Rethinking security:

A discussion paper

The Ammerdown Group brings together practitioners and academics in search of a new vision for the future of our common peace and security. The group includes participants from Conciliation Resources, Campaign Against Arms Trade, International Alert, Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, Oxford Research Group, Quaker Peace and Social Witness, Saferworld, and Three Faiths Forum, as well as independent practitioners, and academics from the universities of Bradford, Coventry, Kent, Leeds Beckett and Oxford Brookes.

The Ammerdown Group takes its name from the Ammerdown Centre, a retreat and conference centre in Somerset, where the group meets together. The views expressed in this document do not necessarily represent those of the Ammerdown Centre's staff or trustees, but the Ammerdown Centre fully supports the work of the Ammerdown Group as part of its charitable commitment to promoting justice, peace and reconciliation and to facilitating free and open discussion on these issues.

The Ammerdown Group has produced this publication to stimulate debate about the UK's approach to security. The group welcomes feedback on the paper and is interested in working with others to promote further discussion about the security challenges of the 21st century. For more information, visit **rethinkingsecurity.org.uk**

The Ammerdown Group, 2016.

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May 2016

'The world is always being made and is never finished.' Rebecca Solnit (2005, p. 12)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Ammerdown Group brings together peacebuilding practitioners and academics concerned about the effects of geopolitics on the security of people worldwide. The group is seeking a public conversation in search of a new vision for peace and security. This paper is one contribution. It explores the security strategies of Western states, particularly the UK, and proposes principles for a more effective approach in the common interest. We welcome responses from all quarters.

A failing response to growing insecurity

People across the world face growing insecurity. Violent conflict is spreading and intensifying, economic inequality is widening, and the natural ecology on which human life depends is in jeopardy. The world's poorest people bear the brunt, while those in rich countries are also increasingly affected.

The preferred responses of Western states are manifestly not working and have often made matters worse. The UK's primary response has been to 'project power', joining the US and other Western states in a series of military interventions and restricting civil liberties.

The expectation that this approach would shape the global security environment for the better has not been borne out. It has exacerbated insecurity, allowed global problems to worsen, and added to the harm already suffered in countries targeted for intervention.

These trends are daunting, but a future that better provides for the security of all is not beyond our collective wit and means, provided that we are willing to change course.

An outmoded narrative

The UK and its NATO allies account for half of the world's military spending, so the deficiency in Western responses to insecurity is not a lack of military capability. The problem lies in the dominant narrative about what security means, whom it should benefit, and how it is achieved. That narrative:

1. **privileges UK national security** as a supreme imperative, to which the needs of others may be subordinated, rather than recognises security as a common right, to which all have equal claim;

2. aims to advance **'national interests'** defined by the political establishment, including corporate business interests and UK 'world power' status, and so dissociates the practice of security from the needs of people in their communities;

3. assumes a **short-term outlook** and presents **physical threats** as the main risks, largely **overlooking the long-term drivers of insecurity**; and

4. proposes to respond by **extending control** over the strategic environment, achieved principally through offensive military capabilities, a superpower alliance, and restrictions on civil liberties.

A failing strategy

The UK's National Security Strategy (2015) is premised on the same, dominant narrative. It presumes the supremacy of the UK's interests; it is preoccupied with economic and political power; it takes a near-term view and overlooks the systemic drivers of insecurity; and it marginalises non-military responses. It also ignores deeply harmful actions by Western powers from colonial times to the present day. In addition, the strategy does not define 'security', identify the principles by which it may be built and sustained, or set out a 'road map' against which to measure progress.

Within these constraints, the strategy proposes that the principal threats to the UK's interests are: competing nations, particularly Russia; transnational insurgent groups, particularly ISIS; and 'instability', particularly in Africa, the Middle East, and the Far East. The proposed responses are broadly the same as those adopted in the past, which have been largely ineffective even on their own terms. The threat of atrocities by non-state groups has grown; the stand-off between NATO and Russia has worsened; and interventions in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and Syria have added to regional and global volatility.

At the same time, chronic causes of insecurity have persisted largely unchecked. Fatalities from violent conflict have risen threefold since 2008 to a post-Cold War high of 180,000 in 2014. Human security is deteriorating as the effects of our ecological crisis are felt across the world. Refugee flows are on the increase. Economic inequalities have grown more extreme. Global progress towards greater democratisation and freedom seen in the 2000s is also now being reversed. These problems receive scant attention in the UK's published security strategy.

A reluctance to adapt

The UK strategy, which is allied to that of the US, has changed little since the atrocities of 11 September 2001. At the end of the 2000s, new leadership in the UK and US encouraged an expansion in strategic emphasis to include long-term problems such as climate change, scarcity, poverty, and nuclear proliferation. This move met resistance from the political establishment in both countries. A number of factors appear to impede a productive change of approach:

1. the **dominance of the narrative by a small and exclusive group**, composed of a social elite, to the general exclusion of other voices;

2. the **disproportionate influence of business interests** on the policymaking process, particularly the preference shown to the arms industry;

3. **institutional inertia and political calculations** inclined to dismiss alternative approaches.

4. the **preference for values associated with hegemonic masculinity**, which reduces the discourse to a calculus of threats and coercive responses, at the expense of a comprehensive conversation about the social and ecological conditions of security; and

5. a discourse **abstracted from its real-life impacts,** as experienced by people around the world who are affected by the decisions of Western states.

Nonetheless, the prevailing security narrative has met with **growing public scepticism**. Support for Western military interventions since 9/11 has waned among the British and wider European public, raising the threshold for the use of coercive military power. In certain respects, the public appears to be recognising the shortcomings of the prevailing approach.

Security for the many

The proper goal of security should be grounded in the **wellbeing of people** in their social and ecological context, rather than the interests of a nation state as determined by its elite. This first requires a collective effort to **build the conditions of security** over the long-term. A commitment to the common good should guide the approach, recognising that security is a **shared responsibility** and its practice should be **negotiated democratically**; when security is the preserve of a few, it will not serve the many and is likely to fail everyone.

Principled engagement

This paper proposes four cardinal principles of security as a practice:

1. **Security as a freedom.** Security may be understood as a shared freedom from fear and want, and the freedom to live in dignity. It implies social and ecological health rather than the absence of risk.

2. **Security as a common right.** A commitment to commonality is imperative; security should not, and usually cannot, be gained for one group of people at others' expense. Accordingly, security rests on solidarity rather than dominance – in standing with others, not over them.

3. **Security as a patient practice.** Security grows or withers according to how inclusive and just society is, and how socially and ecologically responsible we are. It cannot be coerced into being.

4. **Security as a shared responsibility.** Security is a common responsibility; its challenges belong to all of us. The continuing deterioration of security worldwide testifies against entrusting our common wellbeing to a self-selected group of powerful states.

Some European states show that similar commitments can shape policy for general benefit. In contrast, the UK's heavily militarised approach is **incongruous in context.** Compared with the rest of the European Union, for example, no state spends as much on its military, exports as many arms, or has joined US-sponsored military interventions as often as the UK.

A shift in priorities

The primary concern of Western states is to prevent further atrocities by non-state groups. That risk is real, yet cannot be addressed in isolation from the profound security challenges arising from how we organise our societies. The following, which are now marginalised in the UK's security strategy, deserve priority attention:

1. **Scarcity and climate change.** Depletion of the Earth's natural resources is already aggravating tensions, entrenching violent conflicts, and displacing ever more people, leading to further conflict. The impact of the changing climate on vital resources, soil productivity, sea levels and flooding are predicted to lead to widespread scarcity, mass migration and conflict. The UN has said that people displaced by climate change will 'test global solidarity in ways that are radically different from anything experienced before'.

2. **Inequality.** Half of the world's wealth is now enjoyed by 1% of the population, while two billion people subsist on the equivalent of $2 or less per day. The injustice of growing inequality is feeding multiple violent conflicts worldwide. It has also been instrumental in the rise of ISIS from the humanitarian crisis precipitated by the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

3. **Militarism.** The world's most powerful states are among those that have normalised a militarist outlook. These states are the world's largest military spenders and arms exporters; they show no

sign of renouncing nuclear weapons; and they have initiated some of the most devastating wars of this century, frequently bending or ignoring international law to do so.

4.   **Violent conflict.** When Western states have intervened in violent conflict, their preferred means have often been coercive. In contrast, 'conflict transformation' approaches, which support local people to transform conflict with a view to just and inclusive settlements, still receive little support.

Practicable alternatives

It has been suggested that the UK sees itself as a 'warrior nation', and that without extensive offensive military capabilities it would be left 'naked and undefended' in a dangerous world. This paper argues that the UK's approach, which relies on a rate of military spending that far exceeds the European average, provides no appreciable advantage in response to the risks that the government has prioritised.

The risk of a military crisis involving Russia

The government believes that Russia is unlikely to attack a NATO country using conventional means but could try to undermine neighbouring states covertly. In response, senior figures in the British defence establishment have called for new military investments.

NATO currently outspends Russia ten times over on its military, with the US accounting for most of the difference. It is not plausible that the UK's level of military spending is a factor in Russia's calculations, or that British conventional forces, however large, could deter Russia from using covert tactics against NATO states.

Russia and NATO share responsibility for their rivalry in a self-serving competition for global influence. Both have legitimate complaints against each other, but rather than seek a frank dialogue with a view to détente, each party's rhetoric has sought to use its grievances as a fulcrum for its own advantage. First steps towards improving relations might include **toning down the rhetoric**, **deploying diplomacy in preventive mode**, and **looking for confidence-building measures**. Intermediaries have been working to these ends and could be better supported.

The threat posed by ISIS

A US-led alliance, including the UK, aims to 'destroy' ISIS militarily. In addition, the UK government has extended surveillance of Muslim communities and challenged them to conform to its own list of 'British values'.

It is widely acknowledged that ISIS cannot be defeated by air attack. It is doubtful that a ground offensive would be any more successful and it could bolster ISIS' long-term strategy.

There is no blueprint solution to the problem of ISIS in the short term. In the longer term, effective responses will have to pay heed to the factors that have allowed the movement to flourish. These include the devastation of the Iraq war and its aftermath; a humanitarian crisis that has prompted fighters to join the movement for economic reasons; widespread anger at the West's actions in the region; and the Wahhabist ideology of the group's leadership, incubated in Saudi Arabia, a Western ally.

Western states must **critically examine their own role** in generating the conditions for insurgent movements to flourish – much Western policy in the Middle East continues to be self-serving and counterproductive. In the UK, the government should **preserve spaces for non-violent dissent**, however unpalatable, and **heed warnings about the counter-productive effects of much of its domestic 'counter-terror' policy**. It could also do more to **listen and respond to the longstanding grievances** of minority groups, particularly those relating to social and economic inequality.

Commentators in the defence establishment have proposed that coercive military power, with or without UN approval, can supplement the UK's diplomatic and aid effort in conditions of regional instability. Similar arguments have been used to justify British military action in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Syria.

NATO's war over Kosovo in 1999 is widely lauded as a model military intervention, in which coercive power was both necessary for, and effective in, reversing a humanitarian crisis. This paper argues that the Kosovo war is a poor example to follow. NATO's action was tactically successful in thwarting a bellicose Serb government, but by exacerbating the humanitarian crisis and leaving the dispute over Kosovo unresolved, the war was a strategic failure. It also had an intolerable impact on the people of Serbia; it broke and thus weakened international law; and it was extremely expensive. Viable alternatives to war were available long before the NATO action, even at the eleventh hour, but NATO's leadership, particularly the UK and US, preferred overwhelming military power. The episode encouraged the British establishment to apply the same principles in Iraq, with disastrous results.

In other respects, the UK has taken a progressive approach to humanitarian crises; it has been **the largest contributor in Europe** to the UN's Syrian refugee appeal, for example. The UK's *Building Stability Overseas Strategy* is also forward-looking, defining 'stability' in terms of **inclusive democracy, equitable access to vital resources, and the effective management of conflict**. This approach could be brought closer to the heart of the official security discourse, as it was in 2008 when the Brown government published its security strategy, *Security in an interdependent world*.

A 'common home'

As Pope Francis has suggested, we share a 'common home', which it is our common responsibility to keep. Seen from this perspective, the practice of 'security' cannot be limited to neutralising threats, but must encompass a commitment to build peace with justice. It has to evolve away from exercising control over world affairs towards facilitating genuinely democratic participation in them. Security discourse will need to become more reflexive and inclusive if it is to do more than merely legitimate a dysfunctional *status quo*.

The most successful societies are better able to 'recast conflicts of interest as problems to be solved, not bouts to be won.' (Raymond, 2000, p. 290) People's movements and civil society initiatives of many kinds, the approaches of some nation states, and some of the work of regional and international institutions, further demonstrate that there is nothing inevitable about the current cycles of injustice and violence that are jeopardising the security of everyone. The UK can play a more effective part, too, by displacing the desire to 'punch above its weight' with a commitment to security as a common right for everyone.

INTRODUCTION: The security conundrum

The world is becoming less secure for most of its people. The major systemic drivers of insecurity – climate change, militarisation, economic inequality, and the increasing scarcity of resources – have continued largely unabated; the number of people affected by violent conflict has increased.

In response, the UK and its strategic allies have extended their might, particularly through invasive military action in other countries. At home, new powers have been introduced for detention, surveillance, control of civil assembly, armed patrols and scrutiny of civilians in public places. Even in the relative security of Western Europe, public anxiety has grown and a series of atrocities in major cities has appeared to confirm an increasingly common belief the world is more perilous than it used to be (Collishaw, et al., 2010; Walters, et al., 2012; Halliwell, 2009, p. 21; Mental Health Foundation, 2014, pp. 27-28).

Hence the security conundrum: as military and surveillance powers have grown, public security and confidence have reduced, and the wider world has become increasingly volatile. How did we get here, and what has been the UK's role?

Since the end of the Cold War, UK security policy has been dominated by military interventions overseas. During the 1990s, publics in Western countries watched as Yugoslavia collapsed violently. The region had been under increasing strain from rapid political and economic changes, but its conflicts were characterised simplistically as a hotbed of rival nationalisms (Little & Silber, 1995), which only external military action could subdue. European diplomacy faltered, and NATO eventually answered violence with violence in 1995. As for Kosovo, a one-dimensional media narrative in NATO countries again favoured military intervention in 1999. After ignoring a decade-long campaign by Kosovar Albanians for human rights and recognition, Western powers turned again to bombing, without UN approval.

In 2000, British forces intervened in Sierra Leone. *Operation Palliser* was presented as an evacuation of ex-patriates from Freetown, but gradually the mission to protect the local population and rescue a UN peace operation emerged (Renton, 2010). The action has been described as 'exhibit number one' in the case for military intervention in humanitarian crises (Chalmers, 2014b, p. 98). That action, and the Kosovo war that preceded it, encouraged Tony Blair and the British establishment that heavy investment in expeditionary armed forces would prove justified in a post-Cold War world. The conviction later contributed to the establishment's enthusiasm for US-sponsored military ventures in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, and now Syria.

After 2001, the UK's security policy was subsumed into the US 'war on terror', a succession of high-tech wars against the power of ideas. The US reaction to the

destruction of the Twin Towers was intended to punish, though it seemingly targeted the 'wrong countries', as Patrick Cockburn has argued (2015, p. 138). The US waged war on Afghanistan and then Iraq, while Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, which were directly supporting al-Qa'ida and its ideology, remained Western allies (ibid.). Far from the 'surgical strikes' promised at the outset, the conflicts were marked by intense warfare, atrocity and torture. The ensuing chaos allowed ISIS to grow rapidly under the radar, eclipsing al-Qa'ida.

The devastation in Iraq and Afghanistan testifies to the abject failure of the 'war on terror'. Its guiding rationale has not been the security of Afghans or Iraqis, who in most cases are less secure than they were before, but the interests of the intervening states. As Vijay Prashad has put it, 'there is little regard for the people here [in Iraq], whose death and life in death – occasioned by western wars – is now a footnote to global concern' (2015).

Largely at the behest of the British prime minister, NATO bombed Libya in 2011. Regime change was again a main objective of intervention; once achieved, Libya was left with no functional government or assistance for recovery. This contravened the Security Council mandate, which authorised the use of force to protect civilians, but not to change the government or to support rebel forces. Parts of the country are now an ISIS stronghold.

The Syrian people have experienced more than five years of unending civil war, with fatal cross-border repercussions for Iraq as well. The crisis has been called the worst refugee emergency since the Second World War (HC IDC, 2015). Some 11 million people – half of Syria's population – have been killed or forced to flee their homes. With the involvement of Iran, Saudi Arabia, the Gulf Emirates, Turkey and Russia as well as a US-led coalition and now the growth of ISIS, Syria's complex war has become a battleground for geopolitical rivalry.

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The West's approach to security, and the UK's part in it, is failing people at home and abroad. It is time for a major rethink in search for a new way forward.

This paper is a stimulus to that end. Its approach is informed by the Ammerdown Invitation, an eight-page statement inviting a public conversation in search of a 'new vision' for our common security (Ammerdown Group, 2014). The statement describes security from first principles as 'freedom from fear, freedom from want, and freedom to live in dignity' (UN General Assembly, 2005, p. 143). It asks what part a country such as the UK – its government and its citizens – could play. It also argues that the world's growing insecurity is symptomatic of deeply entrenched systemic problems such as economic injustice and inequality, climate change and ecological destruction, over-consumption, and a deficit of democracy. It criticises the main responses of elite states, which have sought to advance their own interests at the expense of others' security, leading to greater volatility in the long-term.

This paper develops these themes. The first part outlines the 'what' and 'why' of current UK security policy and its sustaining discourse propagated by the British establishment. The purpose of this part is to examine the narrative on its own terms and illustrate its self-defeating character. The discussion concludes with a few reflections on why the establishment has been slow to adapt to the challenges of the new century.

The aim of the paper's second half is to flesh out a viable policy vision for a more effective approach. Beginning with an understanding of security as a common right for all, the

discussion proposes core principles that could guide strategy and suggests priority areas for attention. In response to various security challenges, the paper outlines approaches based on solidarity and equitability, rather than extensive military capabilities or alliance with hegemonic power.

The complexities of today's crises are beginning to dwarf how they are understood. The question *What brings security?* is challenging enough, but *What brings security in the world as we find it now?* is a formidable problem. Effective responses can only be found in a diverse conversation of many voices speaking from many standpoints. The ideas in this paper are among many possible contributions. We invite others, including those who take a different view, to participate in the conversation.

PART ONE: A failing approach to security

1. Why the current approach fails

1.1. The narrative: a benign nation threatened

The dominant conversation about security in the UK frames the problem in threefold terms: the UK is a benign nation state; it faces a complex of shifting threats; it needs to protect itself by using coercive power abroad.

Although the government acknowledges that the UK mainland has faced no military threat since the Cold War (HM Gov., 2015b; 2010b; 2008; MoD, 1998), it argues that the world is increasingly unpredictable, which warrants a substantial increase in military spending (HM Gov., 2015b, p. 5). In 2015, the Chair of the House of Commons Defence Committee, Rory Stewart, warned of a 'descent into chaos, which threatens to spread from the Western Mediterranean to the Black Sea' (Stewart, 2015). The Committee described the world in this way:

> 'For the first time in twenty years, an advanced military state [Russia] has challenged the borders of European nations, and the security challenges in the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia have increased dramatically in scale and complexity. Russia has annexed Crimea, and Russian-backed separatists have taken much of Eastern Ukraine. DAESH (or ISIL) have seized the second largest city in Iraq, and now control areas of a territory larger than the United Kingdom. The Libyan government has retreated to a ship off the coast. The President of Yemen has fled from his capital. Boko Haram controls swathes of Northern Nigeria. South Sudan—the newest country in the world—is in Civil War. Over 10,000 civilians were casualties in Afghanistan last year. Serious instability persists in Darfur, Somalia, the Central African Republic, and Pakistan. Three million people have been displaced and two hundred thousand killed in Syria.' (HC DC, 2015a)

The Committee went on to argue that the UK should respond by strengthening its military hand and deepening its strategic alliance with the US. The UK's military ambitions should not shrink to mere territorial defence, it advised, but project military might abroad in a manner worthy of a 'global power' (HC DC, 2015a, p. 35). This advice chimed with the approach set out in the government's security strategy of 2010, which promised that the UK would wield 'all our instruments of power and influence to shape the global environment…' (HM Gov., 2010b, p. 22) Those 'instruments of power' are political,

economic, and military,[1] particularly 'expeditionary capabilities', which allow the state to sustain a major war effort abroad (HM Gov., 2015b; Cameron, 2015d).

The Committee's pronouncements illustrate the prevailing security narrative, in which the UK and its allies form an island of order in a sea of growing threats, which can only be defeated by coercive instruments of power. This narrative enjoys a general consensus across the defence establishment, defined broadly as central government, the departments of Whitehall, senior officers of the armed forces, strategic studies departments, military think-tanks, arms companies, and defence correspondents and commentators. The political power of the establishment ensures that this narrative continues to dominate the policymaking conversation.

In summer 2015, the government committed to increase the defence budget substantially to 2020 (HM Treasury, 2015). Prime among its spending choices were offensive capabilities, particularly drone warfare and special forces able to operate anywhere in the world (HM Gov., 2015b, pp. 6, 32). The government says that its stronger military will remove or contain the threats that it has identified, leading in turn to greater security.

The first part of this paper questions this narrative, arguing that it neither describes the causes of insecurity, nor prescribes the means by which peace and security may be built and sustained. In particular, the narrative:

1. Pays little heed to the past, particularly the role that Western actions have played in the genesis of the threats it identifies;

2. Takes a short-term view of the future, largely overlooking the long-term, systemic drivers of insecurity and devoting still less attention to their causes;

3. Excludes voices outside the establishment consensus, and is UK-centric, subordinating the security needs of people elsewhere in the world;

4. Elides national security with an abiding desire for global power and status, to the severe detriment of policy choices;

5. Trusts in the coercive use of military power abroad, in alliance with a superpower, assuming against the evidence of recent years that this reduces insecurity;

6. Is preoccupied with insecurity and how to defeat present threats, but not with building the conditions of security in the long-term.

The disavowed past

The government's approach to security, as presented, ignores the contribution of Western states to insecurity.

A dispassionate approach to present-day insecurity in the Middle East, for example, would have to reckon with the effects of Western policy in Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya, and the historical (including colonial) context of present-day policymaking. Some in the defence establishment have attempted to do so (Chalmers, 2014b), but the government's published statements on security are largely silent on the genesis of the risks that they prioritise for action. The UK national security strategy of 2015 is 40,000 words long, so it is striking that only 21 words touch on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan: 'Over the last five years, we have

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[1] The scope of 'military' is now generally understood to include cyber-warfare.

learned lessons from operations in Libya, Afghanistan, the Middle East, Sierra Leone and elsewhere.' (HM Gov., 2015b, p. 27)

The UK's role in the air war over Libya is mentioned in just one other line, on page 62, where it is described as a successful intervention to prevent a massacre. The abject suffering, political chaos and insecurity that ensued, and the occasion it provided to ISIS-affiliated groups to build a stronghold there, are not mentioned.

On the day that the security strategy was published, Saudi Arabia was attacking targets in Yemen using UK-manufactured arms, contributing to a severe humanitarian crisis in the country. According to Amnesty, the attacks have shown an 'appalling disregard' for civilian life and amount to war crimes (Amnesty International, 2015a). Saudi Arabia's intervention illustrates how the arms market, including the UK's participation in it, facilitates atrocities and profoundly undermines security across the world, but the UK's security outlook ignores this. Instead, the government's security strategy salutes the UK arms industry for its 'major part in addressing the threats we face' (HM Gov., 2015b, p. 20). It says that the UK's 'responsible defence and security exports', including sales that it has approved to Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt, Israel, and other rights-abusing states, are 'essential for our security and prosperity' (p. 77).

