

## **The UK Defence Review and the Implications for Germany**

**by Maxim Worcester**

The cuts in Britain's defence Budget might seem excessive to those in the armed forces, in truth, however, they are long overdue and realistic given the financial constraints and the threats which Britain faces.

The manner in which the new government approached the review is one which bears closer examination. Rather than simply cutting costs to satisfy the Treasury, the Government decided to undertake a National Security Risk Assessment (NSRA) in order to examine in detail the threats the country is likely to face in the coming years. Based upon this risk assessment the Government then decided on measures to cut costs and ensure that the security of the nation would not be put at risk. The risk analysis is not confined to risks which might be mitigated by the Armed Forces; all potential threats to the country are included in the analysis.

The NSRA findings are grouped into Level One, Two and Three risks and include all national security risks, including overseas events. The results are intriguing and are of relevance to other European countries.

### **1. Level One risks**

- Hostile attacks upon UK cyber space by other states and large scale cyber crime
- International terrorism affecting the UK or its interests
- An international military crisis between states involving the UK or its allies
- A major accident or natural hazard

### **2. Level Two risks**

- A CBRN attack on the UK
- Instability or civil war overseas which could affect the UK
- Increase in organised crime
- Disruption of satellite communication

### **3. Level Three risks**

- Conventional attack on the UK
- Disruption to energy supplies to the UK
- Nuclear disaster and release of radioactivity

- Conventional attack on another NATO/EU member
- Attack on UK overseas territory
- Disruption to international supplies of resources

The four Tier One risks are judged to be the highest priority for UK national security over the next five years, taking into account both likelihood and impact and form the basis of the Strategic Defence Review which was presented to Parliament on 19<sup>th</sup> October. Level Two and Three risks are important but they are judged to be either less impactful or less likely than those in Tier One.

The results are not only cuts in manpower and equipment but also investments in key areas considered to be crucial to the security of the UK. The government, for example, will invest 650m Pounds over the next four years to put in place a National Cyber Security Programme which includes a single point of contact for reporting cyber crimes and a range of other initiatives to combat the threat of cyber attacks.

The Royal Navy will shrink, however the new ships and submarines on order will be built and these will provide the Navy with state of the art equipment designed to meet the threats identified in the NSRA. It will still be able to land an amphibious force of around 1800 personnel and the single aircraft carrier will allow full interoperability with French and US forces.

The Air Force will lose a number of aircraft such as Sentinel, Harrier and Nimrod and will retain Tornado for a period of time. In future the Air Force will have a fast jet fleet based around Typhoon and Joint Strike Fighter and a modernised transport and tanker fleet based on C-17, A400M and A330.

The Army will have its fleet of heavy armoured vehicles reduced by 40 % and heavy artillery by 35 %. One deployable brigade will be disbanded, leaving the Army with five deployable brigades. At the same time new medium weight armoured vehicles and armoured infantry fighting vehicles will be ordered, together with logistical vehicles offering a higher level of protection. The mobility of the Army will be improved through the introduction of a further 12 heavy lift Chinook helicopters bringing the fleet up to 60 in total. Updated Puma and Merlin helicopters will be retained; older helicopters such as Gazelle are to be retired. The fleet of 67 Apache ground attack helicopters will come into service as planned.

In future the UK Armed Forces will be able to conduct an enduring operation at brigade level (6,500 personnel) with maritime and air support, one non-enduring complex intervention (2,000 personnel) and one simple non-enduring intervention (1,000 personnel) at any one time. Furthermore, with warning and for a limited period of time, an operation involving three brigades, with maritime and air support involving around 30,000 personnel could be mounted. Such a force represents around two-thirds of the force deployed to Iraq in 2003.

The Special Forces will benefit from the Defence Review both in terms of numbers and equipment.

The plan will see cuts in Army manpower from around 102,500 to 95,500. The Navy and Air Force will each lose around 5,000 personnel. As a result, the Navy will have a headcount of around 30,000, the Army 95,000 and the Air Force 33,000. The size of the Armed Forces will thus come to a total of 148,000, a reduction of 7,000.

The biggest cuts, however, will be suffered by the civilians in the bloated Ministry of Defence where 25,000 jobs will go. There will also be a fundamental review of the way in which the Ministry of Defence is structured and managed. This review will be published next year and it can almost be expected to lead to further manpower cuts and restructuring.

