

Domestic and International Security
Consultation Paper 91

This consultation paper is presented as the first stage in the development of Party policy in relation to domestic and international security. It does not represent agreed Party policy. It is designed to stimulate debate and discussion within the Party and outside; based on the responses generated and on the deliberations of the working group a full security policy paper will be drawn up and presented to Conference for debate.

The paper has been drawn up by a working group appointed by the Federal Policy Committee and chaired by Dr Julie Smith. Members of the group are prepared to speak on the paper to outside bodies and to discussion meetings organised within the Party.

Comments on the paper, and requests for speakers, should be addressed to: Dr Smith, Security Policy Working Group, Policy Unit, Liberal Democrats, 4 Cowley Street, London SW1P 3NB. Email: securitywg@libdems.org.uk.

Comments should reach us as soon as possible, and in any event no later than 30th April 2008.

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1. Introduction

The security challenges the world faces in the 21st Century are markedly different from those traditionally faced by nation states. The UK itself faces no direct threats that are not shared to a greater or lesser extent by its neighbours and allies in the EU and NATO. Nor do contemporary threats emanate solely from other states. After more than half a century of European integration, Europe is essentially a peaceful region; the military threats to Western Europe of the Cold War era have retreated, although the challenges posed by nuclear proliferation remain serious. By contrast, non-state actors and failed states pose a significant threat, while globalisation and, especially, climate change are set to have profound ramifications across the world that are likely to impact on the security of the UK and its allies, either directly or indirectly as resource shortages and mass migration place additional burdens on third countries, typically in the developing world.

This changing international situation will impact on world security and the UK's security, internal and external. Indeed, the realities of globalisation mean that domestic and international aspects of security have become increasingly interwoven, with significant implications for policy-makers. Likewise, the UK's involvement in the so-called 'war against terror' has led to attacks in this country. The implementation of international policy now has clear implications for domestic security. There is a particular need for countries such as the UK that have been involved with the US in the war in Iraq and have been targeted in subsequent terrorist acts, whether perpetrated by foreign or British nationals, to consider ways of averting such activities. These challenges raise profound questions for the UK. The Government's response has been to introduce increasingly illiberal legislation at home and has had serious consequences abroad for our troops and civilians alike. The questions for Liberal Democrats are how our liberal values inform an effective security policy and what contribution Britain should make to ensuring international security as a whole.

What then are the key security challenges of the twenty-first century? How far will climate change and associated mass migration and resource shortages impact on security? What challenges are raised by cross-border crime, especially people and drugs-trafficking? The aim of this paper is to outline the security challenges that the UK is likely to face in the twenty-first century and raise the questions that Liberal Democrats must answer in order to create a coherent, effective and liberal security policy. The responses to these questions will help set the framework for a new Liberal Democrat policy to be agreed at Federal Conference in Autumn 2008.

2. Security Threats

We face a future that is uncertain, with innumerable challenges, some of which are more or less predictable and long-term, while others will inevitably be sudden, unexpected and potentially devastating. A coherent security policy must be able to deal with short-, medium- and long-term threats effectively, while at the same time ensuring that individual rights and liberties are preserved.¹ All too often the Government, supported by the Conservative Party, has used security threats as excuse to curtail freedoms; as Liberal Democrats we believe that freedom and security are complementary, where the spread of liberal values and liberty in our society actually strengthens security not simply being something we continually trade off for greater security. As a first step we need to understand the extent to which the UK, acting independently or with its EU, NATO and US allies, is able to reduce the risks and/or able to respond to events as they arise.

¹ For a fuller discussion of Liberal Democrat policy on civil liberties, please see *For the People, By the People: policies for better governance in the UK*, Liberal Democrat Policy Paper No. 83 (2007).

