

**Written Submission to**  
**The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development & Foreign Policy**  
**Submitted by Rethinking Security**                      **September 2020**

**Executive Summary**

- We welcome the opportunity to provide input to the Integrated Review at this relatively late stage in its work and make a number of suggestions about how it might be structured and work prioritised in response to your **Questions 3, 6, 7 and 8**.<sup>1</sup> We have previously submitted evidence to the Cabinet Office and various Review stakeholders on the importance of an open and consultative process, and would like to note our concerns about the ability to consider external evidence meaningfully within the current Review timeline. We draw here upon evidence from the past two UK National Security Strategies as well as our own study of similar strategies from 19 other peer states in Europe and North America.<sup>2</sup>
- **Defining what ‘national security’ means** should be fundamental to any security strategy and the effective evaluation of its outcomes. We believe that this should be based upon sustainably developing the wellbeing of people and planet. The Integrated Review should therefore be concerned with human security within the UK, with the UK’s contribution to the shared security of humanity, and with the viability of the planetary ecosystem on which we all depend.
- Ensuring the wellbeing of the individual, communities and the wider populations must be the first priority of a national security strategy. Such a **human security approach** would prioritise opportunity, equality and inclusion for all in our society with special emphasis on the most vulnerable. In the context of pandemic and ecological breakdown, people expect the state to uphold their security and wellbeing at least as much via health-workers and scientists as via military and secret intelligence forces.
- As part of the Review, the UK should set out its **vision of ‘global’ security**, and its strategy for building a more peaceful, just and sustainable world. It should be transformative in its aspirations to ‘build back better’ an international system that upholds human rights, justice and democracy and prioritises, supports and sustains peace. Promoting disarmament and demilitarisation, championing peacebuilding, and committing to abide by international law and UN institutions are fundamental to such an approach.
- In a context of climate and ecological emergency, rebuilding **Planetary Security** must be an integral part of any country’s vision and strategy for security. Strategies that promote a consumption-based idea of prosperity will be counter-productive.
- A security review should not be considered a one-off activity but part of an **ongoing conversation** between people and government on what can maximise their own security, resilience and happiness, as well as that of the wider world. Mechanisms for ongoing societal consultation should be included as a key output of the Review.

## National Security – Definitions Matter

- The question of ‘security *for whom*’ is paramount in national security strategies, yet rarely defined. It has important ramifications for how security is, or is not, defined. Like most of its peers, the UK gives no definition or vision of security in its current (2015) strategy. This matters because a definition should provide the fundamental conceptual clarity essential to any document that purports to be ‘strategic’. In turn, it increases state accountability for the vision of security it is trying to achieve, and its effectiveness in working towards that outcome.
- To build sustainable peace the well-being of people in their social and ecological context should be the proper goal of security policy. Moreover, peace and security are only sustainable when we see the well-being of others as being as important as our own. This is both a moral and a logical point in an interdependent world, as the current Covid-19 health and economic crisis shows. It follows that the Integrated Review, and attendant government strategy, must be concerned with human security within the UK, with the UK’s contribution to the shared security of humanity, and with the viability of the planetary ecosystem on which we all depend.<sup>3</sup> Finland’s ‘Security Strategy for Society’ (2010; revised 2017) gives an indication of how a multilevel approach can be taken to promote and interlink individual, national and international security.<sup>4</sup>

## Human Security – The Wellbeing of people and society

- While it has been tempting to define national security policy around projecting power and influence outwards, a security strategy for the people of the UK needs to begin with **domestic security** and the wellbeing of individuals and our society. Do people feel secure by themselves, within their communities and within the UK? Seen from this level, the risks or threats to be mitigated are often very different to the geopolitical or militarised threats perceived from Whitehall. Often they concern economic opportunity, environmental protection and access to justice, health and social care. These are all important dimensions of a human security approach.
- The UK is unconscionably and increasingly divided and unequal society. We can see this in access to education, healthcare, jobs and leisure as well as in the discriminatory attitude of the police, courts and government towards migrant and minority groups. Providing for **greater equality of opportunity, and thus a sense of inclusion**, is an essential first step in developing societal cohesion and security. The polarisation and fragmentation of Northern Ireland and the 30-year armed conflict and still-fragile peace that ensued demonstrate why addressing such divisions should be a priority for a national security strategy.
- **People of the UK** must be understood to include all those who reside in the country and its overseas territories. This includes asylum seekers, refugees, other migrants, those (like many in Northern Ireland) who exercise their right to alternative citizenship, and those (like many Commonwealth migrants) who may lack formal documentation. These are integral members of our communities and must have confidence in their right to remain and flourish within the UK. Approaches such as the ‘hostile environment’, deportation of Windrush citizens, Prevent, deprivation of statehood, and attempts to deny asylum gravely undermine individual and societal security for the most vulnerable and dishonour claims to be an open, tolerant and rules-bound society.

## Shared Security – A Vision and Strategy for Global Peace

- The most pressing and far-reaching security threats that the UK faces are transnational and require global solidarity and cooperation to mitigate them. In a world of such increasingly transnational

challenges – of which pandemic disease, climate breakdown and 80 million displaced people are only the three most currently obvious – the UK should set out its **vision of ‘global’ as well as ‘national’ security**, and its strategy for building a more peaceful world. It should be transformative in its aspirations to ‘build back better’ an international architecture that prioritises, supports and sustains peace and human development.

