
BRITAIN'S SECURITY: LABOUR'S DEFENCE POLICY REVIEW

Emily Thornberry MP,
Shadow Secretary of State for Defence.
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Emily Thornberry, Labour's Shadow Defence Secretary, has been asked by Jeremy Corbyn to lead a review of Labour's defence policy. This document, published by Emily, is a terms of reference for her review. It includes key questions for discussion and calls for submissions from members, affiliates and the wider public.

Emily's review will feed in to the NPF which is responsible for Labour's policy development. The document will form a submission to the NPF, specifically the International Policy Commission which is responsible for Labour's policy platform in this area. The Commission will be fully involved in the review and the consultation with the wider party. It will produce a report on its work to Labour's Annual Conference, the sovereign decision making body of the Party.

Britain's Security: Labour's Defence Policy Review

Context

The safety and security of the British people must always be our first priority. This can only be achieved by a defence and security policy which is strategic, informed by expert opinion and supported by a strong evidence base.

The Tories' approach has failed on all three counts. The Government's recent Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) was widely criticised for being rushed and for its woefully inadequate consultation, which limited responses to barely 200 words and was criticised by leading defence experts as "a slight to the intelligence of professional analysts".

Labour's strategic review of defence policy will not make the same mistakes. We want to seek the widest possible range of views, spanning academia, the defence industry, NGOs, parliamentarians, the public and, of course, members of the armed forces themselves.

In 2014 Labour committed to carrying out a review of defence policy if elected to government. The National Policy Forum report^[1] which set out clearly its intended scope and purpose provides important context for the current review:

"The nature of the security threats facing Britain today differs from that of the treats we faced fifty years ago. From fragile and conflict-affected states, to natural disasters and humanitarian crises, to the increase of cyber warfare, it is clear that traditional military responses will not be sufficient to tackle the most salient security issues of the future..."

The report insisted that Labour's review must be "open, inclusive and transparent", examining all capabilities, including nuclear and taking into account the views of "all relevant stakeholders". The need for our review is all the more urgent in light of the failure of the Government's SDSR to do this. In it we will seek to examine our defence and security capabilities by beginning from first principles: how should we see Britain's place on the world and what values should drive our foreign policy. It must also examine the cost implications as well as strategic necessities, recognizing the importance of the defence sector to the UK economy and the need to protect and develop a highly skilled workforce.

This debate will involve Labour Party members, trade union affiliates, representatives from our armed forces and defence-related industries, experts from universities and think tanks, and the British people more broadly.

The Government's Approach: SDSR 2015

In contrast to the Government's 2010 SDSR, the 2015 SDSR was published alongside the National Security Strategy (NSS) review, which was supposed to identify the nature of the main threats facing

[1] Available here: <http://www.yourbritain.org.uk/agenda-2015/policy-commissions/britain-s-global-role-policy-commission/britain-s-global-role-policy-consultation?download=true>

the United Kingdom, to which the SDSR is designed to respond. The process allowed for limited consultation and external input either to the analysis in the NSS or their consequences for defence and foreign policy. It also failed to address the experience of the damaging wars across the Middle East and South West Asia that have left hundreds of thousands of people dead and millions displaced and has resulted in continuing conflict.

There is therefore a real demand for a comprehensive, inclusive and broad review of Britain's strategic defence and security policies. This document sets out the central themes of Labour's review, and the questions to which it will seek answers. It is intended to be used as a framework for the consultative process that will form the spine of our review, which will be submitted to the National Policy Forum to inform their work with stakeholders invited to make their views known in response.

This review will address five areas of Britain's defence policy. Its scope is broad and foundational, in line with the 2014 NPF policy paper, to ensure that those consulted have a chance to engage not just with specific spending decisions, but with the character and purpose of our Party's approach to defence and security.

Britain's Place in the World: Values, Principles and Objectives

The Labour Party has always believed that foreign policy must be driven by values. But after conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and now Syria, we must not only examine our military strategy in those wars, but also what lessons we can learn about the values and objectives that guide our defence policy. Other recent interventions, including those in Kosovo and Sierra Leone, will be equally instructive.

Britain has a responsibility to promote a more peaceful world, to address the underlying causes of conflict and insecurity, to combat the proliferation of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons, and to contribute to international peacekeeping operations. At a time of growing and increasingly diverse security threats and challenges, and a gradual rebalancing of global economic and political power, we must ask fundamental questions about Britain's changing position in the world, and what we can do to uphold international law, aid multilateral co-operation, and protect universal human rights.

This section of the review will address four questions:

- 1) What role should Britain play in building a world that is more peaceful, more just and safer, how can we make a greater contribution to international peacekeeping and strengthen the capabilities of the under-performing UN system?
- 2) What should be the values and principles that drive Britain's strategic defence policy?
- 3) What objectives follow from these values for Britain's defence and foreign policy, and how can our objectives best be achieved?
- 4) What are the strategic assets that Britain needs in order to protect our common security?

Labour's review begins with these fundamental questions because the strategic necessities required to address the threats Britain faces depend on the values and objectives that drive our policy. We will gather a wide range of views on these four questions, and we hope to hear as wide a range of views as possible as we look to build consensus on our future approach.

The Threats to Britain's Security

As well as examining the values and objectives which drive our defence policy, this review will also explore the range of threats to our common security over the next three to four decades.

The threat environment is rapidly changing and increasingly complex. As well as escalating violence and repression in the Middle East, North Africa and elsewhere, there are other more fundamental threats and underlying drivers of conflict on which the NSS is lacking. The bewildering array of threats extends to climate change and environmental degradation, competition for increasingly scarce resources, the expanding cyber threat and the ever-present threat of terrorism.