The past was similarly absent from the government's case for extending the anti-ISIS air campaign to Syria, as set out in a letter from David Cameron to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee in 2015 (Cameron, 2015d). The letter described ISIS as a direct threat to the UK, but omitted to mention the role of Western states in the group's success. Longstanding US and UK support for Saudi Arabia fed the growth of its Wahhabist movements, which are the ideological home of al-Qa'ida and ISIS. The US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 destroyed its government and economy, precipitating a humanitarian crisis and creating a large population of newly unemployed Sunni men, who were disenfranchised by their new Shia-dominated government. These conditions enabled first al-Qa'ida and then ISIS to grow. *Jihadi* groups in Syria have been shipped arms by British allies Turkey and Saudi Arabia, among others (Hersch, 2016), while Iran and Russia have done the same for the Syrian government (Saul & Hafezi, 2014; Hersch, 2016). The UK's notional allies on the ground, the Free Syrian Army, have been selling their US-supplied arms to ISIS, according to Jürgen Todenhöfer who has spent time with some of the militants (2014). David Cameron's letter passed over these details, describing the situation in Syria as if it had no history, the West's motives as wholly benign, and the bombing to come as if it could only have a beneficial outcome.

The foreshortened future

As the mainstream national security discourse devotes little attention to the past, so also the horizon of its future is so close that the greatest security challenges of our times, which take hold over a long period, are allowed to continue unchecked.

The government scans the world for threats and categorises them into priority 'tiers' in a National Security Risk Assessment. Although the risk assessment discusses some long-term trends, its main focus is confined to five years into the future. On this basis, it concentrates minds on six 'tier one' threats to 2020:

> 1. 'Terrorism', particularly atrocities committed by ISIS, al-Qa'ida and affiliated groups;

2. Cyber-warfare, as well as terrorism, crime and espionage conducted in cyberspace;

3. The risk of an international military conflict that draws in the UK;

4. Instability overseas;

5. Pandemics and other public health crises; and

6. Natural hazards such as flooding in the UK. (HM Gov., 2015b, pp. 85-87)

In addition, the assessment notes in brief that advances in technology, shifts in global economics and the balance of power, and climate change will all affect UK security, but as these will take full effect after 2020 they are not deemed to warrant urgent action now.

Even when the risk assessment does take a longer view, it overlooks the security impacts of, for example: poverty and inequality; the fragility of the global economic system; global migration; resource scarcity especially of oil and water; and creeping global militarisation. The proliferation of nuclear weapons is mentioned but de-emphasised as a 'tier-two threat'. The risk assessment prioritises the immediate risks of increased flooding and pandemics in the UK, but it does not connect these to their long-term systemic causes, such as climate change in respect of floods and the role of poverty, inequality, and the overuse of antibiotics in generating conditions for pandemics. To prioritise risks such as these would, of course, call into question the Western neoliberal economic and political project.

The short time-horizon of the government's outlook, combined with the exclusion of risks that do not directly affect the establishment's definition of British interests, amounts to strategic myopia. For example, the MoD has warned in a separate document that about half of the world's population will suffer water shortages by 2045 (2014, p. xiii). This will place a huge strain on the world's poorest people and precipitate global volatility on a scale that will affect Western citizens as well. But this risk would not meet the official criteria for a security risk: the worst of the crisis will occur after 2020 and does not (appear to) directly affect the UK's strategic interests. Accordingly, water stress is ignored in the risk assessment; the security strategy mentions it only in passing and without a proposed response (HM Gov., 2015b, pp. 21,85).

Taking as given a short-term outlook, it remains to be asked whether the government prioritises immediate risks appropriately. It has argued that atrocities by non-state groups are the number-one threat to the country. The Prime Minister has described this as a threat of existential proportions: 'Our Great British resolve faced down Hitler; it defeated Communism; it saw off the IRA's assaults on our way of life… Together we will defeat the extremists…' (2015c). Certainly, ISIS jeopardises many communities in Iraq and Syria, but the group's paramountcy in the government's security rhetoric is based on it posing a threat to the UK (House of Commons, 2015; Cameron, 2015d).

The risk of an atrocity in the UK or against its citizens is real and, as mass-murder, should not be belittled, but nor should it be exaggerated. David Anderson, the government's independent reviewer of terrorism legislation, wrote in 2012 that terrorism was 'insignificant' relative to other causes of death in the United Kingdom, pointing out that atrocities by non-state groups have killed five Britons per year on average since 2000 (Anderson, 2012, p. 27). Of course, these atrocities are not 'insignificant' and they could yet increase in scale, but David Anderson is right that other causes of premature death loom larger. For example, 446 pedestrians were killed in road accidents in 2014 (DfT, 2015), making the mortal risk from crossing a British road approximately 90 times greater

than that of dying in an atrocity. Atrocities are not the greatest cause of deaths by violence, either. In the UK, approximately 100 women are killed by their partners every year, an annual rate some 20 times higher than death through mass atrocities (Women's Aid, n.d.). Similarly, in France and the US, both of which have suffered major attacks by non-state groups, women killed by their partners far outnumber people of both sexes killed in atrocities.[2]

The absent other

The government's strategy could be guided by a commitment to the common good, and to security as a right to which all have an equal claim, but such principles are absent from the published policy and the discourse that surrounds it. Instead, the discourse assumes that the UK's national interests are supreme.[3] When the Prime Minister was challenged on the UK's extensive support for Saudi Arabia, notorious as it is for oppression of its own citizens, he countered that the relationship benefits UK security, which 'comes first' (2015e). The presumption that Western interests are more important than others has also been characteristic of the US-led wars of the last decade, in which dominant powers believed themselves entitled to impose their will on others in pursuit of their own security interests. Actions such as these reveal an essentially ethnocentric attitude, which ranks life 'over here' above life 'over there' and adds to conditions of insecurity.

Establishing the worldview of the British establishment as authoritative contributes to a further blind spot, for it ignores or relegates perspectives from elsewhere. In particular, official security discourse generally excludes the perspectives of states outside Western military alliances, including their adversaries. In evaluating the behaviour of the Russian government, for example, much attention is given to its potential to threaten Western interests, but little to how it frames its own actions or interprets Western actions (HC/HL NSS Committee, 2015; HC DC, 2015a). As such, discussion of adversaries is often tainted by the prejudice of enmity and rarely informed by a first-hand 'view from the other side'.

Still less attention is given to a 'view from below'; the voices of people affected by UK policy are generally absent from the establishment discourse altogether. The parliamentary motion of 2 December 2015, which endorsed the bombing of Syria, was not concerned with how ISIS had affected Syrians, which it did not mention, but with a potential threat to the UK. It was also silent on whether Syrians wanted the UK to join the US-led air campaign, as was the government's written case for bombing (Cameron, 2015d; House of Commons, 2015). In the debate itself, few MPs spoke about the needs of the Syrian people. Of the 66 MPs who spoke in favour of the motion, 40 said nothing about whether the action would benefit Syrians; of the 26 who did, only four made this their main or joint-main argument for the motion.[4] MPs were much more likely to argue for bombing

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[2] In the US, where the 9/11 attacks and other atrocities have killed more than 3,000 people between 2001 and 2012, around four times as many women were killed by their partners in same period (Gidfar, 2012). In France, 118 women were killed by their partners in 2014 (Libération , 2015).

[3] There is a critically important distinction between a nation state that assumes primary responsibility for its own security while recognising that the same and equal right applies to others, and one that deems its own security to be more important than others. The former attitude requires the practice of building security to be negotiated between parties, including those in conflict with one another. The latter attitude permits the imposition of one party's security goals upon others.

[4] According to a forthcoming discourse analysis of the parliamentary debate of 2 December 2015, of the 66 MPs who made a speech in favour of the motion, 26 argued that bombing Syria would be in the interests in

on the grounds that the UK's Western allies wanted it; 46 proponents of the motion made this argument, of whom 12 made it their main or joint-main argument.[5]

Having shielded itself from potentially disruptive voices, the establishment confirms its own narrative as authoritative and is often dismissive of other perspectives. For example, David Cameron branded those who demurred at his reasoning for bombing Syria as 'terrorist sympathisers', a remark that he continued to stand by afterwards (BBC, 2015c). In January 2016, the House of Commons International Development Committee asked Foreign Minister Tobias Ellwood about the sale of arms to Saudi Arabia while it was engaged in a war over Yemen. The Minister replied: 'I am sorry, but you are being naïve if you think that Britain cannot sell weapon systems to allies.' (Ellwood, 2016, p. 23)

Some of these criticisms are also true of the peace and security field and indeed of the present document, which in certain ways represents another 'view from above'. Nor does the 'view from below' invariably favour a less militarised security posture; after the Kosovo war, some Kosovar Albanian parents named their sons after Tony Blair, whom they feted as a war hero (BBC, 2010c).

The elision of security and status

The discussion thus far has described an establishment narrative that is triply blinkered: it suppresses the past; it avoids the future; and it excludes dissonant voices. A fourth problem is its preoccupation with power and status. Security policies are an investment in 'our place in the world', to borrow words that David Cameron used to justify the UK's new aircraft carriers (2014b); the UK wants to be 'special' (Chalmers, 2014a, p. 278). In 2015, the government extended the scope of its security strategy to advance the UK's economic and business interests (HM Gov., 2015b, pp. 5, 9, 12).[6]

These references to status and position allude to the establishment's intense preoccupation with the UK's future as a 'global power' (HC DC, 2015a; Telegraph View, 2014; BBC, 2014; Dymock, 2015; Chalmers, 2014a; Dorman, 2015). Consequently, the prevailing security narrative is peppered with references to alliances, rivalries, and the state's self-perceived status among its peers. As General Houghton, Chief of the Defence Staff, put it in 2015: 'We are in a state of permanent engagement in a global competition.' (Houghton, 2015)

The establishment discourse thus reflects an uneasy melange of concerns. The UK's 'determination to remain one of the most important powers on the international stage', as Malcolm Chalmers at the Royal United Services Institute has said (2014a, p. 273), powerfully shapes security policy. It can do so partly because the government chooses not to say what it means by security (Security Service: MI5, 2015), leaving it to mean whatever the government decides is the 'national interest'. That term and its equivalents are used to

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Syrians, of whom four made this their main or joint-main argument: Fiona Bruce (Con), Tim Farron (Lib Dem), Simon Hoare (Con), and Tania Mathias (Con) (Rashed, 2016).
[5] The 12 MPs who referred to relationships with allies as their main or joint-main argument for the motion were the Prime Minister, David Cameron (Con), Hilary Benn (Lab) (then the shadow Foreign Secretary), Margaret Beckett (Lab), Yvette Cooper (Lab), Kevin Foster (Con), Jim Shannon (DUP), Richard Drax (Con), James Heappey (Con), Ranil Jayawardena (Con), Ruth Smeeth (Lab), Neil Carmichael (Con) and Mary Robinson (Con) (Rashed, 2016).
[6] The US security strategy had preceded these announcements with a similar fusion of security and economic goals (US, White House, 2015)

refer to the goals of security policy 30 times in the government's strategy, each time without a definition.

As these examples make clear, security policy, despite the innocence of that designation, provides a means for a nation state to magnify its power in relation to other states. This carries consequences for the security of the public at home and abroad that are not necessarily positive. Among his justifications for bombing Syria from late 2015, the Prime Minister said that abstention from the US-led action would 'only have a damaging effect on Britain's standing in the world' (Cameron, 2015d, p. 13). There is no evidence for his claim, but whatever its merits, it illustrates how the UK's preoccupation with global 'standing' is among the motivations for going to war.

1.2.   The strategy: allied might

The foregoing discussion outlines some of the limitations of the prevailing national security narrative in the UK: it is reluctant to look back, reluctant to look forward, reluctant to include perspectives that it does not already share, and is preoccupied with power and status, not simply the security of citizens. In particular, it hopes to fuse a narrative of security with one of ambition. This section explores how this strategy is practised.

A strategy without strategy

The established approach to security is a technocratic one, concerned principally with deterring and defeating threats to the nation state and its interests. Methodologically, the approach identifies 'threats', which are then 'neutralised' through 'capabilities'. Those capabilities are mostly 'hard power' measures, particularly offensive military capabilities. For example, the government summarised its review of the national security strategy in these terms:

> 'This review will look at the full range of threats that we face; it will examine the capabilities we need to counter them; and help us judge how to resource those capabilities.' (HM Gov., 2015a)

The tacit assumption is that security will grow if threats to the UK are neutralised, which is plainly not the case. It is akin to imagining that defending one's house in a riot, or even attacking the rioters, will stop the riot and the remove the causes of future riots.

Preoccupied as it is with eliminating insecurity, the approach does not define 'security', elucidate its principles, or propose a process for building and sustaining it (HM Gov., 2015b). This leaves the strategy with no definition of success, no concept of the preconditions of success, and no 'road map' for progress apart from neutralising threats when they arise. It also presents no evidence for the effectiveness of the 'hard power' measures that it espouses. In other words, it lacks the cardinal components that make a strategy strategic. Instead, it aims to tackle (or more accurately, *control*) symptoms of systemic insecurity, usually at the eleventh hour, while leaving their root causes intact. In analogy, it resembles a national strategy for health based on emergency invasive surgery.

A faith in military power

In common with most (though not all) nation states, the UK looks to its armed forces to guarantee its security. What makes the UK so unusual, particularly among its European peers, is the combination of very high military spending and a very low risk of a military attack on its territory.

The UK is the six-largest military spender in the world and, with France, the largest in the European Union (SIPRI, 2015a). It is also one of nine states armed with nuclear weapons. Yet the current national security strategy repeats the declaration of its predecessors in 2010 and 2008, and the 1998 Strategic Defence Review, that there is 'currently no immediate direct military threat to the UK mainland' (HM Gov., 2008; MoD, 1998; HM Gov., 2010b; HM Gov., 2015b, p. 24). It is also highly improbable that the UK, with or without nuclear weapons of its own, would be attacked by another nuclear-armed state (although the risk of attack by miscalculation remains high) (Global Zero, 2015). Why, then, does the UK spend so much on its conventional and nuclear forces?

Following the US lead, the UK has argued that territorial defence is insufficient; security now depends on being able to attack potential enemies anywhere in the world (HM Gov., 2010a). Its military expeditionary capabilities are promoted as evidence of the UK's commitment to global responsibility (HM Gov., 2015b; Cameron, 2015d). According to General Houghton, the UK must remain in the 'premier league of smart [military] power' and it is 'worrying' that parliament could prevent the state from taking military action abroad (Houghton, 2013; 2015). The UK and the US governments join forces repeatedly to call on European states spend substantially more on their own armed forces (Davis & Chamberlain, 2014; Farmer & Foster, 2014).

The strength of the UK's strategic faith in military power is unusual. Although most European states rely on military capability and some are vigorous participants in the arms trade, their approach to security differs markedly from the activist militarism of the UK and France. In particular, the rhetoric of geostrategic power that runs through the British security discourse is either absent or deemphasised in continental states' strategies.

Have continental European countries been misguided to draw down their military spending since the Cold War and emphasise, more so than the UK, the systemic causes of insecurity? The armed forces of continental Europe are sometimes lampooned in Britain as 'aggressive camping organisations' (Collins, 2013) or 'an unusually well-armed pension fund' (Rachman, 2013). Yet if the UK's strategic assumption – that security is mainly a function of military power and a close transatlantic alliance – is correct, then we would expect comparable European nations to be at greater risk than the UK. There is no evidence for that. Germany, for one example among many, spends about half as much as the UK on its military as a proportion of GDP (SIPRI, 2015b) but is no less physically secure. By measures of human security it seems to fare better; it suffers fewer medically preventable deaths *per capita* than either the UK or the US, for example (Nolte & McKee, 2012). In contrast, the UK is becoming progressively less secure, which the government acknowledges (HM Gov., 2015b), despite spending more heavily on the military now than during the Cold War (SIPRI, 2015b; SIPRI, 2015a).[7] Insecurity is greater in parts of

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[7] The UK now spends more on its military than it did in the Cold War, with the exception of a brief period in the mid-1980s.

Eastern Europe owing to regional volatility, but in general the lower military spending of most European states has not left them notably insecure.

It is true, as Tony Blair has pointed out, that extremists have targeted citizens of European countries that were not involved (or not as involved as the UK) in the US-led wars of the last decade (Blair, 2015b). But also true is his implication: that extremists do not pause to assess a nation's military strength before they blow up a train, an office, or a theatre. At the time of writing, the UK's official threat level has been at 'severe' without interruption for over 18 months, meaning that an attack by a non-state group is 'highly likely' (Security Service: MI5, 2016).[8] It is just not credible that high military spending to sustain expeditionary capabilities can change that, except possibly to make matters worse, if the fallout from the strategic failures in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya is a guide. Nor is it likely that the UK's unusually high military spending protects it effectively from other perceived threats, such as a bellicose Russia. Belgium and Sweden, for example, spend much less than the UK on armed forces, but neither is at greater risk of conventional or nuclear attack as a consequence.

If national security is not a simple function of heavy military spending, then an alternative explanation is needed to understand the UK's rank among the most avid of military spenders. An answer can be found in the collective desire of the British establishment to safeguard and advance the UK's position as a global power. Although economic and political power are vectors of status, too, as is 'soft-power', the UK looks to its military to leverage its political and economic potency on the world stage. In particular, the British establishment expects the state to use military power abroad (Richards, 2014; HC DC, 2015a; HM Gov., 2010b; 2015b), demonstrating its military strength (Chalmers, 2014a, p. 273) and assuring its 'position' and 'standing' relative to other states (Johnson, 2014, p. 4; Dorman, 2015; Cameron, 2014b). Speaking at a book launch, RUSI's then Director, Michael Clarke, put it this way:

> We [the UK] take the view that our role in the world is supplemented by what we do in the world militarily and we, like the United States, tend to react with military resources; the Germans tend to want to pay for things; the Italians tend to want to… convene conferences, everybody making contributions in their own way and our contribution tends towards the military because we think it's a strong card in our hands – nothing wrong with that.'
> (RUSI, 2014)

After the Cold War, the Conservative and Labour governments of the 1990s could have decisively reduced force levels to reflect the new détente, but they chose instead to consolidate the UK's global power status by streamlining the armed forces with relatively modest cuts. Had the UK decided to follow the military drawdown of most of its European allies, savings of around £100bn would have accrued in the regular military budget to date, plus the £35bn or so that it has cost has to wage at least ten military interventions, according to one careful estimate (Chalmers, 2014a).[9] The annual Defence budget would now be approximately £7bn lower than it is (ibid.).

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[8] Official threat level designations are 'low' (attack unlikely), 'moderate' (attack possible but unlikely), 'substantial' (attack a strong possibility), 'severe' (attack highly likely), 'critical' (imminent attack expected) (Security Service: MI5, 2016).
[9] This estimate assumes the retention of British nuclear weapons, so nuclear disarmament would have added substantially to the potential savings.

The UK's attachment to military power is starkly at odds with the United Nations Charter, which commits members of its Security Council to the 'least diversion for armaments of the world's human and economic resources' (UN, 1945) but the UN is rarely mentioned in British security discourse. It is not mentioned at all, for example, in influential parliamentary reports about the UK's future security posture (HC DC, 2015a; HC/HL NSS Committee, 2015). The government's security strategy squeezes the UN's security-building role into three short paragraphs on page 60, in contrast to 64 mentions of military alliance with NATO (HM Gov., 2015b).

And 'soft power'?

For the first time, the government's security strategy of 2015 explicitly acknowledged the utility of 'soft power', a term absent from previous published strategies:

> 'We will further enhance our position as the world's leading soft power promoting our values and interests globally, with our world-class Diplomatic Service, commitment to overseas development, and institutions such as the BBC World Service and the British Council.' (HM Gov., 2015b, p. 9)

The UK's aid spending, which is substantial relative to other advanced economies, is the prime example of British 'soft power'. In narrow but valid terms, the security strategy recognises that aid can help to prevent 'fragile' states becoming 'failed' states, in whose 'ungoverned spaces' threats to the UK can develop (HM Gov., 2015b, p. 16). But these benefits are the incidental gains from the proper and effective use of aid spending to help meet human need. When a donor state uses overseas aid as a strategic tool in its own interests, it makes itself the primary beneficiary. Rather than allocate humanitarian and development funding to wherever it can make a critical difference to people in need, the government has now earmarked half of the aid budget for work in 'fragile states and regions, including those most directly linked to our national security' (pp. 11, 48). This repurposing of aid partly instrumentalises aid funding, and the agencies that take it, for the British government's strategic interests.

It is also a typically ineffective tactic. Using aid to win 'hearts and minds' has rarely been successful and can be counter-productive on its own terms, according to research by Saferworld (Keen & Attree, 2015). The government's emphasis on support for fragile *states*, rather than solidarity with their *citizens*, who are often oppressed by their own political elite, can also reinforce injustices that drive the conditions of insecurity in the long-term (ibid.).

Other 'soft power' measures emphasised in the government's security strategy are weaker than they first appear. Seen in budgetary terms, for example, the Foreign Office, British Council and World Service will be operating to 2020 on budgets between 25% and 60% lower than they were in 2010. In exchange for its government funding, the World Service will be required to open frequencies in regions that the government has prioritised in its security strategy.[10]

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[10] According to the BBC's media correspondent David Silito, the government's decision to grant £85 million per annum to the World Service was conditional on it opening news services in regions seen as posing a threat: North Korea, Russia, Middle East and parts of Africa (BBC, 2015b). Editorial control rests with the BBC, but the conditionality attached to the funding nonetheless appropriates public broadcasting for the government's strategic interests. The announced new money is not, in fact, new. Most of it – about £70

Funding for these 'soft power' instruments is dwarfed by the MoD's budget, which will now rise above inflation every year to 2020, supplemented by a new Joint Security Fund worth £3.5 billion to 2021 (HM Treasury, 2015).

An alliance with greater power

Since the sun set on the British Empire, its military has seen a 'managed decline' on the world stage, according to the historian Hew Strachan (2014). The UK's status as a global power, if that is not already a chimera, has depended instead on a close relationship with the US. The alliance is credited as a bulwark against future risk (HM Gov., 2010b, p. 4; HC DC, 2015a, p. 3; IPPR, 2009, p. 11). It is also seen as the fulcrum for the UK's international status (Chalmers, 2014a; Dymock, 2015; Riley-Smith, 2015b; Meyer, 2015). It prevents the UK's otherwise-inevitable drift, the *Telegraph* often warns, from 'world player' towards 'international irrelevance' (Riley-Smith, 2015b).[11] The establishment view is that, were the US to lose faith in the UK as a reliable ally in the political and military spheres, then the UK would be condemned to the mediocrity of a minor, inessential ally.

US favour is so important to the UK that the relationship shapes – even determines – British security policy. Speaking about the UK's major military interventions since 1991, Malcolm Chalmers has said: 'In all these interventions we were involved because the United States was involved also.'[12] (RUSI, 2014) Successive Prime Ministers have encouraged otherwise reluctant Presidents to lead military action in the Balkans and Iraq, but those and other British interventions would not have taken place had the US not played a leading role in them. According to Michael Clarke, the British state will hope to remain America's '10% partner': a side-kick contributing one tenth of military effort to US-led military operations across the world (RUSI, 2014).

Despite its extraordinary political commitment to the strategy of another state, the British establishment is not confident in the relationship and aims perpetually to prove its worth (Riley-Smith, 2015b; HC DC, 2015a; HM Gov., 2010b). This preoccupation has powerfully influenced policy choices since the Second World War. Justifying his decision to build nuclear warheads in the post-war period, for example, Clement Attlee said Britain had 'to hold up our position *vis-à-vis* the Americans' (Cathcart, 1994, p. 25). The decision to develop a thermonuclear capability might have been an honest response to Cold War insecurities but it was also – and mainly – a bid to ensure that the US continued to take the UK seriously on the world stage (Arnold, 2001). The same is true today. According to General Houghton, the UK can only keep its strategic alliances by virtue of the 'status' it gains from using military power abroad (2015). When the US asks the UK to join it in a future war, the assumption is that the UK must agree to do so. Indeed, it would take a politically courageous prime minister to stay out of it; the establishment would resist such a

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million per year – will be drawn from the overseas aid budget and in any case the funding restores only one-third of the £253 million per year removed from the World Service in 2010 (HM Treasury, 2015; O'Neill & Rigby, 2015; BBC, 2015b). The British Council, which suffered a funding cut of 25% under the Coalition government of 2010-2015, will not get any new funding (HM Treasury, 2015; Stacey, 2015). The work of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, which is side-lined in the 2015 NSS/SDSR, is to have its budget protected, not extended, and this, too, following a 50% cut under the Coalition government (Stacey, 2015).
[11] For other examples of the *Telegraph*'s preoccupation with the UK's relationship with the US as a fulcrum of global power status, see (Telegraph View, 2014; Coghlan, 2010; Coughlin, 2015a; Coughlin, 2015b; Dymock, 2015; Farmer, 2015; Riley-Smith, 2015b; Meyer, 2015; Swinford & Farmer, 2015; Sheinwald, 2015).
[12] The intervention in Sierra Leone is an exception to the pattern of US leadership of the Western military interventions in which the UK has participated.

move as a dangerous dissent from an orthodoxy that valorises global status as a mark of national worth.

