

Campaign Against Arms Trade  
Unit 4, 5-7 Wells Terrace  
London N4 3JU

020-7281 0297  
07814 410893  
ann@caat.org.uk

## **Submission from the Campaign Against Arms Trade to the Foreign Affairs Committee on the FCO and the Integrated Review**

1. The Campaign Against Arms Trade (CAAT) in the UK is working to end the international arms trade. This trade has a devastating impact on human rights and security, and damages economic development. CAAT believes that large-scale military procurement and arms exports only reinforce a militaristic approach to international problems.
2. CAAT welcomes your Committee's inquiry into the Integrated Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy Review. This submission argues that the Integrated Review provides an opportunity, which should not be missed, for completely rethinking security and the UK's place in the world.

### **The process of the Integrated Review**

3. CAAT is pleased that the time line for the Integrated Review has now been extended. It was always unrealistic to have expected it to be completed in five months. Now Covid-19 has prompted not only what is likely to be a substantial pause, but the pandemic itself has already markedly changed the nature of the discussion around security.
4. The Prime Minister's statement on 26th February 2020 (<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2020-02-26/HCWS126/>) announcing the Integrated Review properly starts by asking about the UK's place in the world, but continues by seemingly assuming that security is largely synonymous with military power. It commits, without examining afresh, to continuing to spend 2% of GDP on the military, an arbitrary figure set by NATO that has never been explained, and to the UK's possession of nuclear weapons.
5. That the scope of the Integrated Review is seen by the government as limited was reinforced by the Secretary of State for Defence, Ben Wallace, during Defence Questions on 16th March 2020. He said that the Integrated Review's stakeholders are the Foreign Office, No. 10, the Cabinet Office and the Ministry of Defence and that there are four work streams – on the Euro-Atlantic alliance, great power competition, global issues and homeland security. (<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2020-03-16/debates/CFA44CE2-22D9-45E1-A9C1-33FAA9DB49C7/IntegratedReview>)
6. Even within the limited scope of the review adopted by the UK government, it is strange, for instance, that the Home Office is not seen as a primary stakeholder given its policing and homeland security remit. Likewise, and especially relevant from a foreign policy perspective, the omission of the Department for International Development is curious given that the Prime Minister's statement explicitly includes development in the heading of the review and that the commitment to spending 0.7% of Gross National Income is stated as a given.
7. The framing of the Integrated Review seems so restricted that there is no mention of other threats to human security including climate breakdown, environmental degradation and economic inequality or even, as so tragically evident at the moment, pandemic. Previous National Security Strategies have identified these as risks, but, in contrast to military spending, the resources to address them did not follow.
8. Coming as it does at the time of a pandemic, the Integrated Review provides a real opportunity for change. It must not start with assumptions of militaristic solutions and it should go far beyond military and foreign policy.

9. The Integrated Review needs to be fundamental, asking first what is needed for genuine security for people, both in the UK and globally. This will include addressing the provision of housing and health care for all; the ending of the demonisation of communities, such as through Prevent; promoting international solidarity and cooperation rather than militarised borders; and taking radical action to address climate change and environmental degradation. It would need to be cross-government and involve far more government departments than the Defence Secretary suggests is currently the case.
10. Covid-19 has prompted many people to think about the future and their own security. This, together with the delay, means that the Integrated Review provides an unprecedented opportunity for the widest possible consultation. Participation could be encouraged from individuals and organisations, both in the UK and overseas. The views of those who have been particularly affected by the UK's foreign policy, including refugees and those living in areas of conflict, should be sought.

## **Priorities for a UK foreign policy strategy**

11. Currently much of UK foreign policy involves the promotion of commercial interests. Support for the "Great Britain" campaign illustrates this. There seems to be no questioning by government as to the wider public benefit, either in the UK or the recipient country, of the manufacture or export of particular goods or services – it is simply accepted that production and trade are good in and of themselves.
12. Delusions of empire also remain, not least in the ideas of power projection and the establishment of military bases in the Gulf and elsewhere. The UK is situated on the eastern edge of the north Atlantic yet the UK government authorises a military presence in the South China Seas. Overseas military interventions, as seen in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and Syria have all caused, or added to, devastation and instability with dire consequences for people living in those areas and, to a lesser extent, the world more generally.
13. The intertwined commercial and military interests have led to costly vanity projects such as Trident replacement and the aircraft carriers. Lobbying by these interests and their parliamentary and media supporters has already led to the commitment to spend at least 2% of GDP on the military and they are continuing to press for an increase on this. It is, however, unclear how this spending enhances the security of the UK population.
14. The climate crisis is an urgent, devastating and present threat to human security. The UK government has committed to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050, and its Committee on Climate Change says this would require spending of 1-2% of GDP per year. It is striking that the maximum spending estimate for achieving the UK's climate change targets is around the same level as what the UK government considers to be the bare minimum requirement for military spending. Currently, the UK government fails to devote even half this sum to addressing the climate crisis. This is a gross distortion of priorities, reflecting in turn a fundamentally flawed understanding of security. (Fighting the Wrong Battles: how obsession with military power diverts resources from the climate crisis, CAAT, February 2020 <https://www.caat.org.uk/resources/publications/government/fighting-the-wrong-battles-feb2020.pdf> )
15. Another failure of current foreign and security policies is currently all too clear. Pandemics were identified as a major risk, but there was no preparedness for one. Corona-19 is global and, like climate change, shows the need for an international response built upon cooperation and collaboration between governments and international bodies, as well as scientists and medical experts.
16. The arms trade is a major area which highlights the need for a cultural shift in UK foreign policy. The UK government's advocacy of human rights is totally undermined by the promotion of arms exports. A predecessor Foreign Affairs Committee in its report "The FCO's human rights work in 2013" (<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmselect/cmaff/551/551.pdf>, see paragraph 98), asked for evidence that, as has often been asserted, to do business with an authoritarian regime, and particularly the sale of arms, would help influence a positive change in human rights. No such evidence has been forthcoming.

