



A RESILIENT NATION

**NATIONAL SECURITY
THE CONSERVATIVE APPROACH**

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1. Britain's Place in the World

Britain is an open, outward-facing, trading nation, heavily engaged in the affairs of the world. We are a great country, with political, cultural and economic authority worldwide which far exceeds our size.

It is in our national interest to preserve and extend this influence. Not out of a sense of nostalgia for past glories, but because we wish to cope with present challenges and seize future opportunities. The threats we confront change. The power balance in the world shifts. The chances to do better for ourselves alter. We have to adjust approaches and institutions so that we cope with the 21st century using methods that are appropriate to our times.

Our national interest requires our continued full and active engagement in world affairs. But our international role is not only one of self interest, nor should it be seen purely through the prism of a commercial balance sheet.

We stand for a liberal Conservative approach to foreign policy – liberal because we believe in promoting the values our country stands for; Conservative because we are hard-headed and practical, and sceptical of grand schemes to re-make the world.

Britain stands for the rule of law, democracy, free speech and the protection of human rights. We want to advance those values in the world, and will continue to put our weight behind those people and movements beyond our borders which champion those values. In doing so, we will of course be promoting our wider national interest: Britain will be safer if our values are upheld and respected across the world.

Britain is a great trading nation with huge investments overseas, where a fifth of our people live. We depend on open markets and free trade. We want to reduce the gap between the rich and the poor in the world, both because that is morally right and because it is a way to avoid conflict and diminish other threats.

In advancing our interests, at home and abroad, we have many advantages.

We are an inventive and creative nation. Our language has become the language of the world. Our people are generous and international in their outlook. Our substantial aid programme is matched by enormous public generosity for programmes in Africa and beyond.

Although the global balance is shifting with the rise of countries like China and India, we retain a key role in the main institutions which are shaping the rules that govern the world – from the UN Security Council to the G20, and through our membership of NATO, the EU and the Commonwealth.

We are the closest partner of the United States, a special relationship which brings a duty to offer candid advice as well as reliable support.

Our Armed Forces are highly professional and capable, and exemplify the best qualities of our country and our people. The bravery of our young men and women serving in Afghanistan shows this on a daily basis.

1.1 The response to changing threats

We no longer live day and night with the threat of a nuclear confrontation between the superpowers. Today's threats are more complex and we need to make changes to confront them.

We will be wrestling with the menace of global terrorism for many years to come. The security of our energy supplies increasingly depends on supplies of fossil fuels located in some of the most unstable parts of the world. Nuclear proliferation is a growing menace, focused for the time being on the possibility of a nuclear-armed Iran and the unpredictable actions of North Korea. At the same time, new threats to global security, resulting from climate change, and the consequences for global food and water supplies, crowd on to the agenda, as well as new, high tech dangers like cyber attack.

Looking ahead a decade or two, powerful forces of demography and economics elsewhere in the world will make it harder for us to maintain our future influence. We need to understand what is happening and respond sensibly if Britain is to retain her ability to help shape the affairs of the world.

1.2 Labour's record

How has this Government reacted?

Labour has struggled to adapt Britain's defence and security policies to this dramatically altered scene. There has been a growing gap between rhetoric and action. Abroad, the Government have committed our Armed Forces to two major wars in Iraq and Afghanistan without properly equipping them for the task or thinking through their strategy. Iraq has raised fundamental questions about the Government's integrity in dealing with the most important decisions that Ministers ever have to make, and it is widely accepted that the planning for the aftermath of the invasion was lamentably bad.

It is extraordinary that our Forces have been committed to two major conflicts, which swept away past assumptions about the demands likely to be placed on them, without a major review of our defence and security policies. Our Armed Forces have been in combat in Iraq or Afghanistan for the last eight years. But Whitehall has not been put on an equivalent 'war footing'. There is no sense of urgency and united purpose. The Defence Secretary has been changed four times in as many years, and relegated to the bottom of the Cabinet. There has been a cascade of scandalous defence procurement errors. It has taken too long to rectify the most acute equipment shortages experienced by our troops in the field – from lack of body armour and properly protected vehicles to inadequate helicopters. Our present Prime Minister, during his years as Chancellor, was widely criticised for his indifference to the needs of the Armed Forces. The decision in 2004 to cut the helicopter budget by £1.4 billion looks, in the light of our experience over recent years, especially foolish. Unfortunately, it was not an aberration but part of a wider pattern.