External threats

Terrorism

The term “War on Terrorism” is thoroughly misleading because it seeks to oversimplify a very complex and contentious set of issues. Since 9/11, the most frequently discussed threat to international security arises from international terrorist groups frequently linked to Al Qaeda. This represents a dangerous, new and ever evolving form of terrorism that uses changes in the international system, such as the easy movement of capital, the ease of global communications and the strength of trans-national identities. Such challenges from non-state actors cannot be tackled by conventional military means alone. Yet, responses to international terrorist threats do require concerted and co-ordinated responses from the UK and her allies.

1. How well do we understand either the threat or, more importantly, the causes of terrorism? Do we understand those who are prepared to use terrorism to advance their aims?
2. What is the best way to respond to international terrorist activities perpetrated by non-state actors? How can diplomacy or development aid offer (partial) solutions? What role should the military play and how can this be integrated into a counter-terrorism strategy? What other non-military responses need to be considered to combat terrorism and its consequences?
3. Can the democratisation of authoritarian regimes help combat terrorism and, if so, how can we help bring this about without further recourse to military action?

Rogue states, fragile states and the nuclear question

The term ‘rogue state’ has become a source of controversy as it has been increasingly used to describe not just states acting outside international law but those who represent a perceived threat to security through their internal politics or governance as well. Nonetheless, it is clear that those states operating outside the rules of international law pose a significant challenge to the international community. Iran seems intent on acquiring military nuclear capabilities and N. Korea may already have acquired them; the activities of both contribute to perpetuating nuclear proliferation. The Iranian case raises the spectre of further tensions in the Middle East, with Israel and her Arab neighbours vulnerable to a new nuclear power in the region. While this could have significant geopolitical and economic ramifications, any UK military involvement in such events would realistically only be as part of a broader international coalition, notably through the UN and the EU.²

4. How significant are the threats from rogue states?
5. What are the right instruments to tackle rogue states – multilateral, regional, bilateral, unilateral?
6. What is the right policy mix given that the appropriate instruments will depend on the context? If states act in breach of UN and other international obligations and standards, how far does the international community in general, and the UK in particular even where our interests are not directly engaged (eg Burma), have a responsibility to act, with others, to bring them into compliance? Under what circumstances would it be legitimate to move beyond diplomacy to economic sanctions, force etc?

² The UK, working with France and Germany and latterly with the High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, has taken a lead on diplomacy with Iran under the auspices of the EU.

Fragile states increasingly have a significant impact on global security and the stability of their region, not least as safe havens for criminal gangs and for terrorist-minded groups like al Qaeda. The likelihood of internal conflict and economic collapse is massively destabilising for the affected region and, especially as the populations flee, may cause huge problems for their neighbours and ultimately for European states. While European states have voiced concerns over the numbers of would-be refugees arriving at their borders, it is important to recognise that the vast majority of refugees remain in the developing world, frequently putting great pressure on already poor states.³ Rather than responding to such crises in an ad-hoc, ex- post fashion, the UK, with its allies, should consider what scope there is to reinforce efforts to reduce the likelihood of states failing, whether by international aid (for those where the problems are predominantly economic) or conflict prevention (where the problems arise from weak, corrupt or otherwise illegitimate regimes).

7. What should our aims be in fragile and failed states – stabilisation, economic development or civil/political development? What resource implications might these entail?

Climate Change and Resource Depletion

The British Government's Chief Scientific Adviser has declared that climate change, significantly impacted by human activity, is the greatest threat to our long-term security. While it is not the job of this Working Group to assess climate change generally, its potential impact on global security is of vital concern to the UK and needs to be addressed in this context.⁴ While the full impact of climate change is uncertain, it seems clear that flooding and drought will both occur, creating mass migratory pressures as people become homeless and/or lose their livelihoods. Flooding seems especially likely to happen in the Indian sub-continent, placing additional pressures on already poor states and regions, while drought will impact directly or indirectly on many African states as people are forced to seek alternative locations in pursuit of water and other resources, as already seen in the case of Darfur. Land use, including desertification of fertile land, and food supply will also be greatly affected by climate change. Climate change and resource depletion may lead to resource wars, as states face shortages, especially of drinking water. Such wars, while not impacting directly on the UK, are likely to require international responses. Mass migration may impact further on the UK as on all European states as more people seek refuge either legally or illegally.