17. Indeed, since that report was written, the prioritisation of commercial interests has become more brazen as illustrated by UK government's continued willingness to licence the sale of arms to Saudi Arabia despite its bombing causing devastation in Yemen, which as a result now has the biggest humanitarian crisis in the world with 80% of the population, over 24 million people, needing assistance. (UN <https://yemen.un.org/en/about/about-the-un>)
18. The domestic human rights record of Saudi Arabia is also appalling, especially under Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS). He has overseen the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi in Istanbul in October 2018 as well as the incarceration, and sometimes execution, of those who advocate for human rights. While MBS has been celebrated for changing the law on the right of women to drive, those who campaigned for the lifting of the previous ban have been arrested, detained and subjected to torture and unfair trial proceedings. (Guardian, 4th February 2019 reporting on the findings of a cross-party panel of MPs – Crispin Blunt, Layla Moran and Paul Williams <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/feb/04/saudi-arabia-holding-women-in-torture-conditions-say-uk-mps> and ALQST annual report 2019 <http://alqst.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/ALQST-2019-Annual-Report-En.pdf>)
19. However, as the largest customer for UK arms, Saudi Arabia is given huge power to mute any UK criticism of its policies. Indeed, then Secretary of State for International Trade Liam Fox met with representatives of arms company BAE Systems on 29th October 2018 to “discuss the UK Government response to the killing of Khashoggi and BAE Saudi interests”. ([https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/788337/dit-ministers-quarterly-return-october-december-2018-meetings.csv/preview](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/788337/dit-ministers-quarterly-return-october-december-2018-meetings.csv/preview)) This is shameful.
20. The contradiction in policy between promoting arms sales and advocating for human rights is not limited to Saudi Arabia. Analysis of the figures released by the UK government in April 2020 showed that in 2019 the UK sold £1.3 billion worth of weapons to 26 of the 48 countries that are classed as “not free” by Freedom House, the US government-funded pro-democracy institution. This was compared with just £310 million in 2018. (Observer, 26th April 2020 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/25/uk-arms-trade-repressive-regimes>)
21. There is a long history of UK governments turning a blind eye to human rights abuses while prioritising arms sales. In the 1970s the Shah of Iran was fêted as a valued customer until the overthrow of his corrupt and repressive regime in 1979. Successive UK governments have not learnt the obvious lesson of the consequences of the prioritisation of military and commercial interests in foreign policy. A footnote to the arming of Iran all those decades ago is that the UK still owes Iran money, a debt that led to the incarceration of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe nearly four decades later. (<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/may/28/mod-and-foreign-office-clash-over-400m-debt-linked-to-zaghari-ratcliffe-release>)
22. Human rights advocacy is further undermined by the promotion by the UK government of events such as the Security & Policing arms fair held in Farnborough from 3rd to 5th March 2020. This promoted technology useful for spying and surveillance and the repression of protest, as well as militarised borders. Hosted in this case by the Home Office, over 60 international delegations attended, including representatives from countries accused of human rights abuses such as India, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Uzbekistan. The invitations came from the UK government's arms promotion agency, the Department for International Trade Defence and Security Organisation. (DIT DSO 9th March 2020 [https://www.gov.uk/government/news/security-and-policing-2020?utm\\_source=0826f117-32dd-4fde-a30f-c5a062b5ecdb&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm\\_content=immediate](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/security-and-policing-2020?utm_source=0826f117-32dd-4fde-a30f-c5a062b5ecdb&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate))
23. While espousing an international rules-based order, the UK currently seems willing to undermine international agreements, even those which it helped establish. The Arms Trade Treaty is a prime example of this. It was enthusiastically promoted by the UK government before it entered into force in December 2014, but flouted only months later when the UK continued to arm Saudi Arabia despite its bombing of Yemen from March 2015.
24. There are other examples of double standards too, not least the UK's continuing possession of nuclear weapons, despite the commitment to nuclear disarmament made in the 1970 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. (<https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/npt/>) At the same time the UK denounces other countries', such as Iran's, possible attempts to acquire nuclear weapons and continues with

the pretence that Israel has does not have them. The UK should make it a foreign policy priority to join The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and collaborate with the international community to rid the world of an existential threat.

25. The UK's domestic policy also has an impact overseas. The treatment of refugees, deaths in custody, wrongful deportation, arbitrary stripping of citizenship by executive action and Closed Material Procedures in the Courts all bring into question UK government's self-image as being one of the global "good guys".
26. The Integrated Review, coming as it does at a time of global crisis, presents an opportunity for a real change in the UK government's approach to security. This would naturally lead to a new approach to UK foreign policy to the advantage of all, in the UK and overseas. The UK government should switch from helping despotic governments remain in power to supporting people struggling for democracy and human rights.
27. It should focus on international cooperation and collaboration, rather than perceived national self-interest and advantage. It needs to tackle climate change and environmental degradation, unequal trade policies, and authoritarian rule. Human needs must take priority over commercial concerns. The effect of such an approach for improved UK and global security, as well as the UK's reputation overseas, would be immense.

**May 2020**