At home, the Government failed to take proper account of the warnings given, not least by the intelligence agencies, that the intervention in Iraq would increase the terrorist threat at home. The Government have been too slow to tackle the causes of radicalisation. Instead of promoting a united response and fostering cohesion, a policy of outdated state multiculturalism have increased divisions between communities instead of reinforcing a common British identity. The Government have been willing to sacrifice long held rights and freedoms for the sake of ineffective authoritarian measures – like attempting to extend detention without charge to 90, then 60 and finally 42 days – in order to try to wrong foot their political opponents. The effect has been to undermine trust in Muslim communities. At the same time, the Government have dithered about using existing laws to act decisively to prevent foreign preachers of hate from entering Britain, and to arrest and deport those who are here. We need to replace ineffective authoritarianism with a robust defence of liberty.

1.3 Conservative solutions

The country requires clear and firm leadership, and an equally clear sense of direction. A Conservative government will have a new approach based on a different Whitehall structure. We will address national security issues in the round, recognising the connections between different issues. Foreign and domestic policy are not separate when considering national security. They are linked and should be considered together. Our foreign policy should promote our national security. At a time of financial stringency, we need to make sure that our limited resources are deployed to best effect.

A Conservative government will take immediate action to put things right.

2. A Unified Security Approach

To deal with the new world, we need to link all the relevant parts of government in a new institutional structure that enables all the relevant expertise and power to be brought to bear in a coordinated way. We will therefore:

- establish a new National Security Council;
- draw up a new National Security Strategy; and
- conduct a new Strategic Defence and Security Review.

2.1 The National Security Council

The National Security Council will:

- be chaired by the Prime Minister, and include the Foreign Secretary, who will chair it in the Prime Minister's absence, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Home Secretary, the Defence Secretary, the Secretary of State for International Development, the Security Minister, and other Ministers as nominated by the Prime Minister;
- be advised by, among others, the Chief of the Defence Staff (with individual Service Chiefs as necessary), the Heads of the Security and Intelligence Agencies, Departmental Permanent Secretaries and a National Security Adviser, who will be an official and who will head the supporting Secretariat;
- replace the Ministerial Committee on National Security, International Relations and Development (NSID) and the Ministerial Civil Contingencies Committee;
- be responsible, under the Cabinet, for all national security policy decisions:
 - agree a comprehensive, long-term National Security Strategy;
 - supervise the attainment of strategic goals identified by the National Security Strategy;
 - foster a culture of integrated policy-making on the national security agenda between colleagues and their Departments;
 - manage crises affecting national security; and
 - have the capacity to decide on the creation of cross-departmental budgets for the delivery of national security policies;
- have a range of sub-committees reporting to it;
- be supported by a new National Resilience Team reporting into the Cabinet Office;
- be supported by a strengthened intelligence machinery through:
 - separation of accountability between intelligence assessment on the one hand, and national security policy/policy-making on the other;
 - stronger strategic direction from the Cabinet Office of the intelligence community as a whole;
 - ensuring that intelligence assessments accurately reflect viable alternative or differing interpretations and hypotheses;
 - greater parliamentary oversight from a strengthened Intelligence and Security Committee; and
 - release of more information to the public;
- have its own Secretariat in the Cabinet Office.

The National Security Council will operate, while fighting continues, as a de facto War Cabinet. We will invite the leaders of the main opposition parties to attend its meetings on a regular basis.

2.2 The National Security Strategy

A Conservative government will task the National Security Council with responsibility for drawing up the National Security Strategy, updating it once in the course of every Parliament and monitoring its implementation. The purpose of the National Security Strategy is to set the framework across government for all security-related work over the longer-term (up to approximately 2025) including for the Strategic Defence and Security Review by:

- defining and prioritising the UK's national security goals and interests and the key risks to them;
- clarifying the strategic connections between different risks;
- focusing Departmental attention on these strategic connections and clearly identifying where cross-Departmental working is required;
- developing a cross-Government planning process that can be applied to each interest/risk and which brings together different national instruments; and
- informing the development of sub-strategies within it (such as the Government's counter-terrorism strategy, known as *'Contest'*), by relating broad priorities and policies to them.