A strategic lock-in

As matters stand, the demands of the transatlantic relationship ensure that the UK spends much more heavily on its military than do comparable European states.

Examples of the determining effect of US will on UK policy are ubiquitous. One example is provided by the significance attached to NATO's military spending target: 2% of each member state's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The target bears no relation to a minimum standard of military capability, nor does GDP have any connection to a nation's security needs. Even NATO describes the threshold as a non-binding, politically symbolic measure of commitment (NATO, 2015).

Be that as it may, meeting the 2% target has become the litmus test of British commitment to a meaningful alliance with the US. At the prospect of spending falling below the threshold, defence commentators confess 'fears for Britain's military capability and status as a global power' (Swinford & Farmer, 2015). Meeting the target is 'an important mark of seriousness to our US allies' and it would be 'extremely damaging' to let it slip, according to the House of Commons Defence Committee (2015a, pp. 3, 21). If that were to happen, the UK would 'move down the league' and no longer be a 'world player', according to the UK's senior military officer in the US (Dymock, 2015).

The arbitrary nature of the 2% threshold may still lead some NATO members to judiciously ignore it,[13] but not the UK. In 2014, the UK committed 2.1% of GDP to the military,[14] but was expected to fall below the target by 2016. After intense lobbying from the US including Presidential intervention (Farmer, 2015), in 2015 David Cameron's government pegged the Defence budget to the NATO target for the rest of the decade.[15] The budget, excluding the cost of any military operations, will now be approximately £4 billion higher than previously expected in each year to 2020, according to two estimates (HC Library, 2015; Chalmers, 2015a). Military personnel, whose pay and conditions are a justified gripe, will not reap the benefit; they are to face 'pay restraint' while the new money is earmarked for equipment (HM Treasury, 2015). Meanwhile, austerity intensifies for most other parts of government. After his 2015 summer budget, the Chancellor told departments delivering public services to make savings of 25-40% in real terms by 2020 (Rigby & Cadman, 2015).

1.3. The grand strategy: security through dominance

Insofar as British security discourse values power for its own sake – perhaps as a sort of imperial nostalgia projected forward as a patriotic hope – it is divorced from the public

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[13] Canada and Germany opposed the 2% target, for example (DW.com, 2014b; Pugliese, 2014).

[14] Military spending in European Union member states was 1.5% of GDP in 2015 on average (World Bank, 2014).

[15] The decision to ensure that defence spending tracks the NATO target, which was made in the Chancellor's summer budget of 2015 (Osborne, 2015), surprised the predictions of well-placed commentators (Chalmers, 2015a; McInnis, 2015; Meyer, 2015) and belied earlier statements by the Prime Minister and the Chancellor himself (Coughlin, 2015a; 2015b)

interest. Nonetheless, a more sober case is also made for the UK to remain militarily highly capable and continue to act in concert with US strategy (HM Gov., 2008; HC DC, 2015a; Chalmers, 2015b; IPPR, 2009).

A grand-strategic alliance with the US has effectively guaranteed European security since the Second World War, this argument goes. Notwithstanding some strategic blunders, not least the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, US leadership through NATO will, in Malcolm Chalmers' words, 'continue to be the key anchor around which international order is maintained' (2015b). As such, the UK's preoccupation with global status, far from being a distraction, has enabled it to remain close to the global superpower in an arrangement that has uniquely favoured UK security needs.

This argument reflects a belief that security is achieved through dominance.

Dominance as an ethical proposition

The argument that security is best, or only, achieved through dominance belongs to the pessimistic view of relations between states that is common to the establishment outlook. From the Hobbesian, dog-eat-dog outlook of political realists to neoliberals' commitment to a 'global order' enforced as 'stable' by a superpower, the worldviews that dominate mainstream security discourse represent a parsimoniously narrow spectrum of possibility for relations between states.[16] For example, the neorealist Kenneth Waltz famously pointed to the inevitability of war:

> '[I]t is not necessary to assume an innate lust for power in order to account for the sometimes fierce competition that marks the international arena. In an anarchic domain, a state of war exists if all parties lust for power. But so too will a state of war exist if all states seek only to ensure their own safety.' (pp. 619-620)[17]

Scarcely more optimistic, a neoliberal outlook typically expects a superpower alliance to prevent war by imposing its own hegemonic order. 'Our new world rests on order,' Tony Blair told Congress after the premature declaration of the Iraq war's end in 2003; 'the danger is disorder.' (2003b)[18] His speech went on to encourage the US not to waver from its vocation as the guarantor of world order.

Both perspectives generally share the view that striving for security implies a scrum of rivalries between states; that the vaunted global order is fringed by anarchy; and the whole gamut is never far from the brink of chaos. If there is any peace and prosperity at all, the general establishment consensus is that it persists against the odds and must be protected by a beneficent West using its superior strategic power to impose order on the world (HC DC, 2015a, p. 35; Blair, 2003b; Johnson, 2014; IISS, 2015a; IPPR, 2009; Blair, 1999;

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[16] Traditional schools of international relations theory are concerned with relations between states, rather than between peoples, cultures or societies.

[17] Waltz and others misrepresent anarchy by eliding it implicitly with chaos. Anarchistic models may be highly democratic and highly organised'; their an-archy is a rejection of a single locus of authoritative power, not a love of chaos. More from Waltz: 'States in an anarchic order must provide for their own security, and threats or seeming threats to their security abound. Preoccupation with identifying dangers and counteracting them become a way of life. Relations remain tense; the actors are usually suspicious and often hostile even though by nature they may not be given to suspicion and hostility. Individually, states may only be doing what they can to bolster their security. Their individual intentions aside, collectively their actions yield arms races and alliances.' (p. 619) '[I]n an anarchic domain, the source of one's own comfort is the source of another's worry…' (p. 619).

[18] For a fuller discussion of the strengths and limitations of these theoretical approaches, see (Booth, 2007).

Chalmers, 2015b; HM Gov., 2010b; Houghton, 2015). From this point of view, it is not only reasonable for nation states to vie for power – and ultimately dominance – but also the most ethically viable strategy in a dismal world. Security planners and commentators, as well as the prestigious university politics departments that train them, are steeped in attitudes like these.[19]

Dominance and global (in)security

Whatever appeal the case for a hegemonic global order enforced by a superpower may have in the abstract, its concrete reality belies it.

Order itself is no virtue; it can serve tyranny as easily as justice. What matters is the character of the order that we, as the public, are invited to support. Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva point out that today's global order is not founded on 'universal human interest' at all, but rather 'a particular local and parochial interest [i.e. of the elite] which has been globalised through its reach and control' (1993, p. 9). That an elite few *own* the order implies its dictatorial operation.

But does our 'order' do us good? At least, does it preserve us from chaos? The suggestion that it might is just not credible. The effect of the hegemonic global order has been to disorder the collective life of people and planet. Under its aegis, inequality is growing, our ecology is being destroyed, and for most people the world is becoming less democratic and more insecure physically, ecologically and economically (Pettersson & Wallensteen, 2015; World Bank, 2015; UN-Habitat, 2014; Fuentes-Nieva & Galasso, 2014; Rogers, 2010; Freedom House, 2015). It is difficult to imagine a benefit great enough – or inclusive enough – to justify so much misery. The notion that this approximates to the best of possible worlds assumes against the evidence that we would be worse off without the *diktat* of a global elite who (as their security and economic strategies explicitly state) put themselves first.

The corollary of our 'order' – the international 'rules-based system' – is better than chaos, but in the most part the rules were made by the powerful, who have then steered the system as their own. They have repeatedly bypassed the rules for expedience' sake, not least by starting wars. Whatever successes may be claimed for Western security policies over decades, they have been predicated on heavy military spending, the failure to abolish nuclear weapons, pragmatic alliances with despotic governments, the arms trade, arms-racing, multiple coercive interventions in other countries, and torture. Even presuming benign intentions, the securitised enforcement of the prevailing order has ruptured millions of lives, plundered resources, and crippled local and national economies in the process. There is no dearth of evidence for Adam Curtis' claim that the West has become 'a dangerous and destructive force in the world' ('Bitter Lake', 2015).

Dominance and the (in)security of the British people

The major claim of mainstream security discourse in the UK, however, is that a strategy of dominance has served the country very well, whatever its effects elsewhere. For example, Malcolm Chalmers suggests that Western security policies, and a grand-strategic alliance

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[19] For examples, see (IISS, 2015a; IPPR, 2009; RUSI, 2014; HC DC, 2015a; Cornish & Dorman, 2015).

with the US in particular, have brought the UK to an unprecedented 'period of prosperity and security' (2015b). But have they?

Certainly, few British citizens face daily risks of the kind that abound in the world's most riven places, but this circumstance has many causes. If the UK's relative security were due to a grand-strategic alliance with the US and expeditionary armed forces, then we would expect European countries with neither to be less secure than the UK, but this is not the case. Among the more plausible explanations for the UK's relative security are the backwater geography of the British Isles and, in particular, European economic and political integration after the Second World War.

The notion that Britons now enjoy unprecedented prosperity is also problematic. It overlooks that the UK is the most unequal country in Europe after Portugal and increasingly relies on volunteer food banks to sustain its poorest citizens in lieu of state welfare (OECD, 2014; Neville, 2015). For the first time since records began, children born around the turn of the millennium will be poorer than their parents' generation throughout their lives (Crawford, et al., 2015). In addition, research is finding that levels of anxiety in the UK have increased, particularly among young people, and that the public believe the world has become a more frightening place (Collishaw, et al., 2010; Walters, et al., 2012; Halliwell, 2009, p. 21; Mental Health Foundation, 2014, pp. 27-28).

These factors notwithstanding, is there yet some force in the general principle that militarily capable, strategically allied states are more secure than others? The argument is valid to a point but otherwise specious. When the UK was among a handful of globally dominant military powers, its people went through two world wars. The UK's membership of the extremely heavily armed NATO alliance might have deterred aggression (and the Warsaw Pact claimed the same), but it raised the stakes and contributed to a febrile climate of global insecurity. After the Cold War, the world's militarily strongest nation suffered the appalling atrocities of September 2001 in New York, extremists murdered 52 people in London in July 2007 and then a further 130 in Paris in November 2015. Being strong and having strong friends might give enemies pause, but plainly does not assure a country's safety, its prosperity, or the equitable distribution of either.

A 'special relationship' on the rocks

In the currency of today's security paradigm, the UK has progressively less to offer to the strategic position of the US, which has become ambivalent about its relationship with our small but useful island realm.

In the joint military ventures since the end of the Cold War, the UK was given battles to fight or ground to hold, but in most cases the US called the shots at a strategic level. The decision of 2005 to send British troops to Helmand in Afghanistan was presented as a sovereign choice in the UK interest, but the casual words of Mary Beth Long, US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence during the height of war, are telling: 'the Brits were put there.' (BBC, 2014) Speaking in 2014, former US Defence Secretary Robert Gates told the BBC that defence cuts have rendered the UK's armed forces no longer fully capable, despite a still-large defence budget (Gates, 2014). The salience of his view that the UK 'won't … be a full partner' in the future has grown on both sides of the Atlantic (Houghton, 2013; Riley-Smith, 2015b; HC DC, 2015a; Farmer, 2015).

With the exception of the intelligence relationship, which is said to remain strong (Clarke, 2014), the US has also harboured doubts about the UK's value at an operational level. Beneath public expressions of gratitude for UK participation in more than a decade of war, the US has been disappointed by the British armed forces' performance in Basra in Iraq, Helmand in Afghanistan, and Libya (BBC, 2014; US Embassy in Kabul, 2008; BBC, 2010a; Meyer, 2015; Clarke, 2014). In all cases the UK was defeated in strategic terms (Chalmers, 2014b). According to Bruce Riedel, formerly of the US National Security Council:

> 'I think the United States has a better appreciation after the war in Afghanistan of the limits on British military power. The idea of the United Kingdom having a global role really will come to an end in Afghanistan.' (BBC, 2014)

The former British Ambassador to the US, Christopher Meyer, is among many to call on the government to invest in its armed forces in order to save the transatlantic relationship:

> 'Is it any surprise that, in allied consultations on the Ukraine and Russia, Washington's first port of call is Berlin, even Paris, not London? Contrast and compare with the late Eighties when Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan worked hand in glove on managing the dying years of the old Soviet Union.' (Meyer, 2015)

But this plea already has the ring of elegy about it. Despite the alignment of interests at the highest political levels, the UK-US relationship is ever-less mutual. For one thing, the UK is not the only nation to be told it is 'special' when this suits Washington's purposes (Meyer, 2015). For another, the UK is no longer particularly special. If it were, we would expect to read about it in the US National Security Strategy, but the UK is barely mentioned. After a quarter-century of British involvement in almost all wars led by the US, the 30-page US security strategy confines its single mention of the UK to a short list of European states with which it has 'historic close ties'; the Presidential foreword does not mention the UK at all (US, White House, 2015, pp. 1, 7). The US is now looking to the Far East. There it anticipates the rise of globally significant power – the nascent 'Asian Century', as Michael Clarke has put it (RUSI, 2014) – when the US will no longer preside alone over a hegemonic global order (MoD, 2014).

For now, the UK remains in the strategic straitjacket of the transatlantic alliance and so the establishment's security discourse continues with business as usual. The parliamentary committee on the National Security Strategy, for example, has said that 'there is no doubt that the UK and US are and remain each other's partner of choice' (HC/HL NSS Committee, 2014). Any kind of drawdown of the UK's military capabilities, any kind of de-emphasis of the military in its approach to security, and any kind of move away from a readiness to project power globally in alliance with the superpower, is still seen to jeopardise the UK's 'special' status. Most governments would find such a prospect repellent, argues Andrew Dorman of King's College, London:

> '[N]o Prime Minister wants to be remembered as the one who oversaw a step change down in the United Kingdom's standing on the international stage. This is why successive Prime Ministers have supported the retention of a nuclear capability knowing full well that the replacement costs will fall to their successors.' (Dorman, 2015)

Nonetheless, as the world around the UK changes, it is likely to force a change of course at some point.

US power, too, is in slow decline relative to other states (MoD, 2014, p. xviii; IPPR, 2009, p. 9) IPPR's Alternative Security Strategy of 2009 suggested that 'we may also be seeing

the beginning of the end of five centuries of Western power, institutions and values over international affairs' (IPPR, 2009, p. 9). It went on to suggest that the UK will have to come to terms with the inevitable end of its relationship with the US, and advocated a shift towards greater co-operation with other European states in due course (IPPR, 2009, p. 11).

Even that proposition assumes that nation states will continue their monopoly on strategy, but with the rise of corporations, non-state armed groups operating transnationally, and systemic global crises, the system of nation states is under strain (IPPR, 2009, p. 8; MoD, 2014, p. xiv). In this century, the question of who 'does' security (and insecurity) might well be as contested as how it is done.

2. How the current approach fails

The preceding section explored some of the shortcomings of the UK's strategy for security. This section aims to show how those shortcomings manifest in practice, using brief case studies based on the 'tier-one' security risks identified by the government.[20]

Three of these top-tier risks – floods, pandemics and cyberwarfare – can provide no rationale for the current approach to security based on elevated force levels, high military spending, power-projection, and a grand-strategic alliance with the superpower. Although armed forces have been engaged in responding to flooding at home, pandemics abroad, and attacks in cyberspace, the advantages of elevated military spending are marginal. Smaller armed forces perform similar tasks, as do civilians.

The other three 'tier-one' risks could provide a *prima facie* security rationale for the UK's strategic posture. That rationale would rest on three objectives: to deter and/or respond to an interstate military crisis; to stabilise volatile countries; and to minimise atrocities by non-state groups.

The following discussion aims to demonstrate that coercive, heavily militarised, superpower-led responses to these risks have been habitually ineffective, often adding to insecurity. The few exceptions – the relatively successful intervention in Sierra Leone, for example – are overshadowed by the persistent failures of the current approach since the end of the Cold War.

2.1.   Deter military crises. Case study: Russia.

In response to Russia's increased military spending and annexation of Crimea in March 2014, as well as its nuclear weapons upgrade programme and ability to muster large forces at short notice, senior figures in the establishment have proposed that the former superpower now threatens NATO including the UK (HC DC, 2015a; Wall, 2015;

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[20] See 'The foreshortened future' on page 11 for a list of the top-tier risks to 2020, as identified in the National Security Risk Assessment.

Bradshaw, 2015; HC/HL NSS Committee, 2015).[21] They have called for a renewed focus on Russia as the most probable belligerent in a future military crisis (HC DC, 2015a; IISS, 2015a; HC/HL NSS Committee, 2015). In particular, the Commons Defence Committee has called for a major expansion of the armed forces to hedge against 'the threat from Russia' (HC DC, 2015a, p. 13).

In its 2015 report, *Re-thinking Defence to meet new threats*, the Defence Committee proposed a 'short list' of major additional military equipment to ward Russia off:

> '[M]aritime surveillance aircraft, CBRN capabilities[22], Ballistic Missile Defence, a comprehensive carrier strike capability, more Royal Navy vessels and Royal Air Force planes, and enhanced divisional manoeuvre and armoured capacity in the military and possible pre-positioning of troops in continental Europe.' (HC DC, 2015a, pp. 29-30)

The Committee acknowledged that a 'Soviet armoured invasion' is improbable,[23] and that Russia would favour 'cyber-war, propaganda, subversion, and deniable special forces' (p. 31). This is indeed plausible, but against such asymmetric tactics as these the Committee's clutch of Cold War-era, conventional materiel would be mostly impotent. The Committee suggested that Russia could launch a conventional military attack on a bordering NATO country, but whilst this is possible the UK government regards the prospect as 'highly unlikely' (HM Gov., 2015b, p. 18).

Seen as a balance of power equation, NATO is the world's largest military alliance by far, accounting for half of the world's military expenditure and outspending Russia ten times over (SIPRI, 2015b; SIPRI, 2015a). As noted earlier, military strength is no guarantee of security, but those who argue that NATO is under-resourced have not made the case that outspending Russia 10 times over is somehow insufficient. They would also need to argue that an 11-fold or 12-fold overspend would provide some kind of strategic advantage that NATO needs and does not have now. The government plausibly believes that Russia might employ asymmetric means to undermine a neighbouring state (HM Gov., 2015b, p. 18), but Russia is not more likely to desist simply because the UK's military spending is higher than that of other European states.

Whether Russia has further expansionist ambitions remains a matter of debate (Hitchens, 2015), though public anxiety in the region is high (Carle, 2015). For the EU and NATO's part, expansion is a fact. NATO has grown from 12 members in 1949 to 28 today, of which 12 joined after the Cold War, mostly former Soviet or Warsaw Pact states in Russia's traditional sphere of influence.[24] Alliance territory now stretches from North America to the Baltic states bordering Russia, and still NATO wants to grow: it has been vying with Russia for the allegiance of Ukraine since 1994 (NATO, 2012). The Defence Committee has accused the Russian government of 'paranoia' over NATO's intentions (HC DC, 2013,

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[21] For example, Russia could become 'an obvious existential threat to our whole being', according to Adrian Bradshaw, the UK's senior NATO officer (Bradshaw, 2015); the Defence Secretary has interpreted the Ukraine crisis as evidence of a 'real and present danger' to Baltic states (Fallon, 2015); and Peter Wall, former Chief of the General Staff, has warned against defence budget cuts in a new era of 'Russian expansionism' (Wall, 2015).

[22] CBRN: chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear. Presumably the Committee means to include a final D for 'Defence', as CBRND, to refer to defensive measures against weapons of mass destruction.

[23] Or indeed impossible.

[24] New NATO members since the end of the Cold War are: the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland (1999); Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia (2004); and Albania and Croatia (2009) (NATO, 2013).

p. 14), but we might imagine how the UK would respond if a revived Warsaw Pact had expanded into most of Western Europe and was courting France for membership.

While Russia upgrades its nuclear weapons, so does the US, in both cases from rust bucket, Cold War-era systems (Rogers, 2015a). The UK is doing the same as it plans to build new nuclear-armed submarines to carry *Trident* into the 2050s. Russia has shrugged off Western outrage against its annexation of Crimea by drawing parallels with NATO's justifications for intervention in Kosovo (Putin, 2014), which took place against Russian opposition and without a UN resolution. That episode badly soured relations between NATO and Russia (Chalmers, 2015b). Now, with justification, neither party trusts the other to act within the rules of the international system, even as each makes political capital from the other's untrustworthiness.

Not unusually for British security discourse, the Defence Committee's analysis has excluded testimony presenting a Russian view, having ignored evidence provided to its inquiry from the Oxford Research Group, which tried to represent one (HC DC, 2015a, pp. 14, 51; 2014). If it had, it might have found a near mirror image of its own position, such as this statement by the Russian President:

> 'If someone threatens our territories, it means that we will have to aim our armed forces…
> accordingly, at the territories from which the threat is coming. How else could it be? It is
> NATO that is coming to our borders, it's not like we are moving anywhere.' (Putin, 2015b)

The stand-off has worsened as NATO and Russia collide in their approach to Syria. NATO has justifiably protested 'a troubling escalation of Russian military activities' in the country, but without criticism of the intensification of the US-led air campaign (Stoltenberg, 2015). After a Russian warplane was shot down after provocative incursions into Turkish airspace, Vladimir Putin declared that Turkey will 'keep regretting it' (Putin, 2015a).

Diplomacy could be deployed in preventative mode, using toned-down public rhetoric and looking for a measure of mutual understanding. Instead, both NATO and Russia are exchanging recriminations and propaganda. Next to this noisy rivalry for power between globally ambitious states, each driven by its political elite, the security interests of citizens are relegated or forgotten entirely, as was typical of Cold War strategists (Cohn, 1987).

2.2. Reduce instability and alleviate humanitarian crises. Case study: Kosovo.

The government suggests that 'instability' is a security risk in its own right. It describes the term as including:

> '…regional instability, large-scale humanitarian need, mass migration and human trafficking, and
> exploitation of weak governments or ungoverned space by terrorist groups and criminals.' (HM
> Gov., 2015b, p. 16)

The list of problems is closer to a characterisation of 'injustice' and its exploitation by non-state actors, than to 'instability'. Nonetheless, the government's *Building Stability Overseas Strategy (BSOS)* describes 'stability' in progressive terms, as:

'[P]olitical systems which are representative and legitimate, capable of managing conflict and change peacefully, and societies in which human rights and rule of law are respected, basic needs are met, security established and opportunities for social and economic development are open to all.' (HM Gov., 2011, p. 7)

The policy promises investment in 'early warning' and 'upstream prevention' of violent conflict, to be achieved through a wide range of resources, including non-governmental capacities for peacebuilding (pp. 4-5).

Much of the government's response to instability is based on overseas aid. In response to the crisis in Syria, for example, the UK is the only G7 state to have met and exceeded its agreed 'fair share' of humanitarian assistance (HC IDC, 2015). The UK's bilateral contributions had exceeded £1.1 billion by December 2015, making it the largest contributor in Europe (ibid.).

The UK also intends to continue intervening militarily for the sake of stability. Large-scale interventions for humanitarian reasons, championed by Tony Blair in the 2000s, are no longer a priority, but the view persists that coercive military power can restore stability to disrupted societies. Successive governments have also justified British military operations in similar terms, whether or not that was their original purpose. Malcolm Chalmers, for example, argues that the British armed forces should be a 'force for order', citing the invasions of Iraq in 1990-1 and of Afghanistan in 2001-2 as examples of successful, order-restoring actions (2015b). The Defence Committee has suggested that the French intervention in Mali of 2013 exemplifies a successful intervention to restore stability, which could be applied in the future in northern Nigeria (2015a, p. 16). It is difficult to recognise the BSOS definition of 'stability' in the results of these interventions, however.