8. What are the likely implications of climate change for international security? Where are we likely to see resource wars?
9. How far can the developed world work with the developing world to anticipate and mitigate the likely security impact of climate change, thereby reducing the security concerns that it would otherwise cause? What international mechanisms should we support to mitigate the security impact of climate change?

Energy security

As North Sea oil runs dry, the UK, like the vast majority of its European neighbours is becoming increasingly dependent on third countries for its oil and gas supplies. Norway currently offers secure and stable supplies but other suppliers, notably Russia and the Middle Eastern OPEC states, are far less certain. In recent years, Russia has cut off gas supplies to its neighbours, Ukraine and Belarus, leading to fears that the EU, with its dependence on Russian gas expected

³ Jordan has between 700,000 and a million Iraqi refugees as a consequence of the war in Iraq (Source: Baroness Williams of Crosby, Hansard, Col. 1103, 24 January 2007) and Syria similarly has huge numbers of refugees, as do Pakistan and Iran following the war in Afghanistan. Elsewhere, genocide in Africa has placed huge migratory pressures on fragile neighbouring states.

⁴ For further details about the issue of climate change and Liberal Democrat response, please see *Zero Carbon Britain — Taking a Global Lead: Policies for tackling climate change*, Liberal Democrat Policy Paper No. 82 (2007).

to rise to two thirds of consumption, will before long be open to Russian pressure through the threat to cut supplies (Gazprom is a state owned monopoly not subject to normal market disciplines).⁵ Meanwhile, instability in the Middle East means that supplies are vulnerable to international crises. The March 2007 European Council meeting addressed the related issues of climate change and energy policy, with external energy policy a clear concern for the Union.

10. What measures can the UK undertake in conjunction with its EU partners to ensure stability of energy supplies?

A Multi-Polar World

An increasingly interdependent world has allowed new security challenges to emerge. However, the role of traditional nation states, their relationships, relative power and national identity cannot be overlooked in this new environment as the balance of world power is shifting. In the post-cold war era the world has been dominated by a single super-power. However, a multi-polar world is now emerging as rising powers, such as China and India, and an old super-power, namely Russia, assert or reassert themselves on the world stage.

Relations with Russia and China particularly are profoundly important for the UK and its allies. Both states are nuclear powers and have permanent seats on the UN Security Council. Russia does not currently pose any military threats to the UK, but Putin's determination to use gas supplies as leverage against Russia's neighbours clearly threatens the energy security of Britain and her EU and NATO allies. Meanwhile the US, with its major defence commitments to Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, views China's rising military capability with concern.

Although the UK may not face any conventional military threats in the foreseeable future, the threat of the UK becoming engaged in conventional war has not diminished. In particular there remains the question of the UK's engagement in conventional conflict in other regions, notably the Middle East, which includes some of Europe's nearest southern neighbours across the Mediterranean. Most are experiencing rapid population growth, leading to an explosion of their urban populations, high youth unemployment and emigration. Authoritarian regimes face radical opposition groups; radical groups in power could well be hostile to the West (cf Algeria); traditional societies are challenged by globalisation and technological change; non-oil economies are struggling to adjust to global competition. The Israel-Palestine conflict, Sunni-Shia rivalry, the threat to existing regimes by al Qaeda activities, exacerbated by the aftermath of the invasion of Iraq, and other rivalries among states and non-state movements all fuel instability in the region which could affect European states.

11. What are the security implications of a multi-polar world? Will Britain face any direct conventional threats? How should Britain respond to the possibility of conventional war in the future?
12. What role should Britain play in managing regional conflicts? Should we work more closely with the US, bilaterally and within the framework of NATO, and/or with our partners in the EU, or with others?