To fulfil this role, the National Security Council machinery will undertake systematic long-term risk assessment including the mapping of the United Kingdom's national interests against the risks we face, and will develop strategies to mitigate risk and planning assumptions flowing from this assessment.

To ensure accountability, the National Security Council will publish an annual status report which assesses progress against the strategic objectives outlined in the National Security Strategy, and the Parliamentary Joint Committee on National Security will also be asked to scrutinise the Strategy and its delivery.

2.3 The Strategic Defence and Security Review

The second task of the National Security Council will be to oversee a Strategic Defence and Security Review that implements the new strategy.

Twenty years ago the Berlin Wall fell, the Cold War ended and the last Soviet tank retreated from Afghanistan. Few defence experts predicted in 1989 that a thousand weeks later British troops would be fighting in Afghanistan, or that by 2001 terrorists trained in the ungoverned areas of the Afghanistan-Pakistan border would have turned airliners into guided missiles or that by 2005 young men born in Britain and trained in Pakistan would have killed themselves and many others on the London Underground.

The last Defence Review took place eleven years ago. Since then, we have had the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and 7/7, our country has embarked on two major wars, and the international economic and political landscape has shifted fundamentally. History will find it inexplicable that we continued throughout this period with an approach to our defence and security designed in the optimism of the aftermath of the Cold War.

One thing is clear: we can't go on like this.

As we peer into the future, two things are certain: that money will be exceptionally tight, and that our country must continue to be defended properly in a dangerous world.

The Strategic Defence and Security Review will need to be forward-looking and face up to some very tough decisions that have been put off for too long. Equipment programmes cannot be based on wish-lists or the fantasy world of what we would like to do if resources were unlimited.

It will need to harness our national strengths – our willingness to play a part far beyond our borders, strong public support for our Armed Forces, the character of our fighting men and women, the strength of our defence industry and technologies – to an overall strategy which makes the most effective use of them rather than putting them in a state of permanent overstretch. It must meet the challenges of a turbulent international context and help to reduce our vulnerability at home to threats and hazards.

That means calibrating our role and our capabilities to the sort of conflicts which are most likely to arise in the next twenty years not the last twenty. It means being smarter in using what we can afford. It means deciding what capabilities the UK must itself have as well as how to complement the capabilities of our Allies, especially the US. It means bringing together more effectively soft and hard power. And it means drastic improvements in our defence equipment acquisition process to avoid the delay, confusion and cost overruns which have become all too familiar. A Conservative government will therefore engage industry in a sustained dialogue on strategy and policy development.

3. Some Fundamental Continuities

The new National Security Strategy, and the accompanying Strategic Defence and Security Review, will be built on certain solid foundations – most have been at the heart of bi-partisan policy over many years, including:

- NATO;
- maintenance of the nuclear deterrent;
- EU cooperation;
- active involvement in international institutions;
- continued determination to prevent proliferation of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction; and
- maintaining the security of the 2012 Olympic Games.

4. Changes Needed

The new, integrated approach to national security will, however, mean some major changes in the way we do business. In particular, it will involve:

- a liberal Conservative attitude to foreign policy which champions an enlightened vision of the national interest;
- reducing the need for military intervention by building a capacity for preventative action, including a greater role for diplomacy led by the FCO and for contributions from a wider range of government departments;
- a more integrated approach to post-conflict reconstruction – with a new Stabilisation and Reconstruction Force;
- a new focus on key parts of domestic security which have been ignored to date, such as border security;
- a new focus on our capacity to deal with emergencies, including a more structured military contribution to homeland security;
- much greater emphasis on the resilience of the country's critical infrastructure, including a greater understanding of new threats such as climate change, the importance of food security and the security of our energy supplies;
- particular emphasis on cyber security; and
- a new concern with ensuring that security legislation does not compromise civil liberties, and with strengthening social cohesion.

