



House of Commons
Defence Committee

**Russia: a new
confrontation?
Government response to
the Committee's Tenth
Report of Session 2008–09**

Sixth Special Report of Session 2008–09

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The Defence Committee

The Defence Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Ministry of Defence and its associated public bodies.

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Powers

The Committee is one of the departmental select committees, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No 152. These are available on the Internet via www.parliament.uk.

Publications

The Reports and evidence of the Committee are published by The Stationery Office by Order of the House. All publications of the Committee (including press notices) are on the Internet at: www.parliament.uk/defcom

Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Mike Hennessy (Clerk), Georgina Holmes-Skelton (Second Clerk), Karen Jackson (Audit Adviser), Judy Goodall (Inquiry Manager), Richard Dawson (Senior Committee Assistant), Christine McGrane (Committee Assistant) and Miguel Boo Fraga (Committee Support Assistant).

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Sixth Special Report

The Defence Committee published its Tenth Report of Session 2008–09 on *Russia: a new confrontation?* on 10 July 2009, as House of Commons Paper HC 276. The Government's response to this Report was received on 9 September 2009. This is appended.

Government response

Introduction

The Government welcomes the report of the House of Commons Defence Committee and supports the vast majority of its conclusions. The relationship between the UK and Russia, as well as that between NATO and Russia, remains important to our security and we should seek ways to strengthen it. But as the Committee's report makes clear, Russia has international obligations and commitments which it does not always fully meet and this cannot be ignored if we want a truly constructive relationship. The Committee has also usefully highlighted key areas of focus for the Government's engagement with Russia and we will endeavour to take these into account in both bilateral and multilateral discussions.

The Government's response to the Committee's specific recommendations is as follows:

Russia's foreign policy

1. (Recommendation 1) Russia has been hit hard by the global economic downturn. It is too early to judge how this will affect Russia's foreign policy. Russia's low level of democracy may make it more likely to be assertive in its foreign policy than would be the case with a Western liberal democratic state that faced similar economic difficulties. (Paragraph 23)

We agree that it is too early to assess fully the effect of the economic downturn on Russia's foreign policy. Russia's position as a key partner in the G8 and G20 has given it the opportunity to play a full role in the international effort to restore economic stability and good global financial governance and we welcome this involvement. While we recognise Russia's assertive approach to its foreign relations, it would be premature to conclude that current global economic pressures have made such an approach more marked than might be the case in a fully fledged democracy. It is our view that Russian assertiveness can not be attributed to any one factor.

2. (Recommendation 2) The West needs to engage with Russia to develop cooperation, yet the absence of shared values makes this difficult. Witnesses identified many areas where cooperation was desirable based on mutual national interests. NATO, the EU and the UK Government need a pragmatic and hard-headed approach to their engagement with Russia to achieve the best results. (Paragraph 27)

Both bilaterally and multilaterally, the Government takes account of Russia's actions and behaviour to calibrate its engagement with Russia. We welcome the committee's recognition that a hard-headed approach is justified. While we seek to strengthen our bilateral relations and have noted improvements, we will not overlook key areas of disagreement. Building a constructive dialogue with Russia is challenging, but we believe we can do so in pursuit of UK interests on issues such as non-proliferation, climate change, international economic co-operation, as well as regional conflicts in the Middle East and Afghanistan.

Russia's military capability and posture

3. (Recommendation 3) We welcome Russia's military reform programme that will modernise and professionalise its Armed Forces. It provides an opportunity for Russia to increase the interoperability of its Armed Forces and thereby the possibility for increased joint operations with NATO forces, whilst also improving the conditions of its rank and file soldiers. The UK military is experienced in implementing reforms. The Ministry of Defence should offer support to Russia in implementing its reform programme. (Paragraph 43)

The Government welcomes Russia's military reform programme and supports the Committee's recommendation. The Ministry of Defence has had a programme of bilateral engagement with the Russian Armed Forces since the early 1990s, one of the objectives of which has been to increase the capability for interoperability. Since the Russia/Georgia crisis of 2008, however, this programme has effectively ceased. Although the UK Ministry of Defence remains committed to defence co-operation with the Russian Armed Forces, the Russian Ministry of Defence is at present reluctant to engage with the UK in defence activities in general or military reform in particular.

