

Written evidence submitted by DefenceSynergia

The HCDC seeks written inputs addressing twelve specific questions. This DefenceSynergia (DS) submission will address each question in turn preceded by a short executive summary.

In summarising the DS position in respect of the questions posed by the HCDC we focus on the overarching essential nature of United Kingdom (UK), United States of America (USA) and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) relationship and interaction. We avoid delving too deeply into areas of specific plans and potential future policy, which are the domain of serving politicians, diplomats and Service chiefs.

Executive Summary

1. Underpinning NATO organisational and political resilience is the unique relationship that has developed between the US and UK dating back to WWII and strengthened during the Cold War. In the areas of defence strategy, command and control on operations, the sharing of intelligence resources and product, nuclear weapons delivery cooperation and nuclear submarine development and operation, and the sharing of high-end technologies and weaponry, the US and UK have unparalleled synergy unmatched by any other allied independent nations.
2. It is possible to discern a regrettable level of friction in US political and military circles at the UK's current balance of forces and capability as a result of Her Majesty's Government (HMG) defence spend and recent UK military lack lustre performance in the Middle East. This is caused when US military expectations of UK military commitment and support fall short of what UK provided or promised in the past. However, this US reaction is nothing compared to their distrust and disappointment in many major European NATO powers that rely upon US military defence spend to offset their own paltry NATO contributions or European country self-defence efforts. Many NATO countries still seem content to shelter under the US defence umbrella, rather than accepting the costs and consequences of the need to contribute to their own country's, and Europe's collective, defence.
3. Why this is so critical is because NATO's most likely peer enemy, Russia, takes comfort from, continues to undermine, and possibly will react to any perceived weakness in NATO resolve. This is why the US/UK nuclear alliance, cooperation and protocols, amongst other Capabilities, are so crucial and must be maintained. Three centres of NATO nuclear decision making complicate Russian strategic planning and Mr Putin is more than willing to assist the West's anti-nuclear lobby to drive a wedge between the US, UK and France on this issue. However, each nuclear arsenal has different Capabilities and tactical to strategic use. Thus, for NATO nuclear Capability to be seen as credible the varying capabilities must be highly complementary and be seen by Russia as a coherent deterrent, rather than single national deterrents to be played one off against each other and against the NATO non-nuclear members.
4. However, NATO's problems do not begin or end with the ultimate deterrent. To be viable, the balance of conventional Forces must also be capable, certain and credible. NATO may spend more across the board than Russia on defence – thanks to the US – but the utility of these forces must also be factored in. With US and UK Forces being withdrawn from mainland Europe, the need for rapid 'Force projection' enablers, forward pre-stocking and forward deployment of combat Forces becomes crucial to all NATO immediate reaction and reinforcement plans.

However, forward and pre-positioned equipment and stocks are not a panacea as they can be vulnerable to pre-emptive strikes and subversion by Special Forces or local hybrid force attack. Furthermore, if forward stocks/equipment take weeks or months to get to combat readiness, they are not credible and could be quickly overrun or destroyed in any short notice swift strike operations by Russia.

5. Mr Putin is attempting to undermine NATO's military cohesion by engaging with more vulnerable NATO and EU countries to set up direct economic, trade, infrastructure, military and technology cooperation, especially with NATO and EU nations in the Mediterranean. This 'divide and conquer' Putin strategy has a number of aims, including: to undermine EU sanctions against Russia; and create tensions between NATO members over actions to counter Russian hybrid activities, aggression and pressures against Ukraine, Baltic States, etc. As part of strengthening NATO's cohesion, the US relationship with the UK must not be to the detriment of the US's relationship with other NATO nations. Nor must the UK's BREXIT decision be seen as the UK having a weaker defence attitude towards Europe and NATO. If NATO nations' relationship with the US and UK sour this will be to the detriment of UK and wider European security and to the benefit of Russia and other anti-European way of life adversaries.
6. In brief, the US and UK, who provide the bulk of Force capability in NATO, have a relationship that is unique and this must not be allowed to wither on the vine. Our European NATO allies must spend much more on their own defence or risk alienating our pre-eminent ally the USA. The balance of conventional forces and their disposition must be reassessed and much more resource put into rapid deployment enablers supported by pre-stocking, albeit the latter must be protected and be rapidly generated to combat effectiveness by regular exercises. Finally, the naïve and frankly dangerous voices of the anti-nuclear lobby must be resisted.
7. DS input by question posed:
 - 7.1. **What US, UK and other NATO member state military and security resources are currently available for the defence of Europe?** The US, UK and NATO have extensive maritime, land and air forces and capability but this is spread from Norway to Turkey, with much major air and armoured capability based in the US and UK. The US and France have a combination of land, sea and air launched nuclear weapons covering battlefield tactical, theatre and strategic intercontinental systems which, as alliance members they may use in defence of NATO. The UK has relinquished tactical and theatre nuclear weapons and relies upon the US supplied Trident – with UK built warheads - for its NATO declared strategic nuclear deterrent. Many NATO nations have a wide range of conventional Forces and Capabilities, but most countries focus on particular nationally orientated capabilities tailored to their national defence budgets and priorities. In truth, except in small unit formations for the UK and France, only the US has worldwide 'full spectrum' military capability.
 - 7.2. **To what extent could the UK and continental Europe deter an aggressive Russia, or defend themselves from a nuclear threat or conventional attack by Russia, without US participation in NATO?** Using only conventional Forces, European NATO could not deter or defend against a major attack by Russia without US forces. In particular it would be impossible for European NATO to defend essential sea routes in a crisis without US air and maritime forces. Because France and the UK have independent nuclear forces, the lack of US support in a nuclear blackmail scenario could still be a factor, should the Russian's sense or know that the political