4.1 A liberal Conservative foreign policy

With a Conservative government there will be a distinctive British foreign policy, renewing and reinforcing our engagement with the rest of the world.

In addition to the creation of a true National Security Council to integrate properly at the highest levels of government the work of our foreign, defence, energy, home and international development departments, we have adopted four additional themes to guide our approach to foreign affairs:

- strong commitment to the transatlantic alliance. The United States remains our indispensable partner in diplomacy, intelligence and security. Our relationship should be one of permanent friendship coupled with honest criticism;
- the deepening of alliances beyond Europe and North America: this means using our co-ordination of our domestic departments to elevate entire national relationships, in culture, commerce and education as well as in diplomacy, with nations in the Gulf, and others in North Africa, Latin America and South Asia;
- the reform of older international institutions such as the United Nations and the effective use of new ones such as the G20, and the updating of vital international treaties such as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty; and
- the upholding of our own values, not by imposing them on others but by being an inspiring example of them ourselves. That is why we place such importance on the reinvigoration of our development aid and why we see such a strong role for the British Council and the foreign language services of the BBC.

4.2 Building a capacity for preventative action

When governments act early enough to deal with the causes of a problem, they can avert the need to spend vast sums later on large-scale intervention and reconstruction. This approach is both moral and sensible.

Conflict prevention has to be grounded in the sort of foreign policy outlined above – one which is broad in scope and reach, based on the principles to which the British people adhere at home, of liberal democracy and individual responsibility, and which has many tools at its disposal. At its heart must lie the capacity for both early warning and strategic assessment of potential or emerging risk and instability, and for sustained and patient action which aims to create conditions conducive to stability both within and between states. This includes actions along a spectrum to:

- minimise potential sources of instability and conflict before conflict arises;
- tackle contributing conditions and influence the decision-making of relevant actors as tension rises; and
- manage and mitigate crises when they occur.

There is a wealth of evidence that conflict can be avoided, or resolved, by sensible and timely action.

4.3 A greater role for diplomacy

Britain has a deserved reputation for the quality of our foreign service. Ask any other foreign ministry what they think of our own, and the answer is almost always high praise. Whether it's working on the ground in Helmand or fighting for a British contract against tough opposition in Shanghai or Sao Paulo, we are fortunate to have a well trained, hard working diplomatic service. They are also more likely than any other foreign service to speak the language of the country where they serve.

Over the last decade, our diplomatic capability, centred on the FCO, has been neglected. We should make more of our diplomats' knowledge and expertise. A Conservative government will ensure that our diplomatic service is at the heart of the development and implementation of our national security strategy. The Foreign Secretary will be the Prime Minister's deputy on the National Security Council, and the Prime Minister's principal adviser on foreign affairs.

4.4 A wider range of government departments supporting diplomacy

The Comprehensive Approach that NATO is developing in Afghanistan, involving close civil-military cooperation in a single strategy, is widely regarded as essential to the chances of success. Broadly speaking, the same approach applies to conflict prevention as well: development assistance has a central role to play in it. DFID and the FCO need to work closely together on an agreed agenda.

Defence diplomacy, capacity building, security sector reform, joint training and exercises led by the MoD can, over the long-term, make a major contribution to conflict prevention and reducing the risks of instability. Assistance in disaster recovery creates immense goodwill and maintains the authority of governments which might otherwise be vulnerable to extremists and criminals. All of these activities enhance UK influence and make a contribution to conflict prevention. Just as the FCO, DFID and other departments should expect to contribute to UK success in the context of hybrid conflict, so the MoD should regard it as a priority to play a substantial role in policies which contribute to the prevention of conflict.

4.5 A more integrated approach to post-conflict reconstruction

Change is needed to bring about a whole government effort that will deliver results on the ground in crucial missions like the one in Afghanistan. As the Conservative Party's Green Paper on International Development emphasises, we need a step change in the UK's civil-military development capabilities.

The experience of Iraq and Afghanistan is that we need to go even further in making sure that, as a country, we can contribute rapidly and in full measure to stabilisation operations – in the hours after the intense fighting stops, when the battle for hearts and minds must still be won, and when we have struggled to deliver reconstruction and development aid with the speed required.