4. (Recommendation 4) Russia's unauthorised flights into international airspace, including the UK's flight information region, do not pose a direct security threat to NATO or the UK; nevertheless, they are not the actions of a friendly nation and risk escalating tension. A further issue is that Russia's actions threaten the safety of civil flights and risk leading to serious accidents; Russia should not be making such flights without informing the appropriate authorities. The Government should take a more robust approach in making clear to Russia that its continued secret incursions by military aircraft into international airspace near to the UK is not acceptable behaviour. The Government should call on NATO to ensure that it monitors and assesses the threat posed by unauthorised Russian military flights into NATO and international airspace near to NATO's territorial perimeter. (Paragraph 49)

The Government agrees with the Committee's conclusion that the Russian military flights do not pose a direct security threat to NATO or the UK, but that they risk escalating tension. They are not, however, 'unauthorised': these flights exercising Russian military capability take place in international airspace.

As was stated during the evidence sessions, some flight safety issues have resulted from Russian military aircraft not adhering to International Civil Aviation Organisation regulations. These issues have been mitigated by close liaison between UK Air Defence and Air Traffic Control units and, where necessary, by the launch of UK Quick Reaction Alert aircraft. That said, the safety of civilian flights is an issue that is addressed by the Department of Transport in conjunction with the Civil Aviation Authority.

NATO already assesses the threat posed by Russian military flights in NATO and international airspace near its territorial perimeter continuously. We are content that appropriate arrangements are in place in NATO for the surveillance, command and control, and interception of unidentified aircraft under the Allied Command air policing task.

5. (Recommendation 5) It is understandable that some of Russia's neighbouring states should feel concerned about the possibility of Russian military action against them given Russia's actions in Georgia. Russia has proved that it is quite capable of using military force if it chooses. Russia does not, however, need to use conventional force to achieve its objectives; it has political and economic tools at its disposal to influence its neighbouring states. (Paragraph 52)

The Government shares the Committee's analysis. The UK recognises the concerns of some of the states bordering Russia and supports constructive relationships between Russia and its neighbours. The Government uses bilateral discussions, as well as institutions such as the EU, OSCE, UN and NATO, to remind Russia of its international obligations and the importance of fully respecting the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of its neighbours.

6. (Recommendation 6) In contrast to the level of threat Russia poses to some of its neighbouring states, Russia does not currently pose a direct threat to UK homeland security, nor is likely to do so in the near future. Although it is hard to conceive of a scenario in which Russia would threaten UK homeland security, Russia threatens the national interests of the UK through its attempts to establish a sphere of influence over other former Soviet States. It is in the UK's national interest to have stable democratic and independent states in Eastern Europe as this enhances European security. Russia's behaviour risks undermining this and thereby working against our own national interests. (Paragraph 53)

The Government agrees that Russia does not pose a direct threat to UK security and that there should be no 'spheres of influence' in Europe. While it is normal for countries that have strong historical, economic and political links to want to work closely together in areas of mutual interest, Russia's neighbours are independent, sovereign states with the right to choose their own policies and alliances. The Government believes that those countries that wish to pursue a Euro-Atlantic course must be allowed to do so and that this need not be at the expense of good relations with Russia. Having secure and stable countries in Eastern Europe is in Russia's interest as much as it is in our own.

Georgia conflict

7. (Recommendation 7) We welcome the EU's investigation into the causes of the Georgian-Russian conflict. Understanding the history and causes of the conflict is a prerequisite to achieving peace in the region. While awaiting the EU's forthcoming report that should provide a more detailed assessment of the causes of the conflict, we conclude that:

- **Responsibility for the conflict was shared, in differing measures, by all parties. Both Russia and Georgia share responsibility for the humanitarian consequences of the conflict that have left hundreds dead and thousands displaced from their homes.**
- **Russia provoked Georgia through its actions over many years. Russian provocation included fuelling separatism in the region through the distribution of passports in the breakaway Georgian territories, building up its military**

forces in the region and through its recognition of the separatist territories in Spring 2008.