Of all the military actions since the end of the Cold War, the 1999 NATO intervention in Kosovo was widely lauded as the model 'humanitarian military intervention' that successfully restored a volatile situation to stability. Shortly after the air war began, Tony Blair proposed 'a new doctrine of international community', in which Western states ought to use military power, with or without UN approval, to overwhelm a government if it is 'undemocratic and engaged in barbarous acts' (Blair, 1999).[25] It would not be possible to intervene in all humanitarian crises, so a 'subtle blend of mutual self-interest and moral purpose' should determine when and when not to do so (ibid.). And in building stability overseas, the action would build security at home, he said.

The narrative of a successful intervention in Kosovo is appealingly simple. After forces under Serb leadership had driven 250,000 ethnic Albanian Kosovars from their homes (Human Rights Watch, 2000), NATO's 78-day aerial bombardment forced the Serbian government to capitulate, which allowed the refugees to return.

The reality was more complicated. In negotiations before the war, NATO dictated terms that would have given the alliance the right to occupy Serbia.[26] This led many commentators to argue that the talks were set up to fail (Mason, 2000; Littman, 1999). Fail they did. When the bombing began, the conflict's belligerents (particularly though not only Serb forces) stepped up their campaign of atrocities; the exodus of refugees swelled and the

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[25] Although the UN can authorise coercive 'peace enforcement' operations, it has done so only twice: in Korea in 1953 and in Iraq in 1991 (Guldimann, 2010; UN, 2008).
[26] NATO's terms of the Rambouillet accord were that the alliance would manage the province supported by 30,000 troops with right of passage across the rest of the former Yugoslavia and immunity from Yugoslav law (Codner, 2014).

humanitarian crisis worsened (Fisk, 1999; Balkansnet.org, n.d.; Francis, 2001; Littman, 1999; Chalmers, 2014b; Human Rights Watch, 2000; Carington, 1999; Codner, 2014).

By the end of the NATO campaign, 700,000 people had been displaced within and from Kosovo, mostly ethnic Albanians (UNHCR, 1999a). Half of Kosovo's Serb population had also reportedly fled their homes in a well-justified fear of a backlash to come (Fisk, 1999). In the words of Peter Carington, a former envoy in the region and former NATO Secretary-General, 'I think what we did made things [ethnic cleansing] very much worse.' (Carington, 1999)

The bombing itself divided opinion internationally; among its critics were figures as diverse as Michael Gove and Nelson Mandela (Littman, 1999, pp. i-iv). Without the approval of a deadlocked UN Security Council, the action was formally unlawful (Littman, 1999). So was its conduct (Human Rights Watch, 2000).[27] By the end of the campaign, NATO had destroyed approximately half of Serbia's industrial capacity, crippled its economy, and left an additional 250,000 people unemployed as a result (BBC, 1999c). The military campaign was extremely costly to NATO taxpayers as well, who were left with an estimated bill of £30 billion (BBC, 1999c).

After the war, refugees began their return to Kosovo to mend their broken homes, but Serb and other minorities in Kosovo faced reprisal killings, beatings, arson, and intimidation (Human Rights Watch, 1999). By one month after the war, 170,000 Serbs and other minorities had fled the province (UNHCR, 1999b); only one quarter of Serbs who lived in Kosovo before the war remained after it (Human Rights Watch, 1999). Those who stayed continued to face intimidation from ethnic Albanians who had themselves borne atrocities by Serb forces before and during the war. The cycle of violence continued. In 2004, riots involving 50,000 people led to mass reprisals against the rump Serb population and other minorities; in some villages every Serb and ethnic minority home and church was destroyed (Human Rights Watch, 2004a; 2004b).

Today, Kosovo is relatively stable but the conflict over its status continues. Its society has become segregated into minority ethnic enclaves and the political status of its territory remains fiercely disputed (Rossi, 2013). Individuals indicted for alleged war crimes committed while fighting in the Kosovo Liberation Army now hold positions of power in government (ibid.). Kosovo's prospects, say some commentators, lie in negotiation with Serbia and some form of power-sharing arrangement in the long-term (Rossi, 2014).

For NATO's part, its intervention proved the political and practical possibility of forcing a pariah state into submission by using overwhelming military power. But as the historical details indicate, the alliance's tactical victory in Kosovo did not reverse a humanitarian crisis or establish anything like the conditions of stability that the government's BSOS

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[27] Although the alliance claimed afterwards that there were 'just 20' incidents of 'collateral damage', initial assessment corroborated at least 90, in which around 500 civilians were killed (Human Rights Watch, 2000). Most civilian deaths were the result of targeting civil infrastructure with precision munitions: bridges, roads, rail lines, industry, media organisations, and dwellings (Human Rights Watch, 2000; BBC, 1999b) In one incident, which NATO first denied, a refugee convoy was bombed in error for two hours in daylight (Human Rights Watch, 2000). Military footage from laser-guided bombs was broadcast to the international public to show the care taken to avoid civilian fatalities, but NATO was (contrary to initial denials) also extensively using cluster bombs, which are notoriously indiscriminate (McGrath, 2000).[27] This skilfully sanitised presentation of warfare had been trialled for the 1990 Gulf War and would be further honed for Afghanistan and Iraq (Stahl, 2010).

policy describes today. The tactical success, not the strategic failure, informed the decision to invade Iraq four years later (Codner, 2014; Chalmers, 2014b; Blair, 2010).

Shortly after the Kosovo war, a Canadian initiative established a UN Commission to propose governing principles for external intervention in humanitarian crises without the blessing of the state government in question (ICISS, 2001). These principles, known collectively as the Responsibility to Protect or R2P, emphasise the responsibility to prevent abuses of human rights by tackling root causes. They include the option of coercive military power, but confine it to an 'exceptional and extraordinary' act based on 'an evaluation of the issues from the point of view of those seeking or needing support, rather than those who may be considering intervention' (ibid., p. 17). It must also meet certain strict conditions and win UN approval first. In these and other respects, R2P principles differ sharply from the Blair doctrine.[28]

The R2P principles have won qualified support from many NGOs, who have nonetheless called for them to be applied consistently (One World Trust and others, 2006; Abbott, 2005).[29] Unfortunately, the principles are commonly expropriated to justify more or less any military intervention. When Tony Blair used R2P language to present the case for invading Iraq, which again lacked UN approval, the NGO set up to promote R2P described his comments as 'really unfortunate' (Tharoor, 2011). The rhetoric was invoked again in the UN Resolutions used by NATO to justify the air campaign over Libya in 2011 (UNSC, 2011a; UNSC, 2011b), giving 'R2P a bad name', in the words of India's UN Ambassador (Singh Puri, 2012). In a further absurd twist, the Russian government described its annexation of Crimea as an R2P action (Garton Ash, 2014).

While global powers have invoked R2P to justify their own military action, they have been habitually silent when oppressive governments allied with the West are credited with providing 'stability', as Iraq's Saddam Hussein, Syria's Bashar al-Assad, and Afghanistan's mujahedeen once were (Norton-Taylor, 2014a; Aburish, 2001; Coll, 2004). Good customers for Western armaments, such as Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, are also let off the hook (CAAT, 2014a; 2014b). Israel's incursion into Gaza in 2014 included acts described as 'slaughter' by David Cameron and 'outrageous' by Nick Clegg, but neither leader invoked the R2P principles (Cameron & Clegg, 2014) and the UK continues to export arms to Israel today (CAAT, 2015a). Nor do global powers invoke R2P or indeed the Blair doctrine when the country affected is of no strategic interest, such as the Central African Republic. As Roméo Dallaire, who led the UN peacekeeping operation in Rwanda in 1994, wrote later: 'We have fallen back on the yardstick of national interest to measure which portions of the planet we allow ourselves to be concerned about.' (Dallaire, 2004, p. 517) His observation still applies today.

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[28] Unlike the Blair doctrine's emphasis on eleventh-hour use of overwhelming military power (Blair, 1999), R2P principles begin with the 'responsibility to prevent' abuses of human rights by tackling their root causes and direct causes (ICISS, 2001, p. xi). The Commission makes clear that 'prevention' is the 'single most important dimension' of responsibility and a collective obligation (ibid.). R2P also entails a 'responsibility to rebuild' after violent conflict – a task that again is absent from the Blair doctrine. Between these two poles lies the 'responsibility to react', in which military intervention ought to be 'exceptional and extraordinary', rather than the preferred mode of action (p. xi-xiii) with strict conditions applied to its legitimacy, including UN approval. R2P thus emphasises the collective responsibility to safeguard the rights of vulnerable people while also narrowing the scope for Western states (in particular) to exercise a 'right to intervene' on their own terms.
[29] Among organisations choosing not to endorse R2P are British Quakers (QPSW, 2006)

2.3. Minimise the risk of atrocities. Case study: ISIS and 'domestic extremism'.

ISIS

Since the 9/11 attacks in New York and Washington, the risk of atrocities by non-state groups, commonly known as terrorism[30], has become the primary concern in British and US security discourse (HM Gov., 2010b; HC DC, 2015a; HC/HL NSS Committee, 2015; HM Gov., 2015b). David Richards, former Chief of the Defence Staff, has described 'Muslim extremism' as the UK's 'real existential threat' (Richards, 2015).

A primary focus on al-Qa'ida has shifted to ISIS, following its rapid rise to prominence. The core of ISIS evolved from al-Qa'ida fighters who entered Iraq after the US-led invasion in 2003 and capitalised on the chaos left by the war. The Iraqi economy had been crippled, its armed forces disbanded, and the Sunni minority was being politically marginalised. One consequence was a large population of disenfranchised young men – many ex-military, many bereaved during the war, many incarcerated without trial by US forces (Edwards, 2014; ICG, 2014; Rogers, 2015b; BBC, 2011a; IISS, 2015a; Rogers, 2014; Hendawi & Abdul-Zahra, 2015; Khatib, 2015). In these conditions, ISIS and other *jihadi* groups were able to recruit fighters from a wide demographic, including men with little affinity for the group's ideology (Zein Eddine, 2015), and its command now includes former senior military and intelligence figures from the Saddam era (Hendawi & Abdul-Zahra, 2015; Shehadi, 2015; Khatib, 2015). ISIS has inspired disaffected men and women from abroad to join their *jihad*; 20,000 or more such fighters have entered Iraq and Syria to date (Mehta & Tilghman, 2015; BBC, 2015a). The group also draws some active and passive support from a small minority among Muslim communities and countries across the world (Rogers, 2014; Cameron, 2015c; Riley-Smith, 2015a).

ISIS' millenarian expectation is that Islam will be redeemed once all Muslims adhere to the same strict code, at which point 'the infidels are disgraced' and 'the people of heresy are humiliated', according to a speech attributed to an ISIS spokesman (Adnani, 2014). Drawing on a severely literalist reading of sharia law, ISIS' leadership aims to purge its territory of all who fall short of its fantasy of Islamic purity (Khatib, 2015; Todenhöfer, 2014). The group is particularly brutal to Shiites and non-conforming women. In 2015, ISIS killed 7,101 civilians in Iraq, according to Iraq Body Count (2016).

At the time of writing, ISIS occupies fragments of ground across a wide area in Syria and northern Iraq (BBC, 2015a; Hendawi & Abdul-Zahra, 2015). There are differing views about the group's goals and its capabilities; some fear it could take over the world, while others believe that its main hope is simply to survive (Withnall & Romero, 2015; Khatib, 2015; Rogers, 2015b).

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[30] There is no consensus on the meaning of 'terrorism' (Carlile, 2007). The term is defined in the Terrorism Act (2000) as actual or threatened serious violence or damage intended to effect political or ideological ends, (ibid. pp. 5-6). This would include many actions by state governments. The academic Martha Crenshaw had noted the same definitional problem two decades earlier (Crenshaw, 1981). The Act solves it for the government's purposes by limiting the legal meaning of 'terrorism' so as to discount acts of violence that are intended to influence *foreign* governments (ibid. pp. 5-6). In British security discourse, therefore, 'terrorism' is a politically convenient term of art. Its meaning in general use approximates to 'atrocities by non-state groups', the term used in this document as an imperfect but preferable alternative.

The US-led response, supported by the UK, aims to 'destroy' ISIS (Cameron, 2015b; Obama, 2015b). The initial strategy has comprised attacks from the air, while the Iraqi army, Kurdish militias, and diverse rebel groups fight on the ground, supported by US strategic advice, arms, and training. The US has yet to determine how it will achieve its strategic military aims, however (Hirschfield Davis & Shear, 2015). Complicating the situation is the presence on the ground of other *jihadi* groups besides ISIS as well as intervention by several other states in addition to the US-led coalition. Iran, Russia, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey are, like the Western powers involved, all seeking to bend the crisis to their own strategic purposes in what has become a proxy war of many layers.

In view of the inescapably indiscriminate nature of attacks from the air, bombing has killed, injured and bereaved many civilians. Attacks by Russian and Syrian forces have been particularly indiscriminate (Amnesty International, 2015b; 2015c), but those by the US-led coalition have also taken a heavy toll. Attacks by drone, for example, which are said to put 'warheads on foreheads' (Schogol, 2015), are habitually reckless in practice.[31] In Iraq, air attacks by the US-led coalition or Iraqi forces killed 1,295 civilians in 2015, according to Iraq Body Count (2016); the picture in Syria is similar (Airwars.org, 2016).

Even were those killings somehow deemed tolerable, air attack is tactically ineffectual (Khatib, 2015; Todenhöfer, 2014; Lamb, 2015). Jürgen Todenhöfer points out that air attack cannot defeat the 5,000 militants who hold Mosul, living as they do among the city's three million residents (2014). 'For every child the Americans kill in, say, Mosul, you have a hundred new terrorists,' he said (2015). His analysis appears to be borne out. Thus far, the US-led bombing has prevented ISIS from further growth and wrested back some earlier losses, but otherwise has made little progress towards its strategic goals as more fighters have joined ISIS, replenishing its forces (Schogol, 2015).

On the strategic futility of the action, Harriet Lamb of International Alert writes:

> 'Airstrikes will further traumatise an already broken population. Seeing family members and friends killed by a faceless enemy, to whom ISIS are free to give whichever "face" suits them, will no doubt result in more foot soldiers in ISIS' battle against the west.' (Lamb, 2015)

The Carnegie analyst Lina Khatib confirms that US-led bombing is alienating civilians on the ground. She explains that bombing ISIS angers communities because it strengthens the hand of other parties to violence, including the Assad government in Syria (2015) and the Shia militias looting northern Iraq. Muhammad, a Syrian teacher who joined ISIS, was staggered that the US would bomb ISIS but not the Assad government, having seen how brutally it suppressed the people's uprisings of the 2011 Arab Spring. He told *Syria Deeply*:

> 'I've changed after seeing the hypocrisy of the international community. I realised after all those years that they don't want the so-called revolution to succeed, and they prefer to keep Bashar al-Assad [in power].'

For these reasons, it appears highly probable that the current bombing campaign will fail on its own terms, and will fail Syrians and Iraqis.

At the time of writing, the use of Western troops on the ground has been ruled out, excepting special forces (Roberts & McCarthy, 2015), but some military commentators

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[31] In Pakistan and Yemen, US 'decapitation strikes' aimed at 41 men resulted in the deaths of more than a thousand people, according to Reprieve and the Bureau for Investigative Journalism (Ackerman, 2014). Decapitation strikes are attacks on a movement's leadership.

have suggested that if the aim is to 'get rid' of ISIS, a ground-war will eventually be required (Richards, 2015). Accordingly, military escalation remains a possibility, despite the reluctance of Western governments and their publics to engage in major military interventions after the unpopular wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Would 'boots on the ground' be more effective? Paul Rogers thinks not:

> 'It is highly doubtful that [ISIS] can be defeated by air power and a full-scale ground war would increase support for it while leading to further chaos across the region.' (2015e)

In 2014, RUSI issued a similar caution, arguing that ISIS would be the main beneficiary of a ground war:

> '[The group's] objective is … to draw the West into a protracted ground campaign. This would reinforce the group's narrative that the West is the enemy of Islam, and further enhance its claim as the ultimate defender of the Sunni population.' (Pantucci & Ellis, 2014, p. 5)

A ground war would almost certainly magnify the blow-back effect of the current air campaign. There appears, therefore, to be no effective military response to ISIS. This paper explores possible viable alternative responses to ISIS in a later section.

'Domestic extremism'

The UK government and media have expressed alarm at active support for ISIS among Muslim communities at home (Cameron, 2015c). In fact, the number of ISIS fighters from Western countries is tiny; the Government's Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism estimated in 2015 that 'as few as a hundred' Britons are fighting alongside ISIS (Riley-Smith, 2015a). The rate of direct involvement is 10 individuals for every million people in the UK (BBC, 2015a). The UK and other Western governments further worry, and with justification, that the movement could inspire atrocities in their own societies. Attacks in Tunisia, France, Belgium and elsewhere have shown that ISIS can inspire low-tech but atrocious acts of violence far from its bases (Sengupta, 2015; Jenkins, 2014; Fox, 2015).

In response, the government has made 'counter-radicalisation' a major policy issue; it was the subject of a major speech by the Prime Minister in July 2015, in advance of an Extremism Bill to be tabled in 2016. David Cameron's speech, tacitly addressed to Muslims in Britain, indicates the government's approach (Cameron, 2015c). The root of the problem is ideological, he said – an 'extreme doctrine' of Islam that 'glorifies violence and subjugates its people'. The ideology can seem 'energising' for young people who are searching for a sense of belonging and, in the absence of moderate voices, readily feed on rumours of a Western conspiracy against Islam. An aggravating factor is the cultural isolation of segregated communities, in which people of diverse faiths and beliefs might never meet one another, according to the Prime Minister.

The proposed remedy is twofold. First, the UK must become a more integrated, 'cohesive society' based on British values (ibid.), which are prescribed by the state as 'a belief in freedom, tolerance of others, accepting personal and social responsibility, respecting and upholding the rule of law' (Cameron, 2014a). Second, these values need to be 'enforced' if necessary (Cameron, 2015c). Speakers 'peddling… hatred' should have no platform in the media or at universities, whether or not they advocate violence. Surveillance should be intensified online and by means of the Prevent strategy, which confers on public bodies a statutory duty to refer children deemed at risk of 'radicalisation'.

Counter-terrorism experts have criticised the government's approach for failing to understand the motives of Britons who support extremist movements (Silke, 2015; Anderson, 2015). Research on routes into extremist violence has found that it is not explained by a delimited set of factors, let alone any single factor such as ideological allegiance (UN, 2016, pp. 7-8; Davies, et al., 2015; Adelman, et al., 2010). Indeed, the research finds that ideology is neither a sufficient nor a necessary condition of violence for extremist causes, nor is it usually the salient motivator (ibid.).

The strategy is also proving counter-productive. It has been criticised for its 'overbroad' restrictions on civil rights; and for aggravating whole communities (Silke, 2015; Anderson, 2015). The government's Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation, David Anderson QC, has warned legislators against:

> 'provoking a backlash in affected communities, hardening perceptions of an illiberal or Islamophobic approach, alienating those whose integration into British society is already fragile and playing into the hands of those who, by peddling a grievance agenda, seek to drive people further towards extremism and terrorism' (Anderson, 2015).

Whilst it is plausible that some young Muslims are enticed into extremism on the strength of conspiracy theories, as a generalisation it caricatures the anger and frustration that many feel about Western attitudes to Muslims and their faith. The West's political and military support for Israel, even as it commits atrocious human rights abuses in the Occupied Territories (Human Rights Watch, 2014a), is a lightning rod for anger. Western-sponsored UN sanctions in Iraq, which led to the preventable deaths of half a million Iraqi children, were followed by the US invasion and war of 2003, which has led to 219,000 dead so far, including at least 142,000 civilians (Unicef, 1999; Iraq Body Count, 2015b). British support for dictatorial, repressive governments such as Saudi Arabia's, which violently oppresses democratic dissent and beheads convicts as a matter of policy (Human Rights Watch, 2014b; 2015), jars with David Cameron's insistence that Britain stands for 'basic liberal values such as democracy, freedom and sexual equality' (Cameron, 2015c). These are not conspiracy theories but facts and, to many Muslims, speak more loudly than David Cameron's words about the nature of British values. In an open reply to the Prime Minister's speech, Siema Iqbal, a doctor from Manchester, suggested that Islamophobia and foreign policy were doing more than extremist ideology to turn some young Muslims against society:

> '[H]ow do I explain to my children that 519 Palestinian children were killed last year [during the Israeli invasion of Gaza] and the UK did nothing, while approximately half a million people were killed in Iraq on the basis of a hunt for weapons of mass destruction that didn't exist? Can you come and explain that to my two boys?' (Iqbal, 2015)

Even at their best, Western values are not straightforwardly free from tacit ideological commitments of their own. The liberal values that enable an immigrant to 'come with nothing [to Britain] and rise as high as their talent allows' (Cameron, 2015c), also allow a handful of billionaires to command wealth equivalent to the annual income of the poorest third of humanity.[32] The premium that the Prime Minister places on social cohesion,

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[32] 2.1 billion people earned less than $3.10 per day in 2012, of which approximately half (896 million) were living on less than $1.90 per day (World Bank, 2015). Assuming average daily earnings in this group of approximately $2.50, this is collectively equivalent to $1,916 billion per year. Data extrapolated from the Forbes rich list show that the wealthiest 75 billionaires were worth $1,923 in 2015 (Forbes, 2015). The true figures will differ but not greatly.

whose cardinal quality is uniformity, sits uneasily with diversity, which thrives on difference and dissent.[33] And what David Cameron sees as segregated communities keeping themselves to themselves can also be characterised as marginalised minorities: Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities are much more likely than others to be living below the poverty line, for example (Choudhury, 2015). Shuja Shafi presents a Muslim view of segregation in this way:

> '[A]s a community we face many challenges in overcoming marginalisation, prejudice, discrimination, demonisation, disadvantage, ignorance and suspicion. It is these obstacles, not Islam, or Muslims, that stand in the way of our fuller participation in society.' (Shafi, 2015)

Evidence supports that view. Muslim communities in Britain face increased surveillance (Kiss, 2014); creeping suspicion that Islam itself is a threat (YouGov, 2011b); and growing islamophobia (Field, 2007) including intimidation and violence (TellMama, 2015). A poll in 2012 found that 49% of the public repudiated the view that 'Muslims are compatible with the national way of life' (Goodwin, 2013, p. 10). That proportion rose to 79% among supporters of the English Defence League. So-called 'counter-jihad' groups like the EDL, which combine xenophobia with a willingness to condone violence against whomever they brand as extremists, are rounding on 'Islam' itself as an existential threat to a notional British way of life.

This suggests that the cohesive society that David Cameron proposes cannot be achieved without addressing questions of justice, but he has rejected the idea that perceptions of injustice could play a role in violence, branding such arguments 'grievance justifications' (Cameron, 2015c). In doing so, he has confused a motivation for violence with a justification of it.

There is now general consensus that British involvement in US-led military action since 2001 has done more to raise than lower the risk of further atrocities in the UK. A leaked British intelligence report warned immediately before the July 2005 attacks in London that 'events in Iraq are continuing to act as motivation and a focus of a range of terrorist-related activity in the UK' (Hall, 2005). Shortly after the attacks, a Chatham House report said the war 'gave a boost to al-Qa'ida' and that 'riding pillion' with the US 'war on terror' had damaged the counter-terrorism effort (Gregory & Wilkinson, 2005). Eliza Manningham-Buller, MI5's Director-General during the first four years of the Iraq war, testified in 2010 that the war had 'substantially' exacerbated the threat of atrocities targeted at British citizens (Manningham-Buller, 2010, pp. 24-25). Other well-informed opinion, including from within the Ministry of Defence, had issued similar warnings (Rogers, 2002; IISS, 2003; Joint Intelligence Committee, 2003; Norton-Taylor, 2006). When Sayeeda Warsi resigned her ministerial role in response to the Prime Minister's refusal to condemn the devastating Israeli invasion of Gaza of 2014, she argued that the government's silence would alienate British Muslims:

> '[E]arly evidence from the Home Office and others shows that the fallout of the current conflict and the potential for the crisis in Gaza and our response to it becoming a basis for radicalisation could have consequences for us for years to come.' (Warsi, 2014)

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[33] Although the preamble of David Cameron's speech *celebrated* diversity, he went on to *prescribe* cohesion around values determined by the state as 'British', which are neither peculiar to the UK nor apt descriptors for a society that produced The Clash and the House of Windsor.