A Conservative government will create a Stabilisation and Reconstruction Force which will bring together the skills necessary to carry out vital stabilisation work.

4.6 A new emphasis on domestic security

As an open and liberal society with crowded space and a just-in-time economy, we are vulnerable to disruption – which even locally can have a national effect – from threats and hazards ranging from severe flooding to terrorism, against which we are only very imperfectly safeguarded and to which we are not prepared to respond. This means a series of new measures and action by government and the public are needed.

Effective border control is the first line of defence against the entry of unwanted persons – extremists, terrorists and criminals – and illegal goods like drugs. The formation of the UK Border Agency brought together the immigration service and parts of HM Revenue and Customs but has not solved the problem of disjointed policing of the UK's borders. A Conservative government will:

- bring together those organisations involved in the security of ports and airports to form unified border policing capability; and
- review current systems and arrangements for achieving awareness of and responding to activities in UK coastal and near waterways.

In Northern Ireland, devolution should contribute to greater stability. But a Conservative government will continue to give our fullest support to the police and other agencies in their efforts to combat the threat to the security of the whole United Kingdom from dissident republican and other terrorist organisations.

4.7 A new focus on our capacity to deal with emergencies – Including through the establishment of a new Permanent Military Command for Homeland Defence and Security

Maintaining territorial integrity and safety becomes both more important and difficult as terrorists and organised criminals evolve new modes of operation, and as natural hazards increase in scale and frequency. So a Conservative government will:

- establish a small permanent military command or headquarters for homeland defence and security;
- ensure there is a predictable, rather than declaratory, regular armed force contribution to homeland tasks;
- insist on national standards within and between emergency services so that they can work seamlessly together;
- provide better, more interactive and easily accessible, information about risks and about the measures individuals can take to prevent or prepare for emergencies;
- help link local groups to national emergency response procedures; and
- foster corporate contributions to emergency assistance and support for resilience.

4.8 Increased attention to the resilience of critical infrastructure

The nine essential sectors of daily life – energy, food, water, transport, telecommunications, government and public services, emergency services, health and finance – must be able to withstand and respond to extreme events such as terrorist attacks and natural hazards. These sectors have international supply chains underpinning the delivery of their services to customers which must also be flexible enough to adapt to changes in supply and demand. With the cooperation of private sector owners, systematic mapping and modelling is urgently needed to include knowledge of the interdependencies, capacity and redundancy of essential sectors to withstand and respond to extreme events and long-term trends.

Forming a coherent energy policy, joining domestic with overseas factors, security with long term climate change goals and private sector investment with government policies on resilience of systems will be an urgent Conservative priority on entering office.

4.9 Cyber security

Britain’s digital infrastructure is under constant electronic attack, including from terrorists and organised criminals. This is a relatively new threat. In June 2009, the Government said it would set up a ‘Cyber Security Operations Centre’ at Cheltenham. But this Centre is not yet operational. Even when it is operational, the Centre is only intended to analyse the threats – not to do anything about them. We can’t go on like this. The UK needs to be able to detect and prevent attacks before they hit us. In other words, it needs a proactive and effective capability to respond to cyber attacks. At the moment no organisation brings together all the arms of government to deliver a single response capability, and that is what a Conservative government will task the Cyber Security Operations Centre to do.

4.10 Striking the right balance – Ensuring security while protecting civil liberties and social cohesion

The long-term strategic challenge to the UK – both abroad and at home – stems from the extremism that fuels alienation, violence and terrorism. If they are to provide security on a sustainable basis, security measures must be proportional and consistent with liberal democratic values and the rule of law. A Conservative government will:

- ensure that all UK government departments and agencies honour our obligations in respect of human rights and the prohibition of torture;
- review the Control Order system;
- continue to explore ways to allow the use of intercept as evidence in court cases;
- review the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act;
- review jurisprudence relating to ECHR to permit deportation of foreign nationals; and
- review relevant national databases and systems to develop a clear statement of purpose for each and adequate governance regimes.