- **President Saakashvili's decision to launch an offensive on 7 August was politically reckless. Russia reacted swiftly to remove Georgian forces from South Ossetia. Russia also acted with disproportionate and illegal use of force by encroaching deep into Georgian territory, far beyond the conflict area. (Paragraph 74)**

We too look forward to the publication of the report by Ambassador Tagliavini, now scheduled for the end of September. We share the Committee's hope that it will provide a clearer picture of events and their aftermath than has previously existed, which will aid our understanding of the causes of the conflict. As well as a focus on the origins of the war, we look forward to the mission's findings on humanitarian and human rights issues. We are also clear that, whatever the report's conclusions, we will need to manage any increased tensions between Georgia and Russia that arise from their attempts to apportion blame on each other.

We agree that both Russia and Georgia must accept responsibility for the events of August 2008. Tensions between Russia and Georgia date back to post-independence conflicts in the 1990s. They rose significantly in the months before the war when Russia issued a decree in Spring 2008 establishing closer legal relations with the separatist territories. In April 2008, a Russian fighter shot down a Georgian UAV over Abkhazia and sent troops and military equipment into the region in breach of their commitments under the 1993 Moscow Agreement, which provided for a CIS peacekeeping Force in Georgia. Russia also admitted publicly that its aircraft had overflown South Ossetia.

We share the Committee's assessment that Georgia's decision to try to take and hold Tskhinvali was ill-advised and reckless. But Russia's use of disproportionate force, which extended the geographical range of the conflict and the scale of fighting, had no justification and was rightly condemned by the international community. Nor is Russia's continuing violation of Georgian sovereignty and territorial integrity justified, and this continues with Russia's occupation of Georgian territory.

Given the horrific legacy of the conflict, we continue to stress to all parties their duty to allow unhindered access for humanitarian assistance in areas they control and to recall their obligation to protect human rights. We take any substantive allegations of war crimes and human rights abuses very seriously and it is important that the perpetrators of such abuses are held to account.

Despite the demise of the OSCE and UN missions, we will continue to call on Russia and the separatist de facto authorities to permit access to the separatist regions for humanitarian assistance.

8. (Recommendation 8) There was a collective international failure at a political level to read the warning signs of an escalating conflict. The UK Government has stated its commitment to securing peace in Georgia. Ministers need to learn from history, and should carefully monitor intelligence on the situation in the Caucasus, to ensure that any future outbreak of conflict in the region does not come as a surprise. (Paragraph 75)

The UK had no advance warning of Georgia's plans to use military force to try and seize back control of South Ossetia. In the weeks leading up to 7 August, when there had been a growing number of increasingly serious breaches of the ceasefire, we and our partners actively sought to encourage all parties to avoid stoking tensions. In addition to regular contacts with Georgian Ministers during this period, our Ambassador in Tbilisi visited Tskhinvali on 6 August to urge de facto President Kokoity to do everything possible to avoid escalation.

In the long-term, the conflict in Georgia could potentially affect the stability of the Caucasus, which remains fragile and vulnerable to human rights violations. A democratic and stable region is in our strategic interests. We believe that security measures that do not respect international human rights law are counter-productive. Ending human rights abuses is an essential element of a long-term solution to the region's problems.

The UK Government, together with partners, watches closely the situation in Georgia and the wider Caucasus region. We are working to decrease tension, including through support to a substantial international monitoring presence, and increase dialogue; Georgia remains a priority for conflict prevention and peacekeeping funding, despite budgetary pressures. We are also working to ensure that Georgia remains on the agenda at the appropriate international fora, and we use all available bilateral contacts to encourage all parties to comply with the 12 August and 8 September ceasefire agreements.

While the risk of conflict remains heightened, the Government continues to work with all parties to ensure that existing tensions are dealt with via the appropriate fora for dialogue, particularly the Geneva talks and, on a local level, through the Incident Prevention and Reporting Mechanisms

9. (Recommendation 9) Russia is failing to honour its ceasefire commitments under the agreements of 12 August and 8 September 2008. We recommend that the UK Government send a strong message to Russia that it needs to withdraw its military forces to its pre-conflict positions as previously agreed. (Paragraph 81)

We share the Committee's view that Russia has not complied fully with the 12 August and 8 September agreements. Russia has not withdrawn its troops to their pre-conflict positions. Russia has continued to militarise the separatist regions and in recent months deployed FSB Border Guards to patrol the Administrative Border Line with South Ossetia and Abkhazia under "border management agreements" signed on 30 April with the separatist regions. These actions add to tension.