Tony Blair and then David Cameron have dismissed this line of analysis. In particular, they have argued that because the 9/11 atrocities pre-dated the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, the wars must be a *post-hoc* excuse, not an explanation, for atrocities today (Blair, 2015b; Cameron, 2015c). There is some force in this argument – the wars are not to blame for Islamist-inspired atrocities – but it misconstrues the point. The role of the wars has been to extend, rather than reduce, the conditions in which extremists' motivation to attack the West may be realised.

As has long been recognised, non-state extremist groups will use legitimate popular grievances to swell their ranks and mobilise sympathy for their cause (Crenshaw, 1981). The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the arming of Israel, the killing of civilians in drone attacks, and similar acts by the US and the UK have provided their enemies with abundant opportunities to portray Western society in caricature as an oppressor of Islam. As the BBC's Frank Gardner has put it, 'Britain's part in the Iraq invasion helped recruit countless young men to al-Qa'ida's cause, increasing the danger to Britain.' (BBC, 2011a)

2.4. A reckoning

This section opened by asking how effectively the UK has met its security goals for which it deems high military spending to be necessary. In conclusion, the evidence of history since the end of the Cold War is that the strategy of successive UK governments has not grasped the nature of the security challenges to which it has chosen to respond. In relying principally on military capabilities, the strategy has been poorly equipped to meet its goals and so has not done so. The strategy has failed to reduce the threat of atrocities by non-state groups; it has probably increased the risk. The approach has also exaggerated the risk of conventional military attack, particularly from Russia, and the stand-off over Ukraine and Syria has revived the manoeuvring and mistrust of the Cold War. And whilst the strategy has sometimes helped to thwart despotic rule, the abiding missionary attachment to the 'Blair doctrine' has done more to aggravate humanitarian and political problems than resolve them. All told, the approach has exacted an intolerable cost in human life and resources. As Lukas Milevski wrote in 2011:

> 'The past decade may be remembered as the time when the West suffered a collective failure of grand strategy, being too militarised in its outlook to recognise the limitations of force…' (Milevski, 2011)

Mainstream attitudes to security have nonetheless persisted while some of the major challenges of our day, discussed later, have gone unmet.

During the 1990s, the number of violent conflicts worldwide began to decrease and the deadliness of most of those that remained began to abate (Human Security Centre, 2005, pp. 8-9). The numbers of refugees had also begun to fall, thanks in some measure to a substantial upsurge in active humanitarian responsibility at a global level (ibid.). The trend is now the reverse. Since 2008, fatalities from violent conflict have risen steadily from 56,000 in 2008 to a post-Cold War high of 180,000 in 2014 (Pettersson & Wallensteen, 2015; IISS, 2015b); human security has continued to deteriorate as the effects of our ecological crisis are felt across the world; economic inequalities have grown more extreme (Fuentes-Nieva & Galasso, 2014); and global progress towards democratisation and civil

liberty seen in the early years of the century now appears to be unravelling (Freedom House, 2015).

3. Why the current approach is slow to adapt

This section asks why attitudes to security have been slow to adapt to the realities of the new century, focusing on three points:

1. Security remains a project of elites, particularly of privileged men, which excludes voices from outside the establishment;

2. Institutional inertia, political manoeuvring and the dominance of masculinist norms impede an open conversation about the shortcomings of the prevailing approach;

3. Imaginative distance from the realities of war as industrial violence results in an alienated discourse, which passes over the potentially horrific consequences of policy decisions.

Despite these obstacles, the section concludes with a discussion of some promising signs of change within the defence establishment itself.

3.1. Exclusion: security as an elite project

Exclusion

Nearly half a century of the Cold War saw just four 'defence reviews' (HC Library, 2010), all concerned with configuring military capabilities to defeat or deter physical threats. The main preoccupations of planners were the capability and intentions of the Soviet Union, and a commitment to an expeditionary capability for emergency use. In the quarter-century since the end of the Cold War, some six more defence reviews have taken place, with media and political interest growing each time.

Over the last decade, the traditional defence review has been formally re-framed as the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR), with the concomitant implications that 'security' is not synonymous with 'defence' and that policy ought to be strategic. In 2008, the UK published its first National Security Strategy (NSS), which was renewed in 2010, 2015 and now every five years. The strategy document, which now incorporates the SDSR, is complemented by a National Security Council of senior ministers. A parliamentary Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy (NSS Committee) has also been established, and in the lead-up to the 2015 strategy, interested parties were invited to submit their views directly to the Cabinet Office in an online consultation.

At first glance, this evolution has brought three promising developments. First, the conceptual shift from 'defence review' to 'security strategy' ought to broaden the conversation beyond the defence of national interests to ask what security means and how it might be achieved. Second, the new, formal opportunities to engage democratically with

the strategy-making process ought to widen participation, allowing voices from outside the defence establishment to be heard. And third, the additional public and media interest ought to bring greater scrutiny and help to hold policymakers to account.

In practice, these formal changes have made little difference. Despite the broader conceptual emphasis on 'security', the lion's share of strategy relies on military power in the manner of a traditional defence review. Despite new opportunities to engage with the process, voices from outside the establishment consensus are marginalised or ignored. And despite stronger external scrutiny of the strategy itself, the strategy document has become a policy showcase, rather than a rigorous attempt to understand and respond to the security context.

The creation of the 2015 security strategy illustrates well the political carapace that still surrounds the policymaking process, despite its democratic appearance. Of the 21 NGOs that provided written evidence to the preliminary parliamentary inquiry, more than half presented peacebuilding agendas for security similar to those described later in this paper. The Committee excluded such views from its final report, having also limited its oral evidence sessions to experts who reinforced the establishment consensus (HC/HL NSS Committee, 2015).[34] In any case, the government ignored the Committee's own modestly progressive recommendations, such as that the strategy be 'more strategic' (p. 11).

The Cabinet Office arranged its own formal consultations with 'over 100' experts (Fallon, 2015), whose names have been kept secret (Cabinet Office, 2015). Just three months before the strategy was published, the Cabinet Office opened an online consultation, attracting some 2,000 submissions. As the government surely anticipated, these arrived so late in the day that they could not have influenced the outcome;[35] the deadline for submissions was two weeks before the strategy was published.

These facts illustrate that the strategy-making process, though formally more democratic than ever before, still shuns meaningful participation from beyond the establishment.

Dominance

The defence establishment, which dominates the security discourse, is composed almost entirely of privately-educated men. The Commons Defence Committee is composed of nine men and two women (HC DC, 2015b). Three women and some 19 men made up the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy (HC/HL NSS Committee, 2015). IPPR's Commission on National Security was composed of 12 men and one woman, all establishment figures (IPPR, 2009). BASIC's Trident Commission consisted of seven establishment figures: six men and one woman (BASIC, 2014). RUSI's landmark audit of recent British wars, *Wars in peace: British military operations since 1991* (2014), contains 12 chapters and a foreword, all contributed by men. It was launched by an all-male panel to an audience consisting mostly of men; only one woman spoke during the 90-minute event to ask the only question that dissented significantly from the panel. The leadership of the

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[34] The full list of the NSS Committee's oral evidence sessions from the 2010-2015 parliament is available to view here: http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/joint-select/national-security-strategy/evidence-sessions/?y=2010&mode=0.
[35] In a further dissolution of democratic accountability for the strategy, even the ministerial National Security Council's role has been downgraded from 'overseeing' and 'coordinating' the approach to merely 'discussing' security 'objectives' (Office of the Prime Minister, 2010; Cabinet Office, 2015).

armed forces and arms industry is also predominantly privately educated men, as are most defence correspondents, commentators and analysts. A notable exception is the last and present governments' decision to appoint a woman to a junior ministerial defence post, which has been rare historically.

Participation in the security policy discourse is therefore restricted to – and restricted by – privileged men who champion the view that military power and alliances of strategic dominance will deliver security and status for the UK. Jean Elshtain has critically dubbed their authority as the 'strategic voice' (1995, p. 244). Their expertise is not in question, but their dominance of the discourse circumscribes the policy conversation and truncates the repertoire of policy choices.

Besides the injustice of the marginalisation of women in establishment discourse, parity of participation could promote a more rounded politics of security overall. One indication of this is that polls seeking public opinion on British military interventions from the Falklands to Afghanistan have shown that men have been more likely than women to support the wars, even after the action has been widely recognised as a strategic failure (Rallings, et al., 1992; Gribble, et al., 2014; YouGov, 2011a).[36]

Collusion

'Regulatory capture', now well recognised in corporate economics, refers to the drift of a regulatory body's allegiance away from the public interest and towards powerful business interests, which thus 'capture' the legal framework that was constituted to regulate their behaviour (Stigler, 2008). The same principle, as 'political capture', alludes to the disproportionate influence of corporations on the policy, combined with the presumption of policymakers to show them preference.[37] Consequently, policymaking progressively favours corporate interests over the public interest.

Among the clearest examples of this collusion is the establishment's relationship with the arms trade. The financial value of the global arms trade in 2013 was at least $76 billion (SIPRI, 2015c). The UK's 20% market share, worth around £12 billion *per annum* (Tovey, 2015), makes it the world's largest military exporter after the US. As the sixth-largest military spender in the world, the UK is also a major arms importer. It expects to spend £178 billion on new equipment to 2025, equivalent to more than £2,500 per person in Britain.[38]

Government and the corporate sector both benefit from a close relationship; the state can specify the equipment it wants, while arms manufacturers win lucrative contracts and enjoy extensive government support for their exports. It is one of many examples of an alliance of elite power, which would be far from the public gaze but for the work of campaign groups to bring it to light.

Institutions such as the Defence Suppliers Forum and the Defence Growth Partnership bring together ministers and arms company CEOs to formulate policy on issues from domestic investment to arms exports (HM Gov., 2016; 2015c). A notorious 'revolving

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[36] Polls have also found that the middle class and élite have been more likely to support war than working class people.

[37] Political capture is sometimes referred to as 'corporate capture'.

[38] The 2015 security strategy announced a 7% increase in the MoD's equipment budget over the following ten years: £178 billion over the period (HM Gov., 2015b, p. 27).

door' between government and the arms industry ensures that former senior government officials and military officers join company boards (CAAT, 2014d). Having established an intimate policy relationship with government, the industry lobbies for regulatory restrictions to be eased (Tovey, 2015), weak though they already are (Townsend, 2015; Norton-Taylor, 2014b).

The government's security strategy promotes the arms trade, arguing that '[r]esponsible defence and security exports… are essential' because they 'underpin long-term relationships with our partners' national security organisations, and help us deliver wider foreign policy objectives' (p. 77). The claim lacks any evidence to support it. The exports feed militarisation and generate a political dependency on the favour of other governments, which then constrains and undermines foreign policy goals.[39]

Nor are the UK's exports 'responsible'; among its largest customers are governments with atrocious disregard for human rights and freedoms. Saudi Arabia, for one example among many, buys British military equipment and services worth billions of pounds *per annum* (Norton-Taylor, 2014b; CAAT, 2014b), despite being designated a 'country of concern' by the Foreign Office in view of its systematic violations of human rights (Black, 2015; FCO, 2015). Asked about sales to Saudi Arabia in 2012, David Cameron continued the double-think of his predecessors by affirming the deals as 'completely legitimate and right' (Cameron, 2012). UK arms exports to Saudi continue, despite being probably unlawful while the country is engaged in air attacks in Yemen (Sands, et al., 2015).

The government's security strategy further argues that the arms industry makes 'a major contribution to our prosperity', employing over 215,000 people who generate a collective turnover of over £30 billion *per annum* (HM Gov., 2015b, p. 75). In fact, the economic benefits of the arms trade are doubtful. A King's College paper, commissioned privately by the businessman Jeffrey Sterling to put the case for the arms trade, acknowledged a 'dearth of data and rigorous analysis concerning the… economic return of defence expenditure in the UK' (Dorman, et al., 2015, p. 4). The financial costs of the policy are clear. In the 2009/10 financial year, the taxpayer was propping up the arms industry with an estimated £700 million of subsidies (SIPRI, 2011),[40] equivalent to around £1 per month per person in the UK. CAAT argues that this level of support is disproportionate for a sector that accounts for less than 1.4% of all UK exports (2015b).

The ingenuity of engineers now employed in the arms industry could be redeployed to turn the UK into a world leader in green technology. CAAT has estimated that the transition would provide twice as many science and engineering jobs as arms exports do now (CAAT, 2014c), but arms companies' political capture of the policymaking system makes it difficult to get arguments such as these heard.

The collusion between academia and the arms trade is also worth noting. Most universities are happy to take substantial government funding to develop offensive military systems

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[39] Jeffrey Sterling commissioned King's College to flesh out the public interest case for the British arms trade (Dorman, et al., 2015). In particular, the report outlines three benefits of selling arms abroad: the practice signals political commitment to a recipient state; provides a mechanism for UK to influence the policies of the recipient state; and enhances military capability and reliance in friendly states. Curiously, however, the report laments the difficulty in identifying 'any official studies that quantify the net security gains from export-led security relationships' (p. 6).
[40] Subsidies include export sales support, use of the armed forces, official visits, research and development, marketing, and export credit guarantees (government commitments to underwrite export deals). The estimated levels of subsidy in FY 2007-08 and 2008-09 were similar (SIPRI, 2011).

aimed at projecting power abroad. Between 2008-09 and 2010-11, the government committed an average of £1.3 billion *per annum* to the research and development of offensive systems, according to Scientists for Global Responsibility (Parkinson, et al., 2013). It contributed less – £1.0 billion *per annum* – to research into long-term, non-military measures that contribute to security, including: poverty and inequality reduction; climate change mitigation; food, water and energy security (including green energy); biodiversity; and the transformation of conflict (pp. 43-50).[41]

3.2. Inertia: institutions, politics and hegemonic masculinity

Institutional inertia and political manoeuvre

After the Cuban Missile Crisis almost triggered a global nuclear war in 1962, the analyst Graham Allison pondered how rational men (they were all men) in Washington and Moscow had brought the world to the cusp of Armageddon. His essay has since become a classic commentary on the non-rational, sometimes irrational, forces behind critical policy decisions (Allison, 1968).

Allison's insight is that rational deliberation is not the principal determinant of policy. The actions of complex organisations like states are better explained by the habitual operation of their own systems: their bureaucracies, conventions, cultural norms, and so on. If the most rational course of action in a given situation is not one that the system is used to producing, then it will produce a less rational, or irrational, one. In other words, the state, supported by its establishment, reproduces itself in its policies.

From this perspective, it is unsurprising that the UK policy-making system cleaves to a militarised understanding of security, given its emphasis since the days of empire on military capability, power-projection, and gunboat politics. The expectation that ISIS will be defeated by a US-led coalition, for example, can be understood in terms of a past pattern of behaviour that the policymaking system is familiar with: when control is lost, attack and recover control.

Allison further proposed that policy choices should be understood as political calculations, as people with power seek to preserve and buttress their position, to which the public interest is subordinated. Francois Hollande's promise to wage a 'merciless' war against ISIS, for example, was credited as a political manoeuvre to silence his critics on the political right (Lichfield, 2015), but his escalatory rhetoric has now cast the die for France's military campaign in Syria. For the UK's part, a politically chosen 'determination to remain one of the most important [world] powers' (Chalmers, 2014a, p. 273) renders 'a step change down… on the international stage' a politically toxic prospect (Dorman, 2015).

Consequently, policy continues to be governed by the habits of institutions, as well as a radically constraining politics of power that has little to do with the security of citizens.

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[41] Between 2008-09 and 2010-11, three-quarters (76%; £1.3 billion per annum on average) of R&D spending by the MoD was on offensive military systems, specifically those designed to project power abroad (as opposed to territorial defence). Examples of offensive, power-projection systems include certain aircraft; submarines; nuclear weapons and propulsion; aircraft carriers; and drones. (Parkinson, et al., 2013, p. 32)

Hegemonic masculinity

The prospect of an evolution in security discourse is further hobbled by dominant attitudes associated with hegemonic masculinity. These are typified by dominance hierarchies of wisdom and power, competition for status, faith in the capacity to overwhelm others, and the technocratic rationalism of experts. Such attitudes as these can be seen in each element of Ken Booth's critical summation of militarised security discourse: 'a combination of Anglo-American, statist, militarised, masculinised, "top-down", methodologically positivist and philosophically realist thinking' (2007, p. 29). Amina Mama and Margo Okazawa-Rey go further, writing that 'war and conflict are merely the explicit expressions of deeply gendered, as well as ethnicised and classed, long-term dynamics' (2008).

In these respects, the masculinism of security discourse shares much in common with values associated with military power itself, which the academic Paul Dixon has listed as 'patriotism, unity, hierarchy, discipline, obedience, authoritarianism, pessimism, cynicism' (2012, pp. 112-113). The establishment's assumption that state-defined 'British interests' are the legitimate object of security policy (HM Gov., 2015b), but the common security of all is not, reinforces the masculinist and ethnocentric worldview that characterises its approach.

This masculinist-militarist value-set allows little room for a diverse, multi-voiced approach in which wisdom accumulates through conversation (Blanchard, 2003), informed by an emphasis on democratic values of 'equality, diversity, dissent, participation, autonomy' (Dixon, 2012, pp. 112-113). Were security discourse to value democratic conversation as avidly as it now defers to the authority of expertise, it might be characterised by a richly productive form of *honesty*, by which we move 'out of the unquestioned prejudices of [our] culture' and 'into a genuinely open-minded thoughtfulness', as the theologian Andrew Shanks has put it (2000, p. 5).

Mary Caprioli's systematic analysis of both intra- and inter-state disputes in the second half of the 20th century has shown that gender inequality and the exclusion of women from high office both increase the odds of violent conflict (2000; 2005). The statistical associations between gender inequality and war remain strong even after controlling for other known risk factors for violence, such as poverty, wealth inequality and a history of conflict. For example, the research found that

> 'states with [only] 10 percent women in the labour force are nearly 30 times (29.1) more likely to experience internal conflict than are states with 40 percent women in the labour force, while controlling for other possible causes of internal conflict' (Caprioli, 2005).

As matters stand, the persistent and gendered unwillingness to think anew, and in particular to invest in a praxis of hope rather than militarist pessimism, is culminating in greater insecurity for all.

3.3.   Alienation: violence and imaginative distance

Characteristic of the mainstream policy discourse is a profound imaginative distance from the realities it discusses.

Elaine Scarry points out that the immediate object of military activity is injury to others; the essential, brutally reciprocal goal of war is to 'out-injure' the opponent (Scarry, 1985, pp.

12, 73).[42] Military activity ranges from teaching a 16 year-old boy or girl soldier to drive a bayonet through a body, to the unimaginable misery of flesh-corroding white phosphorous in the Falklands and Falluja (Harnden, 2005; Rayment, 2005); drone attacks on pixelated figures whose dismembered bodies are watched as they cool on infra-red screens thousands of miles away (Power, 2013; Serie, 2014); mass deaths of civilians, bereaved families and mental trauma (Iraq Body Count, 2015a; Wilding, 2005); and the requirement of a national leader to be willing to annihilate millions of people with nuclear weapons in the event that deterrence fails. Despite the partial brake provided by International Humanitarian Law, war remains 'primordial violence, hatred, and enmity', as Carl von Clausewitz put it in 1832 (p. 89). Such language is notably absent from official security discourse, Armed Forces Day, and army brochures encouraging 16 year olds to enlist in the infantry (Gee, 2014).

This imaginative distance is sustained because such 'extraordinary events and possibilities… are masked as ordinary,' as Jennifer Sinor wrote of her American childhood with a nuclear submariner father (Sinor, 2003, p. 411). Writing about nuclear policy discourse during the Cold War, the post-Freudian analyst Hana Segal described it as psychically 'split', in which 'we retain intellectual knowledge of the reality, but divest it of emotional meaning' (Segal, 1997b, pp. 145-146). Carol Cohn, who spent time with US nuclear planners in the 1980s, found the same: an 'extraordinary abstraction and removal from … reality that characterised the professional discourse' (Cohn, 1987, p. 688). She remarked that the people involved, all men, were good people, but that their discourse passed over 'the lives beneath' their conversation (p. 704). She dubbed the discourse 'technostrategic', an exclusively abstract conversation about the most horrific of human possibilities.

Today, British and American security discourse still trades on a miasma of euphemisms that shroud the blood and guts of warfare. Some are blandly technostrategic, to use Cohn's term: war as a clinical-sounding 'military instrument' (Johnson, 2014; Clarke, 2014) or as the innocently Newtonian 'use of force' (Coates, 2011). Others are sentimental, such as when helplessly eviscerated soldiers are said to have made 'the ultimate sacrifice' (HC DC, 2013). Hollywood and video games have further romanticised war, bleaching it of suffering in the public imagination (Gee, 2014, pp. 42-79). Political discourse often employs its own romantic affirmations of war. In 2003, George W Bush prematurely hailed victory in Iraq as a successful quest to 'fight a great evil and bring liberty to others' and 'the highest calling', before elevating the war to prophetic significance by appropriating the words of Isaiah (Bush, 2003). Two months later, Tony Blair told the US Congress: '[W]hat you bequeath to this anxious world is the light of liberty.' (Blair, 2003b) Just over a year later British, American and Iraqi armed forces would destroy a quarter of all the homes in Falluja (Scott Tyson, 2005; Wilding, 2005).

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[42] As military activity, armed peacekeeping does not normally lead to physical violence, but it relies on the threat of it.

4. Promising signs?

4.1. Fitful progress…

By the 2000s, critical security analysts were pointing to the implications of systemic problems, such as climate change and inequality, to which military responses are largely irrelevant (Rogers, 2000; Abbott, et al., 2007). Meanwhile, the growing field of conflict transformation was calling for constructive, process-based approaches to security problems (Tongeren, et al., 2005). In the UK, neither group managed to shift the focus of national strategy but both made other inroads into policy. Under the Blair government, the Department for International Development (DfID) produced *Preventing violent conflict*, which committed to 'work harder to prevent conflict before it turns, or returns, to violence and support local, national and international mechanisms to manage and resolve disputes peacefully' (2006, p. 4). The paper included an economic rationale for its strategic peacebuilding focus: on average, the annual cost of one violent conflict is in the order of all global development aid in a year, it said.

Under the Brown government of 2007-10, the tone of strategic security policy began to change. The Prime Minister inaugurated the first National Security Strategy to guide the formation of future defence reviews and inform the direction of other government departments, particularly the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the DfID. Published in 2008, *The National Security Strategy of the United Kingdom: Security in an Interdependent World* prioritised the threat from 'international terrorism' above all else, but also gave prominence to the systemic drivers of insecurity (HM Gov., 2008). It lauded the role of the armed forces, but also promoted peacebuilding and reform of the international system. And it promised to be 'hard-headed' about threats, but guided by values such as 'justice, freedom, tolerance' (p. 6). For the first time, the 2008 strategy reframed the discourse in terms of 'security' rather than 'defence' alone and went some way to taking the distinction seriously. Recognising the transdisciplinary nature of security challenges, it sought to draw in other government departments alongside traditional reliance on the MoD and the armed forces:

> 'The scope and approach of this strategy reflects the way our understanding of national security has changed. In the past, the state was the traditional focus of foreign, defence and security policies, and national security was understood as dealing with the protection of the state and its vital interests from attacks by other states. Over recent decades, our view of national security has broadened to include threats to individual citizens and to our way of life, as well as to the integrity and interests of the state. That is why this strategy deals with transnational crime, pandemics and flooding – not part of the traditional idea of national security, but clearly challenges that can affect large numbers of our citizens, and which demand some of the same responses as more traditional security threats, including terrorism. The broad scope of this strategy also reflects our commitment to focus on the underlying drivers of security and insecurity, rather than just immediate threats and risks.' (pp. 3-4)

The document named those 'underlying drivers' as climate change, energy scarcity, poverty and inequality, poor governance, and certain factors associated with globalisation.

The 2008 strategy paper has bequeathed an opportune legacy. First, security, rather than defence alone, still conceptually frames policy, even as the discourse remains narrowly preoccupied with threats and military capabilities. Second, there is now a precedent in a UK administration for limited but significant steps towards an ethically guided,

transdisciplinary approach, based on a broader understanding of contemporary security challenges. In view of the scale of the world's crises, these changes of course were small, but still promising ones.