will to use the deterrent in support of other nations (in the case of France from tactical to strategic response) is not firm. The problem for a European NATO without strong credible conventional Forces is that the threshold for use of nuclear weapons, or other weapons of mass disruption or destruction, is diminished, which in turn creates its own political dynamic.

- 7.3. To what is the US currently committed in terms of NATO military modernisation? What will be the impact if some of those programmes cease to be funded?** The US is the lynch pin of NATO, providing the Supreme Commander supported by C4ISR with direct links to the Pentagon and US Chiefs of Staff. Through US command effort, remedial action has been ongoing to reinforce the Baltic and Central European NATO States with deployed forces and pre-stocked munitions and equipment. The DoD is forming home-based rapid deployment 'Stryker Brigades' with dedicated heavy air lift and is the prime customer for the F35 Lightning II which will equip NATO US, UK, Italian, Norwegian, Danish, Canadian, Dutch and Turkish air forces. The US is positioning Patriot Surface to Air Missile systems (SAM) in Turkey and Poland (Germany, Spain and Netherlands operate the system). The US would also provide the majority of the heavy conventional forces (tanks, armoured vehicles, attack helicopters, etc) to engage any conventional Force invasion of NATO borders. Removal of US command and control or involvement in any of these Capabilities will be catastrophic, not least because neither the European Union (EU) nations nor their industry will be capable of filling the gaps created in the short to medium term.
- 7.4. Does NATO devote sufficient attention to the threat from international terrorism?** Given all the above it can be argued that counter terrorism (COIN) has absorbed too much NATO attention, at least on a nation-by-nation level. This is not to understate the threat, only to emphasise that it is not the only threat. In addition, many countries view terrorism within Europe as a national police or para-military criminal, rather than a NATO military, issue.
- 7.5. What will be the effect of the Trump Presidency on the further development of a European defence identity and on the level of investment in defence by European NATO member states?** Largely unknown. However, from the feverish reaction reported in the European press following the accession of President Trump one could be forgiven for thinking that his 'threat' to reduce US NATO involvement has actually, thankfully, been taken seriously by the EU members of NATO. Germany has announced extra recruitment for its Army – not something too prominent in the press during President Obama's years.
- 7.6. What will be the effect of Brexit on plans by continental NATO states for a European Army, and what effect might that have upon NATO and upon UK national security?** DS has taken the view that BREXIT is not a major factor in UK defence policy that is based upon NATO. DS is concerned over the European Army aspirations to sit alongside NATO. With no involvement in a European Army from the USA and no/little involvement from the UK, is this a further opportunity for Russia to create a 'divide and conquer' rift to undermine European security? Could this encourage a potential invasion of an EU, non-NATO/minor NATO country, without getting the US involved, further creating intra-NATO member tensions? The committee, if it has not already done so, might care to look at a Rand Corporation Study (http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1700/RR1786z1/RAND_RR1786z1.pdf), an extract from which states:

- *Brexit raises questions about the future strategic goals of the EU, which in turn influence the future*

direction of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). The EU will need to adjust to a new geostrategic reality in the post-Brexit era.

- *Initiatives aimed at closer integration of European defence activities have been characterised by slow progress in recent years. Brexit may prove a turning point. On the one hand, Brexit may provide impetus for further integration in European defence. Some contend that, unshackled by the 'blocking' influence of the UK, CSDP will be reinvigorated. Proposals are currently under discussion regarding possible vehicles for closer integration. These include Permanent Structured Cooperation, European Defence Union (or 'Schengen for defence') and the establishment of a EU military headquarters. British opposition has been a barrier to some of these proposals in the past.*
- *Equally, it is possible that Brexit will have limited tangible impact, with CSDP continuing on its present trajectory. British veto has not been the only obstacle to closer integration: strategic consensus and financial resources have both been lacking in the past. While 'business as usual' could result in the fulfilment of CSDP as currently envisaged, it is perhaps more likely to result in a decline in CSDP capabilities and credibility since it is unlikely to encourage greater financial or political commitment.*
- *Alternatively, Brexit may precipitate or accelerate the fragmentation and eventual collapse of EU defence integration efforts. Should the credibility of CSDP be further called into question, consensus may become even more difficult to achieve. EU members opposed to closer integration who have hidden behind the British alibi may now find themselves exposed. Caution or procrastination by member states could further slow decision making or see the abandonment of European commitments to defence spend. A lack of strategic alignment between Paris and Berlin would likely hinder efforts towards closer EU defence integration under strong joint Franco-German leadership.*