We, and our EU partners, continue to press Russia at every opportunity to comply fully with the 12 August and 8 September agreements. The Foreign Secretary has raised Georgia with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and others on many occasions to encourage Russian co-operation.

10. (Recommendation 10) We regret that the UN and OSCE monitoring missions have been forced to close. Their closure increases the vital importance of the EU monitoring mission in Georgia and the need for its mandate to be strengthened as well as extended. The EU monitoring mission has a vital role in acting as a deterrent to further military action and promoting stability. The UK Government should increase its diplomatic efforts to secure an extension in time and strengthening of the EU monitoring mission

in Georgia, including enabling the mission to have full access to the disputed territories. (Paragraph 89)

We deplore Russia's veto of an extension of the UN mission and blocking of the compromise proposal for the continuation of the OSCE Mission in Georgia. We worked hard with partners to create options that should have been acceptable to all parties, but Russia chose to sacrifice these missions in pursuit of its own interests in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. We agree that the demise of the two missions gives the EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM) added significance. Our objective after the collapse of the OSCE and UN missions was to secure EU agreement to extend the EUMM's mandate for another 12 months until 14 September 2010, and we were therefore pleased with the EU's decision to do this in July.

Although the EUMM is mandated to operate throughout Georgia, including South Ossetia and Abkhazia, its main limitation remains its lack of access to the separatist regions. We continue to press Russia to allow EUMM monitors access to the separatist regions, and encourage our EU partners to do the same in their bilateral contacts.

11. (Recommendation 11) Russia has breached internationally accepted principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity by unilaterally recognising the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The prospect of South Ossetia and Abkhazia returning under the sovereign control of Georgia in the near future appears slight while the Russian military presence remains in these territories. It is vital for international security that NATO, EU and the UK Government remain resolute in their commitment to Georgia's sovereignty and international law. The international community has a vital role in securing stability and peace in the region. UK Ministers should press for the EU, UN and OSCE to secure a lasting peace settlement in the disputed territories. (Paragraph 93)

Despite the demise of UNOMIG and the OSCE monitoring mission, we remain committed to keeping an effective international presence on the ground, and to maintaining the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia, adapting its activities if necessary to the changed political landscape in Georgia. We are exploring options with our partners in New York that might ensure a continued UN presence, not least to cover the continuing humanitarian needs in UNOMIG's former field of operations and in Vienna on the future shape of OSCE involvement.

We have been clear in our support for Georgia's territorial integrity. Baroness Kinnock stressed this during her visit to Georgia in June 2009. Meanwhile, we have also encouraged the Georgian authorities to look at increased dialogue with the separatist regions, which remains the only way that a comprehensive and durable settlement can be achieved. This will be a lengthy process, but the UK Government will support Georgia in pursuit of this goal.

We also continue to encourage Georgia to pursue internal reforms which will bring the country closer to achieving the criteria necessary for future EU and NATO membership. These aspirations are a powerful driver to lever reform. A democratic, prosperous Georgia, with a free media, strong civil society and trusted judiciary, will also provide an effective tool to increase the chances of rapprochement between Georgia and its separatist regions.

Russia and NATO

12. (Recommendation 12) We welcome the resumption of formal engagement between NATO and Russia on the NATO-Russia Council. Engagement provides a platform for progress in building trust and cooperation. This should not, however, be at the cost of abandoning a commitment to the territorial integrity of Georgia. NATO should continue to make clear to Russia that its actions in Georgia were disproportionate and that it should honour its ceasefire commitments in Georgia. (Paragraph 99)

We agree. When in March 2009 NATO Foreign Ministers agreed to resume formal sessions of the NATO-Russia Council (NRC) this did not mean a return to business as usual. At the first Ministerial level meeting of the NRC since the Georgia crisis, which took place in Corfu in June 2009, Ministers from across NATO underlined their continuing discontent with Russia's behaviour over Georgia, including blocking the renewal of UNOMIG's mandate.