The shift in outlook has manifested in practical politics, too. In 2009, President Barack Obama announced a major push for the abolition of nuclear weapons (Obama, 2009). He set out the first steps on the road: reduce the US nuclear stockpile and its salience in security policy; seek new bilateral reduction agreements with Russia; ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty; revive negotiations on a treaty to curb the production of fissile material; initiate negotiations on a new international uranium bank to dis-incentivise nuclear proliferation; and engage more constructively with Iran over its nuclear programme. Those who dismissed the prospect of progress fell foul of a deadly 'fatalism', the President said, by which a nuclear war becomes inevitable in the long run. The move won strong support from most of the rest of the world, including a number of European NATO states (Davis, 2015, p. 26).

Six months later, Gordon Brown offered to continue to reduce the UK's nuclear arsenal as part of a 'grand global bargain' between nuclear and non-nuclear states (Brown, 2009). He pointed out that the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty obliged 'all nuclear weapons states [to] play their part in reducing nuclear weapons as part of an agreement by non-nuclear states to renounce them' (ibid.). Echoing Barack Obama's warning against fatalism, the Prime Minister suggested that the G20's coordinated response to the world banking crisis demonstrated that global action on major global issues was entirely feasible (ibid.).

The prevailing security discourse now discusses, though still insufficiently, the systemic roots of insecurity (US, White House, 2015; IISS, 2011; IPPR, 2009; HC/HL NSS Committee, 2015; MoD, 2014). For example, the parliamentary Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy has endorsed, albeit lukewarmly, calls for strategy to adopt a relatively broad scope to include non-military risks such as climate change and pandemics (HC/HL NSS Committee, 2015, p. 11). In 2011, peacebuilding principles helped to shape the Coalition government's cross-departmental *Building stability overseas strategy*, discussed earlier, which emphasises the early prevention of violent conflict.

Attitudes abroad have tended to change more quickly than in the UK. Examples are the creation of the UN Peacebuilding Commission, chaired by Sweden, which has six country situations on its agenda (UN Peacebuilding Commission, 2014).[43] The small UN Peacebuilding Office, established in 2006, acts as an in-country peacebuilding broker (UN, 2015). The EU has been developing capacities for peacebuilding support (QCEA, 2004; EPLO, 2015) and, as discussed earlier, continental European strategies tend to take a broader view than does the UK when assessing risks and configuring responses. The US strategy of 2015 sets out eight priorities, which include tackling climate change, building capacity for 'conflict prevention', and enhancing global health security (US, White House, 2015). In this respect, the US strategy is currently considerably more progressive than its UK counterpart.

Some military discourse has also shown an openness to fresh thinking. Senior military officers from the UK and six other countries collaborated to produce a major report in 2014, *Understand to Prevent*, which seeks to effect:

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[43] At the time of writing, the countries listed on the UN peacebuilding agenda are Burundi, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Central African Republic.

'a shift of military effort from crisis response (waiting for the future to happen) to "upstream" engagement to positively manage conflict, prevent violence and build peace' (MCDC, 2014, p. 3).

Where the defence establishment remains committed to its own approach, it is meeting somewhat greater resistance from parliament and the public. Societal changes are imposing 'ever greater constraints on our freedom to use force', the Chief of the Defence Staff, General Houghton, has said (2015). He listed the three most 'worrying' factors as: reduced public support for intervention, the convention of seeking parliamentary consent, and litigation against the armed forces for alleged abuses (ibid.).

4.2. …and an establishment backlash

Such shifts at the fringes of the policy discourse challenge the conservatism of the establishment, which has tended to respond antagonistically. Much of the *Telegraph*'s output in particular continues to bemoan what some commentators see as the ongoing emasculation of the UK as an erstwhile global military power.[44] A leaked US Embassy cable tellingly gloated that the Brown government's 2008 security strategy was 'greeted with disdain' in Whitehall, the establishment press, and defence and security circles (US Embassy in London, 2010). As soon as the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government took office in 2010, the strategy was replaced, reverting to a heavily militarised conception of security and dropping systemic problems from its analysis.

The Obama-Brown nuclear disarmament initiative was similarly compromised. Writing in the *Telegraph*, Charles Moore joined others in lambasting Gordon Brown's dovish nuclear rhetoric and argued that Barack Obama's constructive approach to Iran would only strengthen its bellicose hand (Moore, 2009). Republican Senator Tom Cotton similarly condemned his President's hope for ratification of the CTBT: 'It wasn't in our national security interests then, it's not in our interests now, and it won't be in the future,' he said (Cotton, 2015). Nearly seven years after Barack Obama promised progress on nuclear de-escalation, there is little to show for it, with the important exception of an apparently successful agreement with Iran. For the UK's part, the 2015 security strategy describes nuclear weapons as 'essential to our security' (HM Gov., 2015b, p. 34). The rationale is extraordinarily thin: since there *might* be a threat in twenty or more years' time, it would be 'irresponsible' to assume that nuclear weapons will not be necessary in the future, the strategy explains (ibid.). It is a dangerous logic, which the UK wishes to justify for itself but deny to others, and is probably unlawful under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

At the same time, Simon Fisher, who for the Ammerdown Group interviewed a number of figures engaged in UK policy work, reported a 'deep sense' that current approaches are not working even on their own terms, as well as some goodwill to discuss viable alternatives (Fisher, 2015).

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[44] For examples, see footnote 11.

4.3. The public as battleground

Another promising indication is that support among the public for coercive military action abroad has been receding, while concern about the systemic drivers of insecurity appears to be growing.

Joel Faulkner Rogers and Jonathan Eyal chronicle a clear turnaround of public attitudes to British military ventures (2014). Using polling data, they show that the Kosovo war of 1999 marked a peak in public support for military interventions, despite having no UN approval. The British elite had had little trouble in presenting that war as a short-story, ahistorical fable of heroic action to protect innocent Kosovars from marauding Serbs. The backlashes to come in the province would belie the West's post-war jubilation, but by then the world's media had moved on. In 2003, despite the huge rally on the eve of the Iraq war, a majority of the population rallied behind it in its first month (YouGov, n.d.), but support soon ebbed away as the war dragged on and its supporting narrative fell apart (ibid.). As of March 2013, just over a quarter (27%) of the public thought the UK had been right to 'take military action against Iraq' (ibid.). By the time of the first Commons vote on Syria, also in 2013, a YouGov/RUSI poll found that only 17% of the public would support a UN-approved war involving British troops to overthrow Bashar al Assad (Faulkner Rogers & Eyal, 2014, p. 181).

During the quagmire years of *Operation Herrick* in Afghanistan, ministers and generals became acutely concerned about public awareness of the UK's war dead. Richard Dannatt, then head of the army, spoke of the 'Wootton Bassett factor', alluding to the town's ceremonies to mark the repatriation of dead military personnel (Dixon, 2012, p. 134). The general warned that the ceremonies ran

> 'the risk of undermining morale of the population at home and fuelling the bring the boys home agenda, which potentially means that we would lose the hearts and minds battle here at home' (ibid.).

The MoD appeared to agree; a leaked report warned that repatriation ceremonies were making the public 'risk-averse' and it recommended reducing their public profile (MoD, 2013). The report said that the public must be 'won over to accepting the implications of using the Armed Forces'.

Tony Blair tried to use national affection for UK troops to reverse the waning support for the war, pleading that 'the armed forces want public opinion not just behind them but behind their mission'; we should 'understand their value not just their courage' (Blair, 2007). With public support for the wars continuing to slide, the Labour government responded with a vigorous campaign to embed 'military values' in society (Davies, et al., 2008; Gee, 2014; Walton, 2014). Armed Forces Day, the Armed Forces Covenant, and efforts to bring a 'military ethos' to schools, are among its many products. Paul Dixon has shown, too, that this broad swathe of new policy initiatives has strengthened senior military officers' influence on the politics of security (Dixon, [forthcoming]).

In other policy areas, British public attitudes still mirror those in the defence establishment. A YouGov poll in 2013 found that a majority favoured the renewal of *Trident*; a majority also thought that the UK's new aircraft carriers were 'important' to the national interest

(YouGov, 2013).[45] In comparison, there is rather less support for giving serious attention to systemic problems such as climate change as security issues (ibid.). Even so, Dan Stevens and Nick Vaughan-Williams have shown that strong counter-narratives to the elite consensus pervade a large minority of the public, which has 'disruptive potential' (Stevens & Vaughan-Williams, Forthcoming).

Publics in other countries have a markedly different outlook. Polling by the Pew Research Centre in 2015 in 40 countries around the world indicated that the global public are more concerned about climate change than any other 'threat' from a list that also included ISIS, economic instability, and the bellicosity of Russia, Iran or China (Carle, 2015). While Western publics and some Middle Eastern countries appear to support a focus on ISIS as the major threat to world peace, the changing climate tops the list across Latin America, in most of the (few) African publics polled, and across the Indian subcontinent and China. The study also found that in almost all countries polled, economic instability is the public's second-greatest worry. In 2013, Gallup's polling in 65 countries found that most people believe the US does more to threaten world peace than any other state (WIN/Gallup International, 2013). Evidently, the Western elite narrative of a secure and prosperous global order is not shared by most of the world's publics.

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[45] 56% were in favour of renewing Trident, versus 29% against (16% 'don't know'); 69% said that the aircraft carriers were important to national interests, versus 23% saying they were unimportant (8% 'don't know').

PART TWO: In search of a new approach

The Ammerdown Group is among several initiatives in the peace and security field[46] promoting a belief that:

1. The proper goal of security is the wellbeing of people in their social and ecological context, rather than the 'interests' of the nation state as determined by its elite;

2. This project depends principally on a collective commitment to building the conditions of security over the long-term, rather than the capacity of states to deploy coercive power abroad in their own interests;

3. The potential role of state governments is no more or less important than other contributions at all levels of society, from citizens in their communities to regional and global institutions; and

4. The common good requires that security policy and practice be determined democratically; when security is the preserve of a few, it will not serve the many.

The first part of this paper challenged the assumption that security is achieved when a nation state and its allies prevail over their rivalrous environment. Nonetheless, the primary security actors are nation states. Accordingly, and in order to manage the scope of this paper, this second part asks how the outlook and practice of one nation state – the UK – could change so as to contribute more appropriately to a more secure world for all. The aim is not to propose a utopia, but to suggest options for strategy that would be sufficiently credible – technically, institutionally and politically – to effect progressive change.

To this end, the discussion explores some first principles of security. It then asks how those principles could inform a national strategy, proposing five priority themes for policymaking in the long-term. Finally, the discussion ponders effective lines of approach to the government's own immediate priorities, such as risks posed by ISIS and a resurgent Russia, responses to which are thought to require coercive military power.

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[46] Examples of related initiatives are the 'shared security' approach of the American Friends Service Committee and Friends Committee on National Legislation; the work of Paul Rogers and colleagues at Bradford University; the 'sustainable security' programme of Oxford Research Group; the advocacy work of Engi; and aspects of all the non-governmental organisations in the Ammerdown Group, among others (AFSC and FCNL, 2013; Abbott, et al., 2007; Rogers, 2000; Engi, 2016)

5. Security: First principles

5.1. Values versus principles

It is common for state security strategies to affirm a list of values that ostensibly guide policymaking. The UK's first National Security Strategy, published in 2008, included a chapter on strategic values:

> 'They include human rights, the rule of law, legitimate and accountable government, justice, freedom, tolerance, and opportunity for all. Those values define who we are and what we do. They form the basis of our security, as well as our well-being and our prosperity. We will protect and respect them at home, and we will promote them consistently in our foreign policy.' (HM Gov., 2008, p. 6)

The boldness of this commitment was ground-breaking in the context of past defence reviews, but nothing was said about what it would mean in practice. How would it shape the government's response if the US asked for its support in a war, given the UK's habitual assent to such requests? How would these values alter the UK's historic security relationships with states that systematically abuse human rights? These links were not made.

Two years later, the new coalition government's strategy watered down the 'values our country believes in': 'the rule of law, democracy, free speech, tolerance and human rights' (HM Gov., 2010b, p. 4). Among the deletions since 2008 were 'justice', 'freedom' and 'opportunity for all'. Also removed was the commitment to 'promote [these values] consistently in our foreign policy'; the document simply stated without explanation that the values required the UK to 'project power' abroad (ibid.).[47]

In any case, security that is meaningful, durable and inclusive depends not on a list of liberal values, but on the principle of social and ecological health at every level from the local to the global. Conceptualising security as a form of relational health yields some useful core principles, four of which are outlined below.

Security as a freedom

What is security? Inspired by the word's Latin root, *se* + *cura*, meaning free from fear or anxiety, security may be understood as a shared freedom from fear and want, and the freedom to live well (UN General Assembly, 2005, p. 31). It implies a measure of physical safety but is not defined by it. Rather, true security means communities and societies in which people may meet their fundamental needs without jeopardy.

Within this understanding, security is better understood not as the absence of risk, but as the presence of healthy social and ecological relationships. Conversely, policies that serve a state's interests to the detriment of the social and ecological fabric will generate insecurity. Nor should secure, healthy society be confused with mere order. It is generally accepted in the establishment that 'our new world rests on order' and 'the danger is disorder', as Tony

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[47] The 2015 strategy employed a marginally longer list of 'core British values': 'Democracy, the rule of law, open, accountable governments and institutions, human rights, freedom of speech, property rights and equality of opportunity, including the empowerment of women and girls, are the building blocks of successful societies.' (HM Gov., 2015b, p. 10)

Blair has put it (Blair, 2003b), but if there is to be a 'new world' then it will have to rest on justice and respect for others; the dangers are injustice and indifference to others.

Security as a common right for all

Whom is security for? Official security discourse is concerned to varying degrees with two goals: a state's duty to protect its citizens; and the desire to gain or preserve power relative to other states so as to improve 'our position in the world' (Cameron, 2014b). The first goal privileges the needs of one society over the rest, the second one state over the rest.

Security can only endure, whether at home or abroad, when recognised as a common right for all. Axiomatic to this is a commitment to the inalienable dignity of all human life and our planetary ecology, by the grace of which we live. This principle of commonality is both an ethical imperative and a practical necessity, for one community or country cannot achieve lasting security for itself at the expense of others. Only an approach that aims to honour our common dignity, though inevitably it falls short, can engender the conditions in which security can flourish.

There are authentic national interests that make first-order claims on policymaking, such as the security of a country's people, but these interests and the common good depend on one another. Pursuit of the common good *does* serve the national interest; pursuit of national interests *ought* to serve the common good, and not just as an afterthought. This principle invites states and their societies to transcend the exclusive pursuit of narrow self-interest; it is a tough ask, but the alternative is a long slide to calamity.

Security as a patient practice

How is security achieved? The UK's intention to wield 'all our instruments of power and influence to shape the global environment…' (HM Gov., 2010b, p. 22) misconstrues security as a technocratic exercise in control. It expects the coercive use of military and other instruments of power to make us more secure, but that expectation is perennially frustrated. The Burundian peace worker Adrien Niyongabo has said, 'Healing is different from fixing,' (Niyongabo, 2014, p. 18). This truth cuts to the heart of the West's self-defeating approach to security since the Cold War: the more that the world's most powerful, heavily-armed states have used coercive power to shape their environment, the less secure their citizens have become.

Security grows or withers according to how inclusive and just society is, how socially and ecologically responsible we are, and how equitably we negotiate the meeting of needs. Thus, security follows solidarity, not dominance: standing with others, not over them. There is no technical fix; it is slow work and cannot be forced to a conclusion. Diana Francis writes, 'Peace that is not built from the bottom up, with the involvement of all strata and identity groups, is no peace and will not hold.' (2006, p. 12) Research into successful peace processes bears this out.[48]

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[48] Research based on the Uppsala Conflict Data Program has found that peace agreements are much more resilient when civil society has been included in the process than when it has not. The research examined 83 peace agreements in 40 civil wars between 1989 and 2004. A third of these involved civil society to varying degrees; two thirds did not. The researcher, Desirée Nilsson, calculated that the risk of peace breaking down

Security as a shared responsibility

Whose responsibility is security? Mainstream security discourse in the UK and US continues to encourage the American assumption of global leadership; the alternative is a rudderless world order on the high seas of anarchy (RUSI, 2014; Dannatt, 2014; HC DC, 2015a; Waltz, 1988; Blair, 2003b). Arguing for the UK's continuing involvement in this US-led mission, Malcolm Chalmers has said, '[I]f nobody does that then in the end it will come back to bite us along with others.' (RUSI, 2014) Richard Dannatt has argued for British troops to go back to Afghanistan in the future, because it would be 'very hard for us to say, in a rather Swedish sort of way: "Not our responsibility"' (Dannatt, 2014). Accordingly, the devastating train of wars in Kosovo, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and now Syria has been framed as an ongoing exercise in global responsibility by its self-appointed agents, principally the US and its NATO allies.

The continuing deterioration of security worldwide testifies against entrusting our common wellbeing to a self-selected group of powerful states. Common security is a common responsibility; its challenges belong to all of us and should be democratised accordingly. Citizens, communities, local authorities and people's movements all share the responsibility. So do national governments and regional and global institutions, provided that they be made accountable internationally and democratically. Power must be challenged to serve, rather than dominate, and be actively resisted when those who wield it crave more of it for their own ends.

5.2. The viability of 'principled engagement'

The principles just described assume a worldview in which everyone's security needs matter and a commitment to 'principled engagement' (Francis, 2006, p. 11) in the messy here and now. Were it not for an orthodoxy that privileges the security of the few over the many, a UK government today could commit to a similar approach.

Aspects of these principles already guide security policy elsewhere. A prime example is the UN 'human security' agenda, which centres on how citizens experience insecurity rather than how nation states define it, and advocates equitable access to resources, health, culture, ecology, and other fundamentals (UN, Trust Fund for Human Security, n.d.).

The UK's own neighbourhood shows that the approach now taken by the UK is a matter of choice, not necessity. Germany and Spain, for example, emphasise the transnational, systemic nature of 21st century security challenges and are more willing than the UK to recognise the limits of heavily militarised responses (Germany, CDU/CSU, 2008; Spain, Department of National Security, 2013). The goals that Sweden specifies for its security strategy are 'life and health', the 'functioning of society', and 'the rule of law and human rights' (Sweden, Ministry of Defence, 2015, p. 1); its armed forces are configured defensively and their purpose is expressly tied to the public interest. Nearly a decade ago, Norway's State Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs described its 'peace policy… gradually being fused with security policy', guided by humane principles:

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after the agreement was reduced by about two thirds when civil society had been actively included (Nilsson, 2015).

'Norway's efforts to promote peace, reconciliation and development reflect the value we place on human solidarity and our respect for the value of each human being.' (Johansen, 2006)

These examples show that a range of viable approaches is available to states and that the UK is an outlier in its own back yard. No EU state spends as much on its military as the UK (SIPRI, 2015a),[49] exports as many arms (Tovey, 2015), or has joined US-led military interventions as often. Indeed, EU states have looked increasingly askance at US-led ventures, as the following table shows.

The military involvement of EU states in US-led military interventions since 2001				
Intervention	Total EU states at the time	EU states providing combat forces[50]	Other EU states providing military resources excluding combat forces[51]	EU states with no direct involvement[52]
Afghanistan (2001-02)[53]	15	6 (40%)	4	5 (33%)
Iraq (2003)[54]	15	6 (40%)	0	9 (60%)
Libya (2011)[55]	27	7 (26%)	3	17 (63%)
ISIS in Iraq (2014-15)[56]	28	4 (14%)	6	18 (64%)
ISIS in Iraq and Syria (2015-)[57]	28	2 (7%)	0	26 (93%)

A culture of exceptionalism in the British establishment tends to inure it against unfavourable comparisons with the European continent and UN norms, but progressive principles have infused the UK's own official discourse from time to time. The 2008 National Security Strategy, discussed earlier, questioned the historically narrow focus on the interests of the nation state and promised to take long-term systemic problems as seriously as immediate risks (HM Gov., 2008, pp. 3-4). Some senior military officers, too, are encouraging a shift away from eleventh-hour military reactions to crises and advocating their prevention by mostly non-military means (MCDC, 2014).

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[49] Following the announcement that the UK will spend 2% of GDP on its military, its expenditure will now exceed that in France.
[50] This category includes states committing any direct combat forces for missions by land, sea, or air, including special forces, even if the numbers involved were small.
[51] This category includes states which provided logistical, reconnaissance, medical or other military resources in aid of the combat mission.
[52] This category includes states which became passively involved by granting over-flying rights or the use of bases for aircraft, or which used military aircraft to deliver humanitarian aid, but which offered no other military resources.
[53] Direct combat: Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, UK. Other military: Finland, Greece, Portugal, Spain. Source: (Congressional Research Service, 2001; US, Department of Defense, 2002)
[54] Direct combat: Denmark, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, UK. Source: (Hummel, 2007, p. 40)
[55] Direct combat: Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, France, Greece, Romania, UK. Other military: Italy, Netherlands, Spain. Source: (BBC, 2011b)
[56] Direct combat: Belgium, France, Netherlands, UK. Other military: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Italy. Source: (Freeman, 2014)
[57] Direct combat: France, UK. Source: (Rogers, 2015g)

When seen in context, a more principled approach to security policy in the UK is readily viable in practice, but the 'strategic voice' (Elshtain, 1995) of the defence establishment keeps the prospect from view, abetted by vested interests that now benefit from the *status quo*. Meanwhile, the real pipe dream is the assumption that the prevailing approach can deliver. As the world becomes more fractured ecologically, economically, socially and politically, such that debilitating want and indignities multiply, so will threats of all kinds to all people; the hegemonically determined international 'order' is likely to implode. As Celia McKeon points out, it is phantasmagorical to imagine that risks will reduce if our response to security challenges is to 'just clench our fist a bit tighter... perhaps forever' (2015).

5.3. Success as a process

If the goals of security are predicated on the shared freedom of healthy society, then the primary strategic activity is to strengthen the social ecology on which we depend. Also necessary is an analysis of insecurity, including threats and responses, but an effective strategy would not begin there, nor would it end there.

A strategy based on this approach could set out to build the conditions of security and respond effectively to insecurity, assuming an outlook that includes both near-term and long-term goals. It could operate in three ways:

1. To support the conditions of security to evolve and tackle the systemic drivers of insecurity;

2. To extend cooperation with others to the same end;

3. To respond to crises cooperatively at an early stage, reflecting a commitment to solidarity rather than to dominance.

In the approach outlined here, success is itself a progressive process, rather than an end state; like the world, security is 'always being made', to borrow Rebecca Solnit's words (2005, p. 12). And like the healthy relationships on which security depends, a viable strategy would affirm and allow a measure of vulnerability, recognising that invulnerability is a fantasy. Success is achieved incrementally as the conditions of greater security grow, not when all insecurity is eliminated.

Progress to that end is readily measurable. Data are already collated annually on multiple human security indicators, as well as on the prevalence and deadliness of violent conflict across the world. Each iteration of a security strategy could use these measures to evaluate progress or otherwise.

In failing to define success at all, the UK's and others' national security strategies[58] offer no criterion against which to judge whether they are working. Threats provoke responses that exacerbate the threats that provoke the same responses, and the wheel keeps turning.

5.4. Shifting priorities: Insecurity as systemic

The presence of a putative enemy makes certain security problems, such as the threat of atrocities or a resurgent Russia, appear paramount when they are not. Our greatest

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[58] The US strategy also fails to define success (US, White House, 2015).

challenges arise from the damage that the global 'order' is causing to the social and ecological fabric on which humanity depends to flourish. It is an existential crisis, which is manifesting as climate change, growing inequality, the rapid depletion of finite resources, and efforts by elite nations to control global affairs through coercive means (Rogers, 2000). The effects of the crisis on our common security are legion, and of a severity that eclipses the risks prioritised in official discourse.

These systemic problems provide no enemy to point at, only mirrors to peer into. In the glass peering back at us are a host of insidious value-cultures that militate against the kind of approach that we are advocating: anthropocentrism against ecological responsibility; individualism against solidarity; nationalism and ethnocentrism against the common human good; an economic system that cleaves humanity into billionaires and paupers; and patriarchal and class cultures of dominance, division and exploitation.