EU and NATO cooperation after Brexit:

- *The future of the EU and NATO relationship will, in turn, evolve depending on the nature of CSDP post-Brexit. Collaboration between the two organisations could wither if CSDP stagnates. Alternatively, should the EU become a stronger, more credible actor in crisis response, a clearer, more formalised division of labour may emerge. Should European defence integration accelerate, there is scope for EU and NATO activities to overlap, risking duplication between the two organisations and straining already-stretched defence budgets.*

7.7. **With the new administration in Washington, is there potential for strengthening the 'Special Relationship'?** President Trump and Prime Minister May have already met and it seemed from reports that there was a clear commitment by both to fostering and building upon the 'special relationship'. Even if this were not so, it does seem that for the first time in over eight years that the UK has the ear of a US President who values British friendship and cooperation on many levels. Certainly, given the importance of US support to NATO, UK must cultivate this. However, there is a risk that if Mr Trump's inherent business world approach to working relationships is mirrored in his approach to political relationships, establishing a stronger 'special relationship' may be fraught with difficulty.

7.8. **Is UK-US military co-operation primarily an accident of history and would security be strengthened by a more formal arrangement?** UK/US military cooperation is already formalised in many areas: through NATO, Five Eyes and The Mutual Defence Agreement to name a few. Some of which emerged from the principles outlined in the Joint Declaration

(Atlantic Charter) and others from open cooperative ventures such as 'Tube Alloys', the sharing of technology data and integrated wartime intelligence gathering. It is difficult to define what 'more formal arrangements' might be and in what circumstances they would apply. For example: It has long been understood in the Royal Navy (RN) submarine service, and certainly since the introduction of nuclear power and weapons, that to aid utility and targetting and to avoid subsurface assets conflicting with each other, that a central command and control system was required. This has led to the RN and USN submarine services to work symbiotically whether formal or not.

- 7.9. **What form does the US-UK partnership currently take in the military arena?** The question has been answered to some degree in paragraph 7.8 above.
- 7.10. **What does the UK offer the US that is not available elsewhere and vice-versa?** It would be difficult to define a specific capability that UK has that the US does not. However, in one or two areas the British do have recognised world beating skill sets. For example: Royal Marine expertise in Arctic Warfare, Special Forces, Mine Counter Measures and Battle Field Medicine. Looking at the issue the other way it is embarrassing to admit that US Forces know the UK forces as 'the borrowers'. This is because our Forces on initial deployment always seem to lack immediate sustainment and logistic support across the board. The question of numbers (concentration of Force) may also arise. However, the greatest support that the US can offer the UK is logistic enablers where their sea, land and air transport capability far out weighs the UK's.
- 7.11. **What are the implications of the new Administration's policies for UK major equipment programmes and the UK nuclear deterrent?** Already largely covered at paragraph 7.3 but in respect of the UK 'Dreadnought' SSBN programme the US is responsible for providing the common missile compartment (CMC) and is totally responsible for development, testing and delivery of the Trident II D5 missiles, albeit they are from a common USN/RN pool. However, outside the 'Mutual Defence Agreement' a concern of DS is the potential for draconian implementation of the International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR) to a growing value and quantity of critical US-procured UK capability across the UK military Capability spectrum. It will be absolutely militarily essential to be able to upgrade and evolve F35-B, C-17, C-130, Chinook, Apache, etc, to meet UK requirements without a veto or very expensive contracting constraints of ITAR being leveraged to US company advantage.
- 7.12. **What more should the UK be doing in the European and NATO space in order to support the NATO mission?** As discussed in paragraph 7.1 the weakness in UK defence policy, especially the permanent withdrawal of coherent heavy combat forces from Germany to the UK, to support NATO missions is lamentable and sends a potential 'UK is not/less interested in European Defence' message to Russia. A similar withdrawal of British Forces from the Falkland Islands sent the wrong message to Argentina, precipitating its 1982 invasion as a distraction from internal political and economic problems. This distancing of combat capability from likely European combat zones is further exacerbated by a critical lack of deployment enablers to rapidly, within days, move high readiness UK-based heavy armour into theatre and to NATO borders. This leads to two primary conclusions: either the UK must fund and exercise more military sea, land and air logistic transport; or reverse its policy to withdraw from mainland Europe and forward base more operationally capable combat units

in a variety of host NATO countries. Either that or UK to formally request the US to offer maritime and air enablers if they are able to spare them in times of crisis.

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