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JCNSS backs ORG on National Security Capability Review

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On 23 March, the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy (JCNSS) published its report on its latest inquiry: "National Security Capability Review: A changing security environment". The report cites written evidence from ORG five times, and several of the conclusions support ORG's key arguments.

ORG stated in its evidence that the UK's current quest to maintain "full spectrum capabilities" is unlikely to be viable on financial grounds and is undermining its ability to meaningfully match requirements to clearly defined priorities in a strategic manner. Recommendation 3 of the JCNSS report states:

> " "An honest conversation is needed about what is affordable, how the armed forces should best be structured to meet future threats, and how they might be enabled to take better advantage of technological innovation. This should also include how UK capabilities are designed to fit with and supplement those of our allies. The Government must get a grip on these issues." "

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ORG raised the risk that procurement was driving strategy, rather than vice versa. Recommendation 5 of the JCNSS report states:

> ❝ **"Moreover, we are concerned that the Government's focus on capabilities in the National Security Capability Review runs the risk of the 'tail wagging the dog', with decisions on capabilities driving strategy and policy without due and deliberate consideration."** ❞

On the crucial questions of transparency and accountability, ORG questioned both the procedural coherence of the National Security Capabilities Review (NSCR) relative to the established National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review process, and the inadequate capacity for public scrutiny concerning both the NSCR and the recently announced "spin off" Modernising Defence Programme. ORG argued in its evidence that a clarification of ministerial responsibility and oversight of the review and national security policy-making in general is required.

Recommendation 4 of the report states:

> **" "...we are concerned that the Government might use frequent, more limited reviews as a substitute for the strategically-informed decisions needed to put defence and security on a sustainable footing." "**

Recommendation 13 states:

> **" "We consider there to be insufficient parliamentary oversight of the work of the National Security Adviser, and the Ministers to whom he reports—in marked contrast to the scrutiny which Parliament can and does give to departmental officials and Ministers." "**

ORG's Sustainable Security Programme will continue to engage closely with the evolving National Security Strategy process, including the current Defence Select Committee inquiry into the Modernising Defence Programme (MDP). The initial report of the NSCR is expected this week.

Image credit: Harland Quirrington/MOD/Wikimedia Commons.

About the Author

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