A productive shift in strategy assumes also a progressive evolution of attitude, not least in whose security needs are thought to matter. This is as profoundly necessary as it is difficult. In a critique of the humanitarian military intervention agenda, Diana Francis argues that without due attention to the systemic roots of our common insecurity, it is bound to grow:

> 'If we are focussed only on the prevention of violent crises and do not set out to transform global relationships, economic, social, political and environmental, we shall go on failing to protect on the grand scale and continue to face growing numbers of outbreaks of widespread violence in which those who have lived lives of daily misery are finally dispatched with brutality.' (Francis, 2006, p. 12)

The next section proposes five policy priority areas – climate, inequality, scarcity, militarism and violent conflict – which would have to belong to a strategy worthy of the demanding principles that began this discussion.

5.5. Priorities for policy

Climate

The world's greatest ever humanitarian, ecological and economic emergency is taking place in slow motion, threatening the human security of the global population, including Western citizens but especially the world's poorest people. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has declared that warming of the climate is 'unequivocal' and 'unprecedented over decades to millennia' (UN, 2014). It has warned of 'a very high risk of severe, widespread, and irreversible impacts globally' unless warming slows and stops (ibid.).

The security consequences of this are manifold. The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) has described the changing climate as a 'clear threat to collective security and global order'; its impacts on available water, agricultural land and yields, sea levels, flooding, and access to energy, will lead to 'resources shortages, mass migrations, and civil conflict' (2011, pp. 5, 24). This will burden already-weak states to the brink of collapse, particularly across much of sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and Central and South-East Asia,

leading to widespread conflict (p. 25). Most governments have yet to anticipate this, let alone to prepare responses.

The gravity of the problem becomes clearer when any one of the many security effects of climate change is unpacked, such as its effects on migration. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has noted various estimates that climate change will lead to between 25 million and a billion more displaced people by 2050, which will 'test global solidarity in ways that are radically different from anything experienced before' (UNHCR, 2012, p. 28). This will add to the confluence of other drivers of migration as populations respond to deteriorating conditions by moving elsewhere (UKCCMC, 2014). According to the UK Climate Change and Migration Coalition, many communities will not be able to migrate at all; these will bear the brunt, left *in situ* to adapt as well as they can (ibid.).

Those who can move are likely to head for temperate regions, joined by others fleeing other crises, such as we now see in the flow of refugees from Syria to Europe. Despite references to these refugees in the mainstream press and by David Cameron as 'a bunch of migrants' (Cameron, 2016), the term 'migrant' is associated with voluntary movement over borders, rather than the compulsive flight from adversity that characterises refugees (UNHCR, 2012). Many head towards diaspora communities in northern Europe (Al Jazeera, 2015). Some make it as far as Calais, where they meet the primary Anglo-French security response: a bigger fence (May, 2015). This may be symptomatic of future Western attitudes to similar crises, as Paul Rogers has predicted for many years (Rogers, 2000).

Western governments largely overlook the extensive effects of climate change on the human security of people in other countries, but rich countries will not escape its effects either, which is piquing the attention of strategists. In the UK, the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy warned that the changing climate poses 'several threats to our security' (HC/HL NSS Committee, 2015, p. 11). Other influential commentators in the defence establishment have reached the same conclusion, as has the US government (IISS, 2011; IPPR, 2009; US, White House, 2015). Despite this, ISIS still tops the list of threats on both sides of the Atlantic, while discussion of climate change is still buried near the bottom of security strategies. As IISS has pointed out, there is no good reason for this:

> 'Intelligence failed in 1941 before Pearl Harbor and in 2001 before 9/11 because threats came from places where planners were not looking. There is no excuse for this in respect of climate change.' (IISS, 2011, p. 24)

Inequality

The economic grand strategy of most governments – the indefinite pursuit of growth – is not sustainable socially, ecologically or economically, and leads inexorably to the injustice of widening inequalities.

1% of the world's population now owns half of its wealth (Oxfam, 2015).[59] That 1% itself exhibits a wide range of wealth distribution, such that the world's richest 75 individuals now hold as much wealth as the poorest 2.1 billion people earn in a year.[60] Even in G20 countries, the richest 1% capture around one third of economic growth (Oxfam, 2014).

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[59] 'In 2014, the richest 1% of people in the world owned 48% of global wealth, leaving just 52% to be shared between the other 99% of adults on the planet.' (Oxfam, 2015)
[60] For sources and detail, refer to footnote 32.

According to Paul Rogers, approximately five billion people now form a 'marginalised majority', of whom at least one billion are malnourished – twice as many as in 1975 (Rogers, 2010). An estimated 863 million people live in slums (UN-Habitat, 2014) and more than two billion people barely subsist on the equivalent of $2 per day or less (World Bank, 2015). Accompanying these staggering wealth disparities are inequalities of health, social rights, social mobility, and political influence (Therborn, 2009; Fuentes-Nieva & Galasso, 2014). These inequalities leave the door open for political capture – dominance by the wealthy over political processes – which marginalises dissent and preserves the drivers of inequality for the benefit of the few (Fuentes-Nieva & Galasso, 2014).

Inequality carries severe implications for the security of the world's poorest people in particular and also for citizens of Western countries. To appreciate this, it is important to distinguish poverty and inequality. Poverty is sheer suffering, inequality is injustice; of the two, the latter may be the most influential in generating grievances, driving violent conflict (particularly asymmetric warfare) and exacerbating insecurity (Crenshaw, 1981; Brinkman, et al., 2013; Taşpınar, 2015). Referring to 'collaterality' – the notion that certain kinds of suffering, while not forgotten, can be comfortably excluded from the political agenda – Zygmunt Bauman believes that:

> '[T]he explosive compound of growing social inequality and the rising volume of human suffering relegated to the status of "collaterality"… has all the markings of being potentially the most disastrous among the many problems humanity may be forced to confront, deal with and resolve in the current century.' (Bauman, 2011)

Scarcity

The Earth's natural resources are fast running out or becoming degraded beyond use. The Ministry of Defence estimates that 3.9 billion people – about half of the world's population – will suffer water shortages by 2045 (2014, p. xiii). There is enough water, according to the UN, but it is poorly distributed, increasingly polluted, and habitually wasted (UN, n.d.) The rapid depletion of fertile soils, a problem dubbed 'the other inconvenient truth' alongside climate change (Foley, 2009), is further depleting the Earth's capacity to hold water, produce food, sequester carbon and facilitate biodiversity.[61] In the last 50 years, a third of the Earth's topsoils have been badly degraded or completely lost through misuse, particularly through intensive agriculture, especially for meat and dairy (FAO, 2013; Scientific American, 2014; Foley, 2009). The Food and Agriculture Organisation predicts that by 2050, only a quarter of the land that was productive in 1960 will remain so (FAO, 2013). Ru Litherland, an organic market gardener, speaks to the corporate exploitation of soil and all other resources vital for life with this simple appeal to restore a natural balance:

> '[T]he age of maximum productivity is, as we are seeing, terminal. The task now is surely to approach the optimum. And this entails some sort of fine balance between the social, the economical, and the ecological.' (Litherland, 2014, p. 30)

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[61] Soil recycles living matter, cleans and holds water, and sequesters carbon; we depend on it for 95% of the world's food (Scientific American, 2014) and without it, humanity would die out. It takes nature a millennium to incubate an inch of topsoil teeming with the invisible flora and fauna that allow plants to grow well; one teaspoon is home to a billion bacteria of 10,000 different species (European Soil Portal, 2014). According to the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements, the world is losing topsoil at a rate of 30 football fields a minute (Scientific American, 2014). The impending soil crisis is compounded by climate change, the loss of pollinators, and water shortages – soil and water are co-dependent.

Scarcity has been fuelling insecurity and violent conflict for some decades and particularly since 1990, according to the UN Environment Programme, which cites Darfur and the Middle East as examples (UNEP, 2009). The agency warns that tensions will be aggravated as shortages become more severe and people become more desperate. Violent conflicts complicated by scarcities are particularly difficult to bring to an end and are likely to relapse afterwards, it adds. In 2008, the UN Secretary-General wrote of peacebuilding in Darfur:

> 'Darfur's violence began with the onset of a decades-long drought. Farmers and herders came into conflict over land and water. If this root problem is not addressed — if the challenges of poverty alleviation, environmental stewardship and the control of climate change are not tied together — any solutions we propose in Darfur will at best be a temporary Band-Aid.' (Ban, 2008)

This is generally true of disputes that are compounded by resource scarcity (UNEP, 2009), which is likely to become endemic to conflicts in the future (Rogers, 2000).

Militarism

For many states, large armed forces are seen as a guarantor of security, status and power, but by valorising military means, powerful states entrench militarism as a global security problem in its own right.

A leaden reliance on military power weighs on these states' understanding of the world and over-determines their responses to it. As such, militarism manifests as a culture of thought: the hegemonic orthodoxy of a purblind outlook. As the proverb goes, when all you have is a hammer, every problem looks like a nail.

As the policy discourse sustains the politics and structures of military power, so these also infuse our social culture. To Amina Mama and Margo Okazawa-Rey, militarism encompasses 'values, norms and ideas, institutional cultures, and values that emanate from the military and military institutions to permeate society, and come into play in all aspects of culture and identity' (2008, p. 4). Their African perspective applies with equal force to the UK's proliferating school cadet forces, Armed Forces Day, and the commodification of remembrance for the British Legion's fundraising goals (Gee, 2014; Stahl, 2010; ForcesWatch, 2015).

Feminist analyses are particularly pointed in their exposure of militarism as a ubiquitous, corrosive cultural and political institution resting on the norms of a patriarchal worldview. Some feminist scholarship points to a continuum of violence from the home to the battlefield and so treats with scepticism the conceptual isolation of warfare as a discrete category (Blanchard, 2003). For example, Cynthia Cockburn writes that war is a masculinist project that 'enhances men's authority in a quantum leap'; it thus 'magnifies' gendered power relations in other social spheres and, in turn, their violence (2010, p. 144). If patriarchal gender relations operate as vectors of violence, as Cynthia Cockburn suggests, then they are bound to perpetuate insecurity at the international level, too. The present stand-off between NATO and Russia provides an example.

Militarism can also be regarded as a problem of prodigious waste. The UK is a major contributor to the world's enormous diversion of resources to armed violence, at around $1.78 trillion *per annum* (SIPRI, 2015a). This discombobulating figure is approximately equivalent to the estimated financial cost of limiting global warming to 2.0-2.4 degrees,

which would prevent millions of deaths and help to avert chronic insecurity for everyone across the globe (Pachauri, 2009; Vidal, 2009).[62] The world's militaries are our largest polluters, too, staggeringly so. The US armed forces, which are exempt from federal carbon reduction measures, consume just over 300,000 barrels of fuel every day (US, Department of Defense, 2013, p. 3).[63]

The most devastating effect of militarism is the activity it stands ready to perform on demand: lethal violence to people, communities, and ecosystems. In these early years of the 21st Century, Western states have initiated some of the world's most destructive violent conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya. Other conflagrations, such as the chronic turmoil in Israel-Palestine, the implosion of Syria and the rise of ISIS from the wreckage of the Iraq war, can be traced to, among other factors, longstanding foreign policies of Western states, particularly the US in the present and the UK during its imperial past. When Western states have not perpetrated wars, they have often facilitated them, along with Russia, by selling arms to belligerents and turning a profit in the process; Argentina could not have invaded the Falkland Islands in 1982 without the expeditionary materiel it had bought from France, the US, and the UK.

The acme of militarist ideology is the possession, or coveting, of the most violently destructive machinery the world has ever known: nuclear weapons. The payload of one British *Trident* submarine could mete out the horrors of the Dresden firestorm to 40 cities in just a few minutes, killing many millions of people; it would likely cause a 'nuclear winter' that would destroy most food production worldwide (Webber & Parkinson, 2015).

In the UK, the orthodox discourse generally regards this as the norm for a responsible nation state (HC DC, 2015a; HC/HL NSS Committee, 2015; IPPR, 2009), rather than a symptom of collective psychosis, as Hana Segal once suggested (1997b, p. 143). In a global context, the UK's position is not at all normal; nine states are armed with nuclear weapons, 186 are not.[64] The large majority of states have condemned the will to power that the weapons represent. Argentina, Belarus, Brazil, Cuba, Libya, Kazakhstan, South Africa, South Korea, Taiwan and Ukraine have all chosen at various points to relinquish their military nuclear programmes or formally forego earlier aspirations to acquire them (Arms Control Association, 2015). It appears that Iran has followed suit.

Ultimately, militarism as a strategy reflects a self-fulfilling paucity of practical hope. It diminishes us, write Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva, reducing us to 'social atoms, activated by antagonistic interests'. (1993, p. 5). As the sixth-largest military spender in the world, the UK is a major party to the problem.

Violent conflict

In the midst of virtually every violent conflict are individuals, communities and movements committed to resisting violence and making space for a humane and constructive way through (Clark, 2009; Tongeren, et al., 2005; Mathews, 2001; Britain Yearly Meeting, 2014;

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[62] The mitigation cost is estimated at 3% of global GDP, amounting to 1.8 trillion in 2009 when the estimate was made.
[63] The US armed forces expected to consume 111 million barrels of liquid fuels in 2013, equivalent to 304,000 barrels per day.
[64] 186 states include all 193 UN member states apart from the nine that possess nuclear weapons, plus Palestine and Taiwan.

Rill, et al., 2007). Invariably in need of external support, these actors are often well-placed to develop strategies to move conflict from threatened or actual violence towards peace and a just settlement. Such an approach anticipates a point at which the conflict itself becomes transformative, tending towards an outcome of creative compromise that a formerly riven society can affirm as its own.

This 'conflict transformation' approach follows an understanding of security as a social ecology characterised by progressive inclusion, mutuality, and justice-building. Whereas metaphors of command and control frame coercive interventions, conflict transformation operates through solidarity with those affected and invites organic metaphors of resistance, healing, growth, building, movement, and so on. Rather than wielding instruments of power to determine and control outcomes, conflict transformation invests in the collective use of all the skills and attitudes that enable relationships, cultures, and political and economic structures to evolve. This principle is beginning to gain mainstream currency; the UK's *Building Stability Overseas Strategy* now accentuates a similar principle, for example (HM Gov., 2011, p. 5). Achieving stability for its own sake is not enough, the strategy says; it should enjoy the 'consent of the population', integrate respect for human rights, and help to ensure that everyone's basic needs are met (ibid.).

In general, a conflict transformation approach recognises communities and people's movements as the prime agents of change, who resist destructive forces to a point where conciliation becomes possible, while building the ground of a lasting peace. The role of external actors, when there is one, is to offer mutually-negotiated support (Fisher, 2011). At their most effective, these networks are partly self-coordinated, without a single locus of authority. A large, 'critical mass' of support for change is not essential; John Paul Lederach suggests that even a small minority – a 'critical yeast' – can enable a whole society to move forwards (Lederach, 2005, p. 91).

The work is tough, slow, and perpetually threatened by forces (often including global powers) that benefit from the political *status quo*.[65] It is additionally beset by relations of gender, class and ethnicity that 'inferiorise' whole social groups, writes Cynthia Cockburn (2010, p. 151). These insidious power relations, in feeding the 'presumption of entitlement' of one group over another (Gee, 2011, pp. 63-65), entrench cycles of violence. Conciliation efforts that are blind to these influences can unwittingly add to them (Fisher, 2011; Cockburn, 2010), and so a conflict transformation approach has to confront abusive power through a creative, stubborn and often risky effort.

The outcomes of conflict transformation work are forever uncertain (2009) and, unlike militaristic strategies, it has no guarantor-enforcer to appeal to. Rather, the security that it builds thrives or withers by the health of society: the integrity of a political, economic, and social culture that is resilient to violence and injustice. Furthermore, the approach is fraught with ethical and practical complexities, which demand analytical rigour, reflexivity, and patience. Whether the growing field as a whole is consistently committed to that is a moot question (Fisher & Zimina, 2009; Francis, 2010), but it has sprouted a prodigious body of literature to help shape a genuinely disciplined praxis.

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[65] Western powers and Russia prop up a number of corrupt or otherwise oppressive governments. In the Middle East, for example, the governments of Bahrain, Egypt, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Syria, to name only a few, all benefit from Western or Russian support.

Despite these uncertainties, a conflict transformation approach does not need to be perfect, just better than coercive strategies. Evidence suggests that it is. For example, a detailed study spanning 323 campaigns for major social change between 1900 and 2006 found that about half of the nonviolent campaigns succeeded in exacting major concessions from government, compared to only about a quarter of the campaigns that used violence (Stephan & Chenoweth, 2008). To explain this difference, the authors pointed to the greater social and political support that nonviolent campaigns tend to gather, as well as their lower risk of provoking a violent backlash.

These nonviolent campaigns have been under-funded, under-supported, and under-explored, and still their successes compare favourably with strategies that elite states have habitually preferred, which have cost dearly and failed repeatedly. The poor record of Western military interventions is due in large part to their architects' indifference to the myriad complexities of conflict that rightly vex the conflict transformation field. NATO's approach to Kosovo, for example, was not nearly long-sighted enough to ponder the effects of the war's aftermath on the province's Serb, Roma and Ashkali communities after the bombing had been branded a success (Human Rights Watch, 2004a). Similar stories help to explain why the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were substantially longer than planners expected and ultimately unsuccessful on their own terms. As Adam Curtis has pointed out, the 'fables' of good and evil that Western leaders have superimposed on faraway lands are far away indeed from reality ('Bitter Lake', 2015). The sheer, awkward detail of conflict, which ought to trouble any third party contemplating intervention, is routinely ignored as some states jump bullishly to a military 'solution'. The former head of the armed forces, David Richards, has written that 'the mantra that there is no military solution to a given crisis… is errant rubbish' (Richards, 2014, p. ix). It is a view from above that typifies the elite discourse, despite efforts by some in the establishment to query it (Chalmers, 2014b; Johnson, 2014).

The principles of conflict transformation have been marginalised by successive UK governments' approaches to intervention.[66] Saferworld has noticed that few of the UK's missions in conflict-affected countries are aware of the government's *Building stability overseas strategy*, for example (2015). In evidence to a parliamentary inquiry, Conciliation Resources acknowledged that 'there are… inherent limits to our, and that of the UK Government, ability and responsibility to "build" stability and peace abroad', but made this eminently reasonable plea:

> 'Yet there is much that the UK can do to support, accompany, promote, and enable locally driven peace processes and initiatives. Developing good practice, investing in expertise and strategies, and placing mediation and peacebuilding on a higher footing in relation to security and military responses in the toolkit of responses to conflict, would be an economic, people-centred and politically effective way to enhance national security. Furthermore, finding ways to forge new and collaborative partnerships, which will have collective impact on complex conflict systems, is a key challenge for the 21st century.' (Conciliation Resources, 2015)

For as long as the UK's self-perception is as a 'warrior nation' (Clarke, 2014, p. 251), its potential as a peacebuilding state will be limited, for it remains invested in the same logic of strategic violence for which it criticises others. In the years since the 9/11 attacks in

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[66] Exceptions to this include the Blair government's *Preventing Violent Conflict* (DfID, 2006) and the Coalition government's *Building Stability Overseas Strategy* (HM Gov., 2011), which have both given some prominence to peacebuilding principles, although they account for the lesser part of the UK's approach to conflict overall.

particular, violent conflict has been a British export. Diana Francis suggests provocatively but seriously that Western states that promote disarmament through DDR[67] programmes in other countries should apply the same principles to their own involvement in international affairs and so progressively demilitarise themselves.

6. 'Naked and undefended'?[68] The defence emasculation argument

From the perspective of mainstream security discourse, the agenda just described would seem reckless in the face of present threats. Are such sweeping hopes for the future dangerous if they blind us to today's immediate dangers? Like Aesop's astronomer, will we fall in a hole if we stare at the sky?

As discussed in the first part of this paper, the British establishment generally believes that a high level of military spending – well above the European average – preserves a transatlantic alliance, which achieves security through dominance of the strategic environment. This grand strategy has failed as a hedge against insecurity, exacerbated the drivers of insecurity, exacted an incalculable toll on life, consumed vast resources, and in any case cannot endure as the US looks upon the UK as an ever less useful military ally.

The paper then explored the three priorities for national security that might provide a rationale, but in practice do not, for offensively equipped, expeditionary forces: to deter military belligerence, particularly from Russia; to reduce instability, particularly by intervening in humanitarian crises; and to minimise the risk of atrocities by non-state groups. That discussion concluded that elevated military spending does not enhance responses to these challenges, and that the preferred, heavily coercive approaches of the UK and US have tended to be counterproductive.

These challenges are nonetheless real. The major security problems listed in the present section – climate, inequality, scarcity, militarism and widespread violent conflict – are far greater, but that is no reason to ignore the immediate risks that the government identifies. Hence, if inflated investment in military capabilities cannot meet these challenges effectively, can anything else?

6.1. Deterrence: Russia revisited

The earlier discussion noted renewed calls in the establishment for a substantial increase in the defence budget for conventional deterrence against an 'advanced military nation', exemplified by Russia (HC DC, 2015a, pp. 22-30).

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[67] DDR: the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of former combatants.
[68] In response to a report criticising armed forces recruitment practices (Gee, 2008), the military historian Max Hastings argued in the *Daily Mail* that such criticisms, if heeded, would leave the country 'naked and undefended' (Hastings, 2008).

Even this proposal's proponents accept that an open military attack on any NATO country, including the UK, is improbable (HM Gov., 2015b, p. 18; HC DC, 2015a, p. 31). Were Russia to favour asymmetric tactics, such as cyber-warfare and covert special forces, which is plausible, then conventional military capabilities could do little to deter it. Further, if NATO's current tenfold overmatch of Russia's military spending is an insufficient deterrent, then spending 11 or 12 times more is unlikely to make a critical difference. Conversely, the further militarisation of the stand-off carries its own risks; when deterrence relies on elevated levels of military capability it tends to drive an arms race and so undermine itself (Herz, 1951).

This leaves no evident deterrence rationale for high military spending in the UK. Nonetheless, the risk of escalation through misunderstanding, miscalculation and military accident remains high (Task Force on Cooperation in Greater Europe, 2015; Global Zero, 2015). As both sides exchange hostile rhetoric and Russia in particular plays the brinkman (European Leadership Network, 2015; Kearns, et al., 2015), neither party is showing interest in de-escalation, at least not in public. Either side could do so, and in the past, both have. If one party were to take a more constructive approach, how might it look?

Currently, neither side's rhetoric acknowledges any legitimacy in the grievances of the other; this statement by the NATO Secretary-General in 2014 is typical:

> 'In recent weeks, Russian officials have accused NATO of breaking its promises, interfering in Ukraine's internal affairs, and escalating the crisis. It is time to see these claims for what they are: a smokescreen designed to cover up Russia's own broken promises, interference and escalation.' (Fogh Rasmussen, 2014)

Anger and indignation on both sides are understandable, but these rhetorical swipes show little promise of a constructive approach that takes seriously all points of view (not only those of the men in charge) and looks for the grain of truth in an antagonist's recriminations.

Gregory Raymond's research of international conflicts has found that as the currency of mutual communication grows, so coercive approaches are seen as less legitimate (Raymond, 2000, p. 290). Accordingly, it is worth imagining how the character of the conflict might change were either Russia's or NATO's leadership willing to recognise publicly the other's perspective. For example, in 2015, a group of former European ministers published *Avoiding war in Europe: how to reduce the risk of a military encounter between Russia and NATO*, which described the stand-off in these neutral terms:

> 'There has been a fundamental break-down of trust amid divergent and, at this point, totally incompatible accounts of what has happened in Ukraine and why. Long-standing concerns and differences over other issues, such as missile defence, the enlargement of NATO, regimes designed to build confidence on deployments of conventional military forces in Europe and non-strategic nuclear weapons have become more acute as a result. The economic relationship between Russia and the rest of Europe is also beginning to disintegrate due to the sanctions process, and many commentators in both Russia and the West now openly speculate about a new Cold War.' (Task Force on Cooperation in Greater Europe, 2015)

This language, which attempts to describe the conflict without prejudice, lies outside the habitual institutional repertoire of both protagonists, yet has much to commend it. Were NATO, for example, to take a similar approach, the changed dynamic could challenge Vladimir Putin's pattern of bullish action framed in a rhetoric of victimhood. In turn, it

could help to shift the conflict towards de-escalation. If it failed to do so, then nothing would be lost; NATO's current approach shows no sign of achieving a better result.

The Task Force has also proposed that both sides agree a memorandum of understanding to establish rules of behaviour that would help to reduce the risk of miscalculation and ensuing rapid escalation. This simple and uncontentious measure would build confidence and help to de-escalate the conflict, from which further détente could flow.