Internal Security

Terrorism

The UK has faced terrorist threats for decades, historically from the IRA and now from Islamic fundamentalist groups. These new terrorist threats raise fundamental new security questions as tackling terrorism is now not solely a question of either internal or external security measures. As the events of 7 July 2005 and June 2007 demonstrated, in exceptional cases British citizens are

⁵ "By 2020 around 80% of UK fuels are likely to come from overseas" DTI Energy Review p33. The EU relies on imports for 50% of its energy (Speech Andris Piebalgs, European Energy Commissioner, 21 September, 2007)

willing to perpetrate terrorist attacks within the UK. Moreover, there may be trans-national links supporting domestic terrorist groups such as training camps in other states, ties to radical groups in other countries and financial flows from foreign supporters.

The Labour Government's response to terrorism, backed at almost every stage by the Conservatives, has been to curb civil liberties, by increasing the length of time people can be detained without trial, introducing ID cards and innumerable surveillance mechanisms. Liberal Democrats accept that some constraints might be in the public interest but believe that it is necessary to ensure that they are limited and proportionate. We also believe that much more transparency and scrutiny is required in decision-making. A case in point is the security services. The latest CSR sees their settlement climb to above the FCO to c. £2bn pa by 2010/11 but the services are only very weakly accountable. There are clear new challenges for our security services, their structures, funding and the ways in which they interact with each other, the police and democratic government and they must be addressed.

13. How do we address the trans-national links which support domestic terrorist groups – training camps in other states, ties to radical groups in other countries, financial flows from foreign supporters?
14. What constraints on civil liberties, if any, are acceptable in the fight against terrorism? What principles might we introduce to determine whether constraints on civil liberties are proportionate? And, if the government is to have larger powers, surely there should be greater corresponding scrutiny?
15. How can we enhance engagement between community groups, the police and security services?
16. What is an appropriate model for our security and intelligence services in the future?

Community cohesion, radicalisation and identity

Questions of civic engagement, integration and community cohesion have rightly come to the fore in recent years as tensions between different ethnic and religious communities have escalated. Home-grown terrorism, race riots in the north of England and the rise of the BNP highlight tensions within the UK that must be addressed urgently in order to try to prevent the alienation that may lead some to more extremist and violent responses. Socio-economic exclusion, real and perceived victimisation offer a partial explanation, however calls to revive 'Britishness' also point to a real problem: there is no national consensus on what British identity is, and – more importantly – ensuring all communities can feel able to participate in that identity positively and on equal terms.

17. What measures ought to be taken to enhance community cohesion? How can we better engage minority and immigrant groups positively in wider society? To what extent would an enhanced idea of civic identity resolve tensions within our society?
18. What causes British-born people to perpetrate acts of violence against their fellow citizens? Is there any way of either predicting or preventing this, for example through a reduction in socio-economic disparities, enhanced integration, or greater civic engagement?

Cross-border crime

Britain's borders no longer separate domestic order from disorder and insecurity elsewhere. More and more British citizens travel across the UK's borders, and more and more people from other countries travel to Britain. Several million British citizens now live abroad, for all or part of the year. Several million citizens from other countries live and work in Britain. Tourists and students travel inwards and outwards in rising numbers. There are limits to how far British border controls alone can discriminate between the mass of peaceable arrivals and departures

and the small minority of criminals, political subversives and potential terrorists, without imposing unacceptable delays at entry points. Britain's geographical location on the edge of a large continent means that close cooperation with other governments is an essential factor in maintaining domestic order as cross-border crime including drugs and people-trafficking and illegal immigration affect the whole EU and the solutions are to be partially found at European level. However, both Labour and Conservative parties are reluctant to give the EU the powers it needs to tackle such questions effectively. There are also serious questions as to how we can best cooperate internationally and through international institutions to tackle crime originating outside of our borders, such as cybercrime.

19. What is the most effective framework for tackling cross-border crime? Can we police our own borders as the other parties assert or should we be seeking to work more closely with international partners?