Building an integrated and cohesive society

This country has been the victim of terrorism but we forget at our peril that most of those involved in plots in this country were born and brought up here and have been strongly influenced by extremists who attack the values of democratic societies and advocate their violent overthrow. Lack of integration and social cohesion in the UK lies at the root.

Recognising that government has a key role to play in fostering a society resilient to extremism and terrorism, a Conservative government will:

- develop a National Integration Strategy which promotes the common English language and a sense of a shared history as the cornerstones of a successful community;
- work with local authorities to deliver localised cohesion strategies which promote activities that increase contact and integration between communities
- focus the ‘Prevent’ Strategy on combating the extremism which promotes violence or hatred, not just violent extremism, and supporting those most vulnerable to radicalisation and those already radicalised through targeted intervention strategies; and
- integrate counter terrorism tasking into effective community policing.

5. Conclusion

The problems which have bedevilled our approach to national security in recent years are well documented: a failure to weigh carefully and plan properly for the consequences of intervention; a failure to equip our Forces for the deployments they are actually ordered to carry out; a failure to harness all the resources of the government in support of an intervention overseas or security policy at home; ineffective authoritarianism damaging civil liberties, instead of effective protection; and a poor decision-making structure, which has failed to inject urgency and sense of purpose into every corner of government. The measures set out in this paper, combined with firm leadership from the top, will start to put right these deficiencies.

Annex 1: Strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan

The consequences of international intervention failing to establish Afghanistan as a country stable enough to be able to provide for its own security would be immense. But until very recently, the Government have shied away from trying to explain to the British people the vital national security reasons behind the Armed Forces' mission in Afghanistan or its relationship to policy towards Pakistan. This has seriously undermined public confidence in it.

Three quarters of the most serious terrorist plots investigated in the UK have been shown to have direct links with the borderland of Pakistan next door to Afghanistan. The threat to UK security from this region remains current and substantial. Islamabad's actions to tackle extremists and terrorists have been significant and must continue; British and coalition counterinsurgency operations on the Afghan side of the border are equally important and reinforce Pakistan's efforts. Apart from the serious damage done to the credibility of NATO, failing to secure Afghanistan would contribute to the further destabilisation of Pakistan, with direct consequences for UK security; to the increase in tension and risk of terrorism in the subcontinent as a whole; and would act a boost to extremism and terrorism worldwide.

With other coalition forces, which should bear their fair share of the load, UK troops should engage in counterinsurgency against the Taliban to deny extremists and terrorists a renewed foothold in Afghanistan, which would result in the further destabilisation of the state of Pakistan, by laying the base for Afghan leaders to assume responsibility for the security and protection of their own people.

The approach of a Conservative government

Together, Afghanistan and Pakistan will be the single most important foreign policy and military commitment of an incoming Conservative government. It will deliver policy more effectively by giving leadership to the nation and improving decision making in government.

Currently, Whitehall is not well organised to deliver policy effectively. The convoluted structure of a Ministerial 'Trilat' composed of the FCO, MoD and DFID alongside an Afghanistan Strategy Group, an Afghanistan Senior Officials Group and a Cabinet Office Afghanistan Strategy Team will be replaced by a standing item on the agendas of the regular meetings of the National Security Council at Ministerial and deputy levels. A Conservative government will simplify the structures for developing and delivering strategy by having one official level group in the National Security Secretariat to which Departments will report up to the National Security Council.

As regards policy, based on the principle that coalition forces do not seek a permanent presence or regional dominance, but are in Afghanistan to assist the people to take control of their own security, a Conservative government will:

- be committed to ensuring that UK military commanders in Afghanistan have the right equipment and troop numbers, based on an agreed assessment of operational need;
- increase the capacity of Afghan security forces – Afghan National Army, Afghan police and auxiliary (tribally based) forces – to provide protection to the population. Training the Afghan army and police is essential but to be sustainable and to undercut the appeal of the Taliban, security also needs to be delivered at tribal and village level as well;
- help ensure strong co-ordination of the international civilian effort in Afghanistan, and effective working relationships with the Afghan government and coalition forces;
- match the military element of the strategy and surge with a political strategy in Afghanistan by encouraging President Karzai to tackle corruption; improving governance, including at local levels; actively encouraging and taking steps to facilitate the political integration of those prepared to come across from supporting the Taliban; supporting the Afghan-led reconciliation programme;
- match the coalition's military and political work in Afghanistan by: assisting Pakistan in conducting effective counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations against all groups posing a threat to the stability of Afghanistan and Pakistan through the provision of equipment and training to the Pakistan Armed Forces and local security forces in the frontier provinces; and supporting economic and social development, other capacity building programmes and improved governance at national and local levels; and
- as a key part of the coalition's political strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, strengthen weak regional relationships through consultation and confidence-building measures.