- Understanding and measuring the **impact of UK actions on global security**, not just the impact of the world on the UK, is critical. Key questions for Reviewers should be not so much *who* or *what* threatens the UK (and how to counter them) but *why* other actors might pose a threat to the UK and how this might be influenced or reinforced by UK actions future, current and historic. This involves deeper questions of perception: why are others perceived as threats? Why might others perceive the UK as threatening? Obvious examples include how Iran might assess UK policies towards Afghanistan, Iraq, Israel or Saudi Arabia, or the global impact of the UK possessing nuclear weapons and pursuing an explicit policy to project military ‘strike’ power globally. Listening to communities affected by conflict, especially those conflicts in which the UK is a participant, should be a crucial part of any review process. Their views are vital to informing the UK’s understanding of what works, including in places where the UK has minimal diplomatic presence. DFID’s expertise in such consultations must not be lost in the FCDO merger.
- Promoting **international disarmament** and the reduction of militarised confrontations should be a key element of the UK’s approach to global security. As a P5 member and recognised Nuclear Weapons State, the UK should lead by example in advocating and facilitating multilateral nuclear disarmament initiatives in close collaboration with other states, urgently rebuilding the mechanisms that make up the disarmament and non-proliferation regime. It should also rigorously uphold its international commitments to cease conventional arms exports to states that are repressive or in breach of international humanitarian law, operating on a presumption of denial basis for export licences.
- **Human rights and justice** should be values at the heart of the UK’s foreign policy and must not be subordinated to other conceptions of the ‘national interest’. As DFID expertise is merged into the new FCDO, the UK has an opportunity to become the global champion of peacebuilding and conflict-focused development. It should build on its pioneering role in the UN Peacebuilding Commission and demonstrate its renewed commitment to global norms and multilateral action through implementation of, and sustained political and financial support for, the UN ‘Sustaining Peace’ agenda, the peaceful, just and inclusive societies elements of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDG16+), the Youth, Peace and Security agenda, successive resolutions to UNSCR 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security, and the Arms Trade Treaty.
- A genuinely rules-based international order rooted in a **commitment to global multilateralism through the United Nations**, and the progressive reform of the Security Council, should be at the heart of the UK’s global vision. Acknowledging that the UK has both had a privileged role in setting existing rules and has used its powerful position and alliances to enforce or break international law in its own interests is an important step in moving towards a more just future order. No state should jeopardise the system by acting beyond international law. Legal exceptionalism must cease.

### Planetary Security – Existential Underpinnings

- None of the diplomatic or security institutions and policies that the UK may engage with will have any chance of building a more secure world unless the **crisis of ecological security** is addressed as a

direct and urgent threat to the survival of life on Earth. An essential component of any new national security strategy should therefore be a vision of how the UK can contribute to planetary security, including by mitigating and reversing climate change and by ensuring the protection of the ecosystems on which we depend.

- **Environmental security** needs to be understood as far more than a question of climate and pollution but as something that underpins the viability of all other endeavours. Health security or biosecurity, for example, is directly impacted by climate and the stresses experienced by other species as vectors of transmission of established (e.g. malaria) or novel (e.g. SARS, Covid-19) diseases. Highly complex environmental relationships that we little understand will determine such future security issues. However, it should be clear that the planet is now beyond its sustainable carrying capacity and security strategies that promote a consumption-based idea of prosperity will be counter-productive.

## Finding Relevance with Society

- While it may now be too late to address the deficiencies in external consultation ahead of the Integrated Review, it remains important to consider **processes for ongoing consultations with wider society on security**. A security review should not be considered a one-off activity but part of an ongoing conversation between people and government on what can maximise their own security, resilience and happiness, as well as their relations with the wider world. There are many precedents of how this can take place. Mass civic education on societal security has been pursued in, among others, Finland and Austria as part of their strategic approach.<sup>5</sup> Canada also has an encouraging model in its Cross-Cultural Roundtable on Security, which is mandated to engage all its diverse communities in a long-term dialogue on security policy.<sup>6</sup> Ireland has also recently put public dialogue at the heart of the development of its first national security strategy.<sup>7</sup>

## About Rethinking Security

Rethinking Security is a network of UK-based organisations, academics and campaigners with expertise in peacebuilding, conflict and security research, disarmament and demilitarisation.<sup>8</sup> We have a shared concern that the current approach to national security in the UK and beyond often hampers efforts for peace, justice and ecological sustainability. We are committed to building a much richer understanding of what security really means, and of what is required to build sustainable security. For further information, please see [www.rethinkingsecurity.org.uk](http://www.rethinkingsecurity.org.uk).

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<sup>1</sup> See Call for Evidence at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/integrated-review-call-for-evidence> for ToR

<sup>2</sup> 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>

<sup>3</sup> See Cohen, J., Dumasy, T., Reeve, R. (2020), *Shared Security: Humans and Humanity in National Security Policy*, in Hug, Baldoumas, Chakraborty and Sriskandarajah (Eds.), *Finding Britain's Role in a Changing World*, Foreign Policy Centre & Oxfam, March 2020. <https://fpc.org.uk/shared-security-humans-and-humanity-in-national-security-policy/>

<sup>4</sup> The Security Committee of the Parliament of Finland (2017), *The Security Strategy for Society*. Government Resolution, 02 Nov 2017. [https://turvallisuuskomitea.fi/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/YTS\\_2017\\_english.pdf](https://turvallisuuskomitea.fi/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/YTS_2017_english.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> McKeon (2018), pp.27-28.

<sup>6</sup> See Public Safety Canada (undated), *Connecting with Canadian Communities*. <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/ntnl-scrtr/crss-cltrl-rndtbl/index-en.aspx>

<sup>7</sup> O'Keeffe, Cormac (2019), *Public asked for views on Ireland's first national security strategy*, Irish Examiner, 06 December 2019. <https://www.irishexaminer.com/breakingnews/ireland/public-asked-for-views-on-irelands-first-national-security-strategy-968892.html>