3 Britain's Role in the World

Tony Blair set out a new vision of liberal interventionism after he entered office in 1997⁶ and established a new impetus for engaging in military intervention. Under Labour, the UK has engaged in numerous military interventions, from Kosovo to Afghanistan and Iraq, typically but not always alongside the US, and sometimes with other NATO and EU allies. Tony Blair also launched, with Jacques Chirac, the project to build a European Security and Defence Policy, and British forces have participated in European operations in the Western Balkans and Africa. This approach to international politics may well fit with a vision of a 'strong Britain in the world', but it is not clear this is the right role for Britain in the 21st Century. Even if the UK continues to seek to play a global role, there is a need to re-consider who its partners and allies should be and whether or not to rebalance its international commitments. For example, Liberal Democrats have been sceptical about a US missile defence system. Is there, however, a role for a system under multi-lateral control?

20. What scope is there for interventionism in the twenty-first century? Is this an altruism we can no longer afford or an integral part of our security strategy? If we still support this, do we need to make any modifications post-Iraq?
21. Do Liberal Democrats wish Britain to play a global military role?
22. Should the UK reduce its dependence on the US? Should it deepen its military ties with its EU neighbours? Need these approaches be exclusive?

The Liberal Democrats have consistently recognised the importance of international institutions in ensuring global security and recognise that the challenges of globalisation mean that operating through such institutions is vital to ensure domestic security. Nonetheless Liberal Democrats must address whether international institutions are fit to meet these challenges in the 21st Century.

23. Are there any conditions under which the UK might realistically wish to intervene militarily on its own? What principles should govern our decisions to intervene, and the partners with which we cooperate? Are NATO and the EU, or coalitions of the willing, acceptable frameworks within which to operate? How far is specific UN authorization also essential, e.g. in cases such as Kosovo when a UN mandate is certain to be vetoed by Russia and/or China?
24. What is our vision for the UN's role in security (international norms and standards setting; international peace and security; post-conflict/failed states), what about the EU? Which reforms do the UN/EU need to undertake? What about regional security organisations e.g. OSCE? What is the role of NATO?!

⁶ "On the doctrine of the international community" 24 April, 1999; Economic Club, Chicago
<http://www.number10.gov.uk/output/Page1297.asp>

4 The Security Budget and Machinery of Government: Opportunity Costs and Balancing the Budget

Inevitably, any decisions regarding security have financial implications and necessitate hard choices. The heightened military commitments, coupled with budget and force reductions over the past ten years have led to serious overstretch in the Armed Forces, especially the army, with consequences for recruitment, retention and re-equipment, not to mention any long-term commitment to keep troops in Afghanistan. Defence inflation far outstrips the retail price index, as military equipment becomes increasingly high-tech. There is already a stark gap between projected defence expenditure and future commitments for major weapons systems. The defence budget is lower as a percentage of GDP than it has been for 75 years. Therefore, resources devoted to the armed services will have to be increased significantly if the UK wishes to have power projection of any significance. Conversely, conflict prevention *might* lead us to devote more resources to DfID for international aid, though it might equally necessitate continuing levels of expenditure for the military. Liberal Democrats have called for a strategic defence review to assess the balance between our objectives, capabilities and resources. It is timely to consider whether we need to expand such a review to cut across all departments with security responsibilities, including DfID, MoD, FCO and the Home Office, and how can we bring these departments together to operate more effectively?

25. What role should our armed forces play in the 21st Century? What are the spending implications of these choices? Is there a case for reducing the defence budget and re-deploying resources into other means to prevent conflict?
26. Should Britain still seek to maintain a full range of weapons systems and capabilities, with the defence budget increased commensurately? Or should we seek to maximise the effectiveness of limited resources in this field by role specialisation and greater integration with our partners and allies? Are we procuring the right equipment and should we be doing this alone or with our allies?
27. How can we generate more co-ordinated responses to security challenges, bringing together the MoD, FCO, Home Office and DfID? What scope is there for cross-departmental budget lines e.g. a global conflict prevention pool.[Possible cross-Whitehall security budget]. What is the future for the PCRU (now stabilisation unit) situated within DfID? The Conservatives are proposing a Cabinet-level Security minister. Is this a helpful proposal?