Annex 2: Energy Security

Energy supply is critical for the functioning of all parts of society.

After decades as an energy-secure nation, safely reliant on fossil fuel supplies from the North Sea, the United Kingdom has in the last decade added itself to the long list of import-dependent nations. But the Government have been irresponsibly slow to respond to a fundamentally changed situation of loss of national energy self sufficiency at a time when world demand is increasing. And they had plenty of warning of future trends.

In 2004 the UK became a net importer of fuel. In 2005 the UK returned to being a net-importer of primary oils and, in the same year, started to import Liquefied Natural Gas for the first time since the early 1980s. This dependency is set to continue. Latest estimates show that by 2020, 39 to 43 per cent of energy will be imported, and that by 2025, 47 to 50 per cent of the UK's energy supply will come from abroad.

These imports come from volatile regions like the Middle East, where political instability, terrorism and piracy pose real risks to supplies. As state control over commodities increases, so does resource nationalism. This was demonstrated by disputes between Russia and Ukraine with knock-on effects for the rest of Europe. So even when supplies come from partners like Norway, the nature of the UK's contracts mean that it is actually in competition for them with continental customers.

At the same time, the Government have allowed the UK's domestic capacity to withstand crises to be degraded. Over the next decade the UK will lose one third of its electricity generating capacity. Labour have failed to ensure that the margin of supply over demand is maintained, in the face of so many plant retirements. According to the Government's own projections this will result in a significantly higher level of power cuts by 2017.¹ Furthermore, decisions on key technologies such as nuclear, offshore wind and smart meters have been repeatedly delayed, further undermining Britain's ability to provide for its energy needs.

And there is no breathing space. Britain has just sixteen days of gas storage capacity. This compares to much larger storage capacities elsewhere in Europe – 99 days in Germany and 122 days in France. In the face of the multiplicity of risks in the international market place and the vulnerability of the UK to them, this is not enough to assure supply through the sorts of crises – whether political or climatic – which could develop.

The way forward: how should government lead?

It is very clear that in this vital sector the UK is far from either secure or resilient. This is not the place for a full discussion of future UK energy strategy under a Conservative government, which will be published separately. But it is clear that given the need to adapt to the demands of climate change and in an era of tight, often politically controlled, global energy markets which are likely to persist for decades, a totally laissez faire approach is simply inadequate to protect the national interest.

To improve security and resilience of energy supply, a Conservative government will:

- ensure that energy security is high in FCO priorities. Diplomatic effort and representation should reflect UK strategic energy interests and security of supply. In particular, we need to catch up with other countries in securing long-term energy supply contracts;
- reflect energy security concerns in the tasking of the Armed Forces. The MoD should have regard to energy security in the tasking of our Armed Forces, for example the Royal Navy in the security of the sea lanes and the safety of maritime traffic;
- develop a role for NATO. NATO must develop, in doctrinal and practical ways, the concepts of solidarity and mutual assistance in the context of threats to energy security as part of the operational underpinning given to collective security in the twenty first century. NATO navies should cooperate with other navies to help police supply lines;

1. HM Government, The UK Low Carbon Transition Plan: Analytical Index, 15 July 2009, p. 85

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- push for a co-ordinated European policy. To date EU governments have been unable to agree fully on two aspects of policy crucial to energy security at affordable prices or the link between them: policy towards the biggest local supplier of gas – Russia, and the extent of liberalisation of the European market. Getting agreement remains an important short and medium term priority; and
 - increase gas storage capacity. Against the risk profile established through monitoring of global supply and demand, we will ensure the additional capacity required for an adequate level of UK gas storage is built.