Labour's review will therefore look beyond immediate state-based military threats and seek to achieve clarity about the dynamic and various threats to Britain's security over the next few decades.

This section of the review will address three questions:

- 1) What are the key security challenges facing the UK?
- 2) What are the more fundamental, long-term threats to our common security, what or who is driving them?
- 3) How can we improve our ability to identify, predict and act upon underlying threats to Britain's security, and work to prevent them developing?

These first two sections will form the basis on which Labour's review assesses Britain's security and defence capabilities. By seeking evidence from conflict analysts, trade unions, Labour members and the British public on these three questions, we can then address what assets and approaches Britain needs to pursue a foreign and defence policy that is both value-driven and effectively responds to the threats facing Britain's security.

Britain's Military and Security Forces: Capabilities, Spending, and Choices

This section will follow from the first two and will seek to explore the details of the military and security forces Britain needs. In a world of complex and varied threats, protecting Britain's security requires more than traditional military capabilities alone. We must learn the lessons from previous conflicts about the apparatus and capabilities we need to fulfill our international obligations and effectively implement our objectives overseas. The review assumes that under a Labour Government the UK will continue to work with international partners through our existing treaty alliances, especially within the EU and NATO.

To achieve our objectives, we must make choices. These choices will involve not only spending decisions, which will be included in this section, but also decisions about the defence capabilities that protect our common security and promote Britain's place in the world. This must include – but not be limited to – decisions about the relevance and effectiveness of our nuclear capability.

This section of the review will address six questions:

- 1) What level of defence spending is required to keep Britain safe and help us promote a more peaceful and safer world?
- 2) What are the lessons from recent conflicts about the equipment and military capabilities required for the deployments Britain may face in the next few decades?
- 3) How can Britain help to effectively stem the flow of weapons – chemical, nuclear, and military – around the world and promote non-proliferation and disarmament?
- 4) What training do our military and security forces need to carry out operations that protect Britain's security and pursue the values that guide our defence policy?
- 5) Will renewal of Britain's nuclear capability aid us in protecting Britain's security and pursuing the values that guide our foreign and defence policy?
- 6) What new capabilities will our armed forces require to address the complex and dynamic threats facing our common security, especially the growing threat of cyber attacks?

Each of these questions is necessarily broad, since this review will leave no stone unturned in seeking to assess from first principles the strategic defence and security capabilities that Britain needs for the twenty-first century.

Protecting British Jobs and Skills

Central to Labour's review is the question of the impact of decisions about future capabilities on employment and skills in the British economy. We must ensure we protect the high-technology jobs, skills and industrial base that may be affected by decisions on defence capabilities.

The UK defence and security industries employ over 215,000 people directly and support a further 150,000 throughout the supply chain. All individuals and companies involved can offer insights into the implications of strategic security decisions. This is why we are inviting such a broad range of inputs to our review and why protecting jobs and skills will be at the heart of Labour's security review.

Crucially, this goes beyond the defence industry and extends to our armed forces personnel themselves. A flexible and adaptable armed forces will be essential to meeting the challenges of a changing landscape of threats to our safety, and so we need to make sure that we are properly equipping our men and women in uniform with the full range of skills they need to adapt to this changing environment, as well as to life after military service.

Going further, our defence policy would be incomplete if it failed to take proper account of the welfare of our servicemen and women, veterans, and their families. Contributions focusing on these issues would be particularly welcome.

Protecting our common security is about much more than defence. It is also about jobs, skills and welfare, so that our armed forces, as well as those employed by our defence and security industries, do not lose out from decisions made in Westminster in which they had no meaningful say.

This section of the review will address five questions:

- 1) Are the UK's armed forces equipped with the full range of skills they need to tackle the threats Britain faces in the 21st century? Or do we need to do more?
- 2) What are the central economic challenges our domestic defence industry will face in the next few decades and what must be done to overcome them?
- 3) What implications would any changes to current policy have in terms of jobs and the wider economy? Where jobs are lost, how could the impact best be mitigated?
- 4) How can we combine value for money on all military spending programmes with secure and sustainably high-skilled jobs?
- 5) How can we protect the wider supply chain required for our domestic defence industry to flourish?

The Review Process

This consultation has set out the central themes of Labour's strategic defence and security review. The questions this review will seek to address can only be answered with the broadest possible range of inputs from stakeholders. Since there are 13 million people with connections to the UK's armed forces, we must draw on their expertise and experience in the course of this review.

This review will seek advice and evidence from Labour Party members, supporters, trade unions, academics, think tanks, industry representatives, armed forces charities and representatives, and the public more broadly.

Only by canvassing a wide range of views, by broadening the base of our knowledge, can we best understand how to work with others to address the deeper causes of insecurity and conflict.

Understanding, anticipating and responding to long-term, complex challenges such as terrorism, cyber threats, climate change, inequality and marginalization, resource scarcity, and mass migration will be best achieved through wide-ranging and long-term consultation.

Labour's review will draw on all that experience to develop a defence and security strategy that can help build a world of lasting peace and security.

There will be a range of meetings to inform and support this review. Written contributions can be made online by emailing defencereview@labour.org.uk and we would be grateful if initial contributions could be submitted before 30 April 2016. As a guide, written submissions should broadly seek to address the questions in this paper. You will be able to find further details on Labour's 'Your Britain' website at www.yourbritain.org.uk/defencereview.

