee Network, Saferworld, Scientists for Global Responsibility, United Nations Association – UK, and War on Want.

ⁱ McKeon, Celia (2018) *Contrasting Narratives: A Comparative Study of European and North American National Security Strategies*, *Rethinking Security*.

<https://rethinkingsecurityorguk.files.wordpress.com/2018/03/contrasting-narratives-march-2018.pdf>