Russia-NATO relations are not as poor now as they were in the aftermath of the Cuban Missile Crisis, when the US and Soviet Union began to introduce effective confidence-building measures.[69] That episode showed, paradoxically, that crises can offer new routes to rapprochement, which then undercuts calls for increased militarisation. Unsurprisingly, hawkish voices resist that, as the US defence establishment's opposition to 1980s disarmament negotiations exemplifies ('Unknown Known', 2013). Nonetheless, détente prevailed, as it can do now, if first one side is willing to speak up for it.

6.2. Stability and humanitarian crises: Kosovo revisited

As noted earlier, NATO's war over Kosovo was widely hailed as a success, which presaged the use of overwhelming military power elsewhere to reverse humanitarian crises and restore stability (Blair, 2010; Johnson, 2014; Codner, 2014). The NATO action was a tactical success, in that it thwarted the Serbian government's belligerence, but a strategic failure, for it exacerbated the humanitarian crisis and ethnic conflict and left the dispute over Kosovo's status unresolved. Since the war is nonetheless seen as the model for further military interventions framed as humanitarian, as described by Tony Blair (1999), it is worth pondering whether there were effective alternatives at the time. Was there really no better way to achieve a satisfactory outcome for the people of the region, over whose heads all the decisions were made?

For a decade before the war, ethnic Albanian Kosovars had persisted with assertive, nonviolent protest and civil resistance even as they faced oppression and antagonism by Serbian authorities (Clark, 2000). Meanwhile, civil society movements in Serbia were trying to build bridges to the politically alienated Kosovars (Women in Black (Belgrade), 2012). The major powers did nothing to support these movements or heed their calls to forge a peaceful and inclusive political process (the notion of early, non-military engagement is strikingly absent from the Blair doctrine). Howard Clark, author of *Civil Resistance in Kosovo*, described this as a critical failure of international responsibility:

> 'The best chances to initiate a peace process in Kosova happened when there was still a Kosovar consensus to refrain from violence. However, international powers took for granted this self-restraint in the face of heavy-handed repression and provocation… When one considers how much governments invest in military research and development, it is criminal that there was no significant effort to formulate an international peace policy for Kosova until some Kosovars took up arms. What lesson should other beleaguered peoples draw from that?' (Clark, 1999)

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[69] There was no hotline between Washington and Moscow at the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis, despite the escalation of the Cold War for more than a decade, which left each superpower's leadership with no way to communicate directly with the other. After the Crisis both powers agreed to install one (Stone, 1988).

Even as late in the day as 1998, there were alternatives to a bombardment (Clark, 1999; Francis, 2001; Brecher, 1999; BBC, 1999a; Clark, 2000). A corps of 2,000 unarmed observers had been mandated by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to accompany Kosovar civilians and report human rights abuses; 1,500 personnel arrived less than one month before the war began (OSCE, n.d.). Despite being under strength and undertrained (Francis, 2001), the observers' presence helped to stabilise the situation on the ground and attacks on civilians temporarily reduced in number (Human Rights Watch, 2000; Francis, 2001).[70] Peter Carington, the former NATO secretary-general and erstwhile envoy to the region, was among those who had called for the observer mission to be strengthened (Littman, 1999, p. 12), but its staff were brought home in anticipation of the bombing campaign (Human Rights Watch, 2000).

It is only possible to guess at the effect an expanded observer mission would have had. Would it have endangered its personnel? Would it have allowed the belligerents space to avoid a war and negotiate, albeit uncertainly, a transitional settlement? No-one can know, but given the initial progress made by such a small initiative, it would be wrong to conclude that there were no alternatives to war, even at the eleventh hour.

Even after the war started, options for de-escalation remained. Among these were a peace plan drafted by the German government, which proposed suspending the air bombardment if forces under Serbian command began to withdraw from Kosovo; a permanent ceasefire would ensue once all Serb forces had exited the territory (BBC, 1999a). The US would not countenance this and Tony Blair said that all NATO's original demands were not negotiable, but otherwise no reason for rejecting the proposal was given (BBC, 1999a; Blair, 1999).

Might these alternative approaches, or similar, have avoided the years of strife that followed the war? Diana Francis:

> 'There were no easy solutions to events in what was once Yugoslavia. We cannot say, "If only this and this had been done, everything would have been all right." We can say that there were constructive things that could have been done, given the will and resources, and that mistakes were made at many stages, because of national interests in the West, the lack of any coherent approach, the lack of respect for local populations, and the lack of any serious analysis of what the "military solution" was likely to achieve.' (Francis, 2001)

Seen against the background of its history, in which years of mounting enmity went ignored and civil resistance went unsupported, NATO's action was a last-minute, externally imposed, illegal 'fix' that ultimately failed the region's people.

It is often said that just such a military 'fix' ought to have been provided in Rwanda to prevent the horrific genocide of 1994 (Burkhalter, 1999). Roméo Dallaire, who commanded the country's UN peacekeeping mission at the time, had appealed to Western governments for a modest increase of budget and personnel, which he said could have prevented civil war (2004, p. 514). But his memoir makes this point as part of a wider criticism of the world powers: that they did not care enough about a poor African country at an earlier stage (pp. 514, 517). In particular, greater commitment ought to have followed the peace accords signed a year earlier, he said (p. 514). He also roundly criticised military

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[70] Regarding the OCSE observers, an alternative narrative is that the initiative belonged to NATO's intended escalation of the conflict to pave the way for bombing (Schweitzer, 2009, p. 113).

action outside UN auspices (such as that in Kosovo). It weakens the international system, he said, which needs to be stronger if genocide is to be prevented in the future (p. 519).

In place of eleventh-hour invasive 'fixes', the first resort of external intervention ought to be early, civil solidarity with local actors at all levels of society who are engaged in peacebuilding and working to preserve the human security of the population. This offers no panacea – the complexities of conflict render any such claim presumptuous. But also presumptuous would be to imagine that military power can end a given crisis, as the story of Kosovo shows.

6.3. Atrocities by non-state groups: ISIS and 'domestic extremism' revisited

Before discussing possible responses to ISIS, it is worth noting that it is not the only insurgent movement in the region (or elsewhere) that has been killing large numbers of civilians (Evers, 2014). In addition, it is worth remembering that civilians killed in ISIS' grisly executions and purges are still outnumbered many times over by those killed in Western interventions in Iraq and elsewhere. Simple tales of good and evil will not do. Nor is it apt to define ISIS in terms of the ideological fanaticism of its leadership, important though that is as a factor, for the movement's rise is symptomatic of a deeper crisis with regional and global dimensions. That crisis, in turn, has been seeded by the events of history, including the repeatedly antagonising effects of Western policy in the Middle East for more than a century. And despite some facile characterisations of 'Islam' as a 'violent religion', only a tiny minority of people in the region and worldwide have joined ISIS. The overwhelming majority of the population – whatever their faith allegiance – abhor its ideology and methods and that is unlikely to change.

As discussed earlier, military action from the air or on the ground is unlikely to defeat ISIS. 'Hammering' the movement day and night (Schogol, 2015) in a war that some US generals have predicted will be 'decades-long' (Dozier, 2015) seems strategically doomed, yet certain to kill many people who have no hand in the violence.

The genesis of ISIS is complex; effective responses, whatever they may be, are unlikely to be simple. A blueprint solution is out of reach, but a thoughtful conversation, taking in many standpoints, could inform a constructive line of approach for the medium to long term. A few provisional suggestions follow, inspired by the principles of security proposed earlier. First, how should the problem of ISIS be framed?

Paul Rogers suggests that we try to appreciate the growth of ISIS in three aspects: its ideological origins in Wahhabist religiosity; the socio-economic marginalisation of many people across the region; and the effect of Western wars – including the current campaign – in feeding a narrative that the West is intent on destroying Islam (Rogers, 2015d).

To see how those three elements have allowed ISIS to grow, Martha Crenshaw's historical survey of 'terrorist' movements is instructive. She showed that 'terrorism' is usually an elite project, led by a small number of ideologues from relatively privileged backgrounds (Crenshaw, 1981). But she also showed that groups bent on atrocities magnify their potency by mobilising popular support among oppressed publics, who harbour 'concrete grievances' against the incumbents of power (p. 383). The Brookings scholar, Ömer

Taşpınar, makes a complementary observation: that the attraction of ideologically extreme movements grows with the relative deprivation of the public whose support they need, particularly when political and economic expectations are repeatedly frustrated (Taşpınar, 2015). Accordingly, the socio-economic marginalisation of millions of people throughout the Middle East, whether as a result of Western strategy, World Bank policy, corporate capture, or the policies of despotic governments in the region, provides fertile ground for extremist ideologies and movements.

If the West wants to dissuade young, disaffected people from joining or supporting a violent *jihad* against it, then it has to prove, and not merely declare, that it cares about their relative poverty and political exclusion. The plight of the region's people cries out for international solidarity, but external powers – the US and Russia in particular – have put the big money into military intervention. At the time of writing, UNHCR reports a 38% funding gap, equivalent to $1.65 billion, as it attempts to coordinate accommodation for nearly five million refugees (UNHCR, 2016). The US alone has spent four times that sum – $6.2 billion – on bombing ISIS.[71] Much to the UK's credit, it has provided more than its allocated share of funding to UNHCR's appeal (HC IDC, 2015), but by characterising the refugees at its own front door as a 'bunch of migrants' (Cameron, 2016), it signals indifference to disaffected people in the Middle East. It does not help, either, that the West has judiciously overlooked other extremist insurgencies that have been perpetrating atrocities in Iraq, as Owen Jones has pointed out (2014). And as noted earlier, the West eagerly sells arms to Saudi Arabia and other oppressive states even as they violently suppress democratic dissent (CAAT, 2014a; CAAT, 2014b), and to Israel, even as it commits severe human rights abuses in Palestine (Human Rights Watch, 2014a; CAAT, 2015a). These realities are not lost on the young men in particular that ISIS seeks to enlist.

Who is responsible for responding to ISIS? The US leads the offensive, but the natural locus for a genuinely shared international response is the UN, with other Middle-Eastern states and regional citizens' organisations supported to take the initiative. Insofar as the US and UK should take responsibility, this might first be to acknowledge the huge damage that their wars have caused in the region. It is beyond immediate political reach, but an apology, or at least a sincere admission that the wars were misguided, could plausibly go a long way to undercut long-standing, historical narratives that the West is a natural enemy of Islam. In light of this history, the most constructive course of action by the US and UK, unlikely though it is to happen, may be to withdraw their military forces entirely, in a collective exit strategy negotiated with Russia and endorsed at the UN Security Council. This would enable the UK to better support the UN to broker negotiations, while funds now devoted to bombing could be used instead to support reconstruction.

In the meantime, Harriet Lamb proposes what may be the only approach that stands some chance of leading to success against ISIS in the long term:

> 'Surely the way for the UK to approach this is patiently to continue working with international, regional and local partners to provide adequate humanitarian help to all those in need, reduce incentives and opportunities for new fighters to join ISIS, and develop a viable long-term, incremental strategy to restore stability and – eventually – peace to Syria?' (Lamb, 2015)

There appears to be some support for this in military circles, too. Speaking to *The Daily Beast* in May 2015, the head of the US army's special forces, Lt Gen Charles Cleveland,

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[71] The cost of the US of bombing ISIS was $6.2 billion to 31 January 2016 (Wong, 2016).

alluded to the need to shift emphasis from overwhelming ISIS with military power to building the conditions of strategic success in the long-term:

> 'We can continue to mow the grass and try to take 'em out, but it's not a winning strategy […] We're going to have to start thinking of root causes […] We have to try to set the conditions so that 8-year-old today doesn't become the jihadi in 10 years… or even less than that.' (Dozier, 2015)

In this vein, there may be a number of ways to reduce ISIS' potency. These include attempting to close off the supply of arms and military logistics, and working with Middle Eastern governments in particular to trace ISIS' other sources of material support. Paul Rogers has suggested that a state like the UK could use its strong diplomatic presence to encourage dialogue between Iran and Saudi Arabia (Rogers, 2015e; 2015f).

At home, the narratives used by Western powers could better reflect the complex aetiologies of 'extremism'. The motivations of ISIS' recruits and supporters are not uniform (Stern & Berger, 2015). Even so, some of their stories confirm Ömer Taşpinar's view that relative deprivation can drive politically excluded individuals towards ideologically extreme movements. When *Syria Deeply* interviewed Muhammad, an ISIS militant who disagrees with some of its methods (Zein Eddine, 2015), he described his motivation partly in financial terms. Joining ISIS enabled him to shrug off the shame that he could not otherwise support his family, he explained. He also spoke of his fury at the 'hypocrisy of the international community'. If he died fighting, he said, 'then I would be a martyr who died to raise the word of God'. His story goes some way to illustrating the intersection of relative deprivation, political frustration, and ideological commitment. In David Cameron's terms, Muhammad's 'grievance justification' is morally beyond the pale (Cameron, 2015c) but it evidently played a role in his attraction to ISIS.

In contrast to David Cameron, Barack Obama's rhetoric has recognised that grief and anger feature in the genesis of violence. The President routinely passes over the provocative nature of US policy in the Middle East, but in February 2015 said this:

> 'We do have to address the grievances that terrorists exploit, including economic grievances. Poverty alone does not cause a person to become a terrorist, any more than poverty alone causes somebody to become a criminal… What's true, though, is that when millions of people – especially youth – are impoverished and have no hope for the future, when corruption inflicts daily humiliations on people, when there are no outlets by which people can express their concerns, resentments fester. The risk of instability and extremism grow…. And we've seen this across the Middle East and North Africa.' (Obama, 2015a)

Larry Attree highlights the deeply corrosive effect of Western double-standards in the moral rhetoric of Western governments. In response to David Cameron's extremism speech in July 2015, which had been addressed to British Muslims, he wrote:

> 'Where grievances that underpin violence do have a connection to past and present foreign policy, it is important to understand these connections and be prepared to consider changing the policy. Instead of seeing such changes as capitulating to terrorists and caving in to violence, the UK government should recognise that if it condemns those who oppose "British values" as extremists, it ought to promote these values itself consistently in practice in the wider world.' (Attree, 2015)

With security understood as the freedom to live in dignity, and freedom from fear and want, a progressive policy would open public debate rather than close it down, allowing

channels of dissent. To blame Muslims and Islam for the rise of ISIS, even tacitly, and to threaten to silence non-violent, anti-government individuals, however odious some such voices seem, is highly counterproductive. After David Cameron's speech, the academic Zaheer Kazmi blogged:

> 'However counter-intuitive it may appear to Western governments, the solution to extremism in the longer-term lies in developing strategies that enable rather than limit the public space for Muslim dissent in liberal societies. This is something that has not been given enough attention since 9/11, with counter-radicalisation strategies focusing on narrowing civil liberties and creating the chimera of state-endorsed "moderate Muslims" to take the battle to the jihadists…' (Kazmi, 2015)

The UN agrees:

> '[T]he creation of open, equitable, inclusive and pluralist societies, based on full respect for human rights and with economic opportunities for all, represents the most tangible and meaningful alternative to violent extremism and the most promising strategy for rendering it unattractive.' (UN, 2016, p. 8)

In 1997, between the two US-led wars in Iraq, Edward Said wrote the following, the sad relevance of which has since grown:

> 'As rallying cries for their constituencies, "Islam" and "the West" (or "America") provide incitement more than insight. As equal and opposite reactions to the disorientations of new actualities, "Islam" and "the West" can turn analysis into simple polemic, experience into fantasy. Respect for the concrete detail of human experience, understanding that arises from viewing the Other compassionately, knowledge gained and diffused through moral and intellectual honesty: sure these are better, if not easier, goals at present than confrontation and reductive hostility.' (Said, 2005, p. 595)

In the UK, extremist narratives, whether violently Islamist or violently islamophobic, aim to divide, exclude and exploit, jeopardising the prospect of a truly multi-cultural society characterised by equality. As Edward Said's comments imply, we all share responsibility to provide counter-narratives that thwart forces invested in division and, in particular, to enact those narratives in daily life, communities and societies.

PART THREE: Transition

7. Propositions and questions

The second part of this paper has proposed an outline approach to security that contrasts with the dominant model. It encourages a commitment to the common good, rather than to exclusive national interests defined by an elite, and to building the conditions of security, rather than only countering insecurity, important though that is. To these ends, the approach proposes to combine a long-term outlook with learning from the past. It advocates a broader understanding of risk. Especially, the approach argues that the greatest causes of insecurity are not physical threats posed by enemies now, but systemic problems that persist over a long period, and which arise from the manner in which global society is organised, in particular its political and economic systems. Accordingly, this approach does not support the substantial diversion of resources into military capabilities on the assumption that they guarantee security; risks that now attract coercive responses would be better tackled in mainly non-military ways. And it argues that our common security is a common responsibility, and a democratic one, rather than the preserve of self-selected elite states, which do not enjoy the consent of the rest of the world.

Insofar as an approach of this kind is more practically viable than the prevailing model, then it is credible, but that does not make it politically palatable. In the UK and other Permanent Members of the UN Security Council, the national defence establishments that dominate security policymaking remain committed to a heavily militarised outlook. The purpose of this paper has been to query the wisdom of that commitment, but the politics of a potential change of direction are altogether more challenging than the theory. This is not least because globalised problems require responses of globalised solidarity, which is not characteristic of elite states' approaches to security.

This part of the paper sketches an initial response to this difficulty. As stated earlier, without people's movements working for change, policy is likely to remain much as it is, but the remainder of this discussion ponders what scope there may be for bringing some of this paper's queries into conversations with policymakers and opinion-formers. Specifically, it asks, if some UK policymakers could be attracted to an approach similar to that outlined here, then:

A. What five key propositions could, and would need to, gain policymakers' support in order to encourage a recognition that change is necessary?

B. What five key questions might guide a productive, mutual conversation with policymakers?

A. Five key propositions

Recognise insecurity as systemic. Systemic drivers of insecurity present a more severe risk to the UK and the world than 'international terrorism' but are largely overlooked in the official security outlook.

Commit to the common good. When the pursuit of 'national interests' undermines the common good, it generates insecurity for the UK and the world in the long term. A national security strategy should marry the two goals.

Define success. The published strategy does not define security or elucidate its principles; it aims only to counter immediate threats. It is not, therefore, strategic.

Rebalance responses. The net effect of British involvement in several military interventions since the Cold War has been to exacerbate insecurity in the UK and elsewhere. The UK's approach to security has yet to recognise the limits of military power or the potential of peacebuilding and conflict transformation approaches; the strategy needs to be rebalanced accordingly.

Re-think grand strategy. The 'special relationship' with the US is on the wane, such that the UK's grand strategy will have to change eventually. Comparable European states are less convinced than the UK of the value of a) a transatlantic 'special relationship'; b) expensive, expeditionary military capabilities; and c) military interventions abroad, and they are no less secure.

B. Five key questions

Principles of security. What is security? What are its core principles? How is it developed over time?

Beneficiaries. Who are the intended beneficiaries of UK security policy? Who benefits in practice? Who ought to benefit? Could UK strategy shift emphasis from a perception of 'national interest' towards one of 'common interest' – should it? Is there a balance to strike?

Risks. What are the greatest risks to the security of these beneficiaries in the short and long term? How do these risks compare with those identified in the national security strategy? How do the effects of systemic drivers of insecurity rank next to risks such as international terrorism and a resurgent Russia, and why?

Resources. What capacities are needed to build security and respond effectively to insecurity? How should resources be divided between these tools? How does this compare with the tools that the national security strategy promotes now?

Grand strategy. How productive/counter-productive for security is a grand-strategic alliance with the US? For how long can, or should, that strategy be sustained? Were the relationship to end tomorrow, how would the UK's security outlook adapt?

CONCLUSION

> 'Is it at least possible to believe that the world could gradually become more just and less violent, such that we come to trust one another more with our vulnerabilities? Or are we doomed to endless war? These are genuinely open questions – no-one can know the answer with certainty – but our security could well come to depend on which future we choose to believe in.' (Ammerdown Group, 2014)

In his encyclical on the social and ecological problems of the 21st century, Pope Francis proposed that we look for their causes in how we live and organise our societies (Pope Francis, 2015, p. 133). The genesis of their solutions will only come from knowing that we inhabit a 'common home' with a 'common destiny', he said, realised through a 'genuine and profound humanism' (2015, pp. 118, 133). That commitment must be supported to displace, in time, the tendency of 'countries [to] place their national interests above the global common good' (p. 125). The encyclical suggested that humanity, in all its diversity, has a unified vocation to preserve and keep our common home – a home secure not only in the narrow but important sense of safe, but also in good health, and free from fear and want.

Work to tackle problems of climate, inequality, scarcity, militarism and violent conflict belong to the same, common, home-building, home-keeping vision. Among the many challenges we face, a liveable future will depend on redrawing the meaning of security, such that it evolves from the will to neutralise threats towards a commitment to build peace with justice, and from exercising control over world affairs to facilitating genuinely democratic participation in them. Simon Dalby has expressed a similar vision as a tantalising Big If:

> 'If security can be reinterpreted in terms of this kind of ecologically sustainable common security, requiring a political and social order that works to sustain resources in the long-term interest of all, and taking into consideration intergenerational equity as well as intragenerational equity, then it may offer some useful potential.' (Dalby, 1999, pp. 87-88)

The etymology of 'crisis' leads us back to the Greek word *krisis*, the 'turning point in a disease', which is derived in turn from a Proto-Indo-European root *krei,* 'to sieve, discriminate, distinguish'. So it is that our crises are opportunities as well as urgencies, as we suggested in the Ammerdown Invitation:

> 'Our ecological crisis presents an unprecedented incentive to renew our global institutions and foster cooperation between peoples, creating a worldwide sense of humanity as a global community.' (Ammerdown Group, 2014, p. 2)

But is humanity capable of this? We have to be and we are. All but the least fortunate few have experienced and expressed solidarity; it is a reality, not just an aspiration. As Rebecca Solnit remembers the 9/11 attacks, 'The first impulse everywhere… was to give blood, a

kind of secular communion in which people offered up the life of their bodies for strangers.' (2005, p. 77) Evidence from the most successful societies shows that they are also the most equitable and the most free (Freedom House, 2015; Dorling, 1998, pp. 115-144; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010, pp. 197-272). They are also better able, according to research by Gregory Raymond, to 'recast conflicts of interest as problems to be solved, not bouts to be won.' (Raymond, 2000, p. 290) People's movements of all kinds, the work of progressive states, and the work of some UN agencies, further demonstrate that there is nothing inevitable about the current cycles of injustice and violence that are jeopardising the security of everyone.

If the primary imperative of security is to build its conditions through our political, economic and social systems, and in our relationships, then heavy investment in military forces is misplaced. The first resort is the civil instruments of state, from children's education to high diplomacy, alongside citizens' own initiatives. The frequent claim that only the armed forces can deal with certain crises should be interrogated. When Tony Blair presented the case for NATO's air campaign over Kosovo, he said: 'We cannot turn our backs on conflicts and the violation of human rights within other countries if we want still to be secure.' (Blair, 1999) His binary rhetoric implied that nothing could be done between shooting and shrugging, but military responses to crises are never the only options. Overall, the UK's post-Cold War coercive interventions have been inordinately expensive, unacceptably harmful to people affected, and highly counterproductive in the long term. A sustainable, strategic approach to crises would have to regard the prospect of interventions based on overwhelming military power, even if tactically successful, as symptomatic of strategic failure. In their place, it would develop non-military response capabilities, such as early resort to state and civil capacities for violence prevention, conflict transformation, diplomacy and peacemaking, as well as cooperatively devised, civilian-based violence-reduction interventions. All these have precedents.

A sustainable approach to common security would include an initial military drawdown. It would also involve working vigorously with others to encourage drawdowns elsewhere in a bid to progressively demilitarise the strategic context over decades. This would be difficult, particularly in view of states' attachment to military power as a guarantor of international status and influence, but it is in the public interest and has yet to be seriously attempted.

The UK government can play a more progressive role, equitably alongside others, if it can transcend its post-imperial self-perception as a 'warrior nation' (Clarke, 2014, p. 251) and thus a 'global power' (HC DC, 2015a). Security discourse will need to become more reflexive and proactively inclusive, if it is to have a genuinely creative function beyond the mere legitimation of a dysfunctional *status quo*.

Acknowledgements

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