These steps reflect the changes in the security environment since the end of the cold war and the new threats which have emerged in the past 20 years. In the past the levels of manning, volume and quality of equipment were driven by the Soviet threat, today they are driven by low intensity conflicts, organised crime, terrorism and the threat of an attack from cyber space. They are, however, only one of many steps which need to be taken. Clearly, Europe's leading military powers need to work more closely together which will lead to new and far-reaching defence relationships. The "special relationship" between the US and the UK has not become weaker but the new Government is more realistic about how much real influence the British have in Washington. For political reasons the US like "to have the Brits along", from a military perspective, however, British support is not really needed, with the possible exception of the Special Forces. Having said this it is clear that the strategic defence review puts interoperability of UK and US forces high up on the list of priorities.

At the same time France has put its relationship with the US on a new footing and the decision to rejoin NATO in 2009 was more than only symbolic significance, for one it removed a big obstacle to co-operation with the UK. This opens up new possibilities for both countries.

France and the UK have a similar view of the world, are forced to reduce their armed forces and are willing and still able to project power globally. This opens up new possibilities of co-operation between the two countries armed forces. Both are hinting at jointly operating the future fleet of A400M military transport aircraft and France is keen to have access to the RAF's fleet of seven C-17s and the UK's 14 A330 tankers. Such moves make sense as they save money and enhance capabilities, they are also politically easy. A further step would be to jointly use the carrier fleet, a move now possible as the UK will in future have one of its new carriers equipped with a catapult launch capability thus ensuring interoperability. Cooperation in the field of Strategic Defence or the sharing of nuclear research for military purposes is less likely in the short term but cannot be excluded the closer we come to replacing existing assets.

Such moves by France and Britain will further divide NATO into the "enablers" and "users" of security. It plays into the hands of those experts who predict that the future of NATO is an organisation which is simply concerned with defending the borders and not projecting power in those regions upon which we continue to be dependent. If nations cannot project power they really cannot defend much more than their borders and are dependent upon others to undertake such tasks if deemed necessary. The enablers, the US, UK and France, will maintain the capability of power projection and it is very much up to nations such as Germany and Italy, both more users than enablers, to decide which camp they intend to join. Clearly, NATO's job is more that simply the defence of the European home land. Today, and in the future, NATO needs to be able to project power outside its borders if so required. For this to happen, Germany, the most important country in the EU, needs to be able to play a meaningful role in such a security structure, this is really at the heart of the current efforts to reform Germany's armed forces.

The current debate in Germany around the issue of reforming the armed forces has now reached a crucial stage. Most politicians and the military realise that the German armed forces have equipment they don't really need and cannot afford the equipment they do need. The German Ministry of Defence, much as its counterpart in the UK is bloated, inefficient and out

of touch with reality. The headcount is too high for the budget available, resulting in poor equipment levels and standards of training. It cannot be in the interest of Germany, NATO or the EU that the German armed forces are not a fully-fledged partner of France or UK in matters of European security. For this to happen, decisions need to be taken in Berlin in the very near future, sitting on the fence is clearly no further an option.

For once it makes a great deal of sense to follow the UK in the way it has approached the problem of adjusting its security policy to shrinking budgets and changes in the security environment. Rather than restructuring the armed forces and then facing the challenges, the government should undertake a national security risk assessment and then decide on the cuts which need to be made and where investments in equipment and personnel are required in order to mitigate risks to the nation. Such a risk assessment followed by a reform of the German armed forces and the non-military security network needs to be communicated to the voters of the country, not simply decided behind closed doors and announced. Unless the voters understand the risks they are facing and why reforms are necessary, there will be only protests and no buy-in.

In any multi national company the board of directors is required to undertake a risk assessment for reasons of compliance before embarking on any significant and important investment, why should that be not the case when a government is considering huge changes which have security and financial implications for the entire nation?

\*\*\*

*Remarks:* Opinions expressed in this contribution are those of the author.



*Maxim Worcester*

Maxim Worcester is Senior Advisor at ISPSW, Berlin. Before, he was Senior Manager for Advisory Forensic at KPMG International. In the past he was Managing Director of Control Risks Germany, and held senior positions at the Economist Intelligence Unit, the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung and Deutsche Börse AG.