The Government is clear that in taking forward NATO-Russia relations we need to consider both areas in which we agree and those in which we disagree. We will continue to make clear to Russia that it has commitments by which it must abide, not least on Georgia. We will continue to use the NRC, among other fora, to raise our serious concerns over the Russian military/security build-up in Abkhazia and South Ossetia and the need to respect the territorial integrity of Georgia.

13. (Recommendation 13) For the NATO-Russia Council to be effective in building trust between NATO and Russia there needs to be an honest dialogue on areas of disagreement as well as agreement. The UK Government should encourage the NRC to be used as a forum to discuss difficult and strategic issues—such as NATO enlargement, Georgia, and human rights—as well as issues where cooperation is more likely. (Paragraph 101)

The UK and other NATO Allies want a constructive relationship with Russia. It remains our goal to build up further trust between NATO and Russia in order to enhance all our security. The Government agrees that this relationship needs to be frank and honest – one where we are able to relay tough messages on difficult issues such as Georgia as well as seek practical co-operation in areas where we have a shared interest or common goal. To become a better vehicle to deliver real output, the NRC needs to refocus on key priority areas. NRC Partners will resume discussions on the future direction of the NRC in September. The Government will push for a substance-driven, flexible and efficient body that can respond to new issues as they emerge as well as deliver results on existing ones.

14. (Recommendation 14) Arctic security is an issue of growing strategic importance as sea routes are opened up as a result of climate change. NATO has a critical role to play in securing Russian cooperation or at least minimising tensions over the territory. (Paragraph 104)

The Government agrees with the Committee that NATO has an important potential role to play in discussions with Russia on the Arctic. This must be carried out in a way that neither unnecessarily militarises the issue, nor cuts across the other valuable fora available for discussion of wider critical aspects of Arctic security, including economic, environmental and legal considerations, in which other Arctic powers have a voice.

15. (Recommendation 15) There are many opportunities for NATO to pursue cooperation with Russia for mutual benefit. The full potential of the NATO-Russia Council will not be realised until it takes strategic decisions on the priority areas for cooperation. In relation to these areas of potential cooperation, the NATO-Russia Council should focus its efforts on key strategic areas where there is a consensus within NATO and realistic prospects for success: these areas could include arms control, the Arctic and Afghanistan. We recommend that the UK Government identify and communicate within NATO what its priority areas are for cooperation with Russia. (Paragraph 106)

The Government agrees with the Committee that it is important that the NRC addresses the many areas where NATO and Russia share common interests and look to build up practical co-operation in priority areas. For the UK co-operation over Afghanistan, including on transit routes and counter narcotics, is a key priority. We also wish to use the NRC, as well as other fora, to tackle issues around counter-terrorism, counter-proliferation, arms control, anti-piracy and missile defence. We will continue to review these priority areas and will press for them to be reflected in future workplans of the NRC. Discussions with Russia at the NRC, while separate, should also complement discussions at the OSCE on broader threats to the security of Europe.

16. (Recommendation 16) The Government should work within NATO to secure an agreement with Russia on the transit of NATO military goods through Russian territory to ISAF forces in Afghanistan. We acknowledge that the UK currently relies on a southern transit route to supply its Armed Forces, yet it has a vital interest in ensuring the effectiveness of the entire coalition mission in Afghanistan. The Alliance's effectiveness would be enhanced by accessing an alternative supply route for its military goods other than through Pakistan. (Paragraph 111)

We agree with the Committee that diversifying the supply routes for military supplies for the ISAF mission in Afghanistan is beneficial for the whole alliance and we fully support NATO's efforts to secure a northern transit route. NATO has continued to negotiate with the Central Asian states for permission to operate the route and, at time of writing, agreement only needs to be finalised with Kazakhstan. Russia has continued to offer support for the route and we welcome their engagement. As the Committee rightly notes, the UK's deployment remains concentrated in southern Afghanistan and we will continue to use transit routes through Pakistan as the primary means for supplying our forces.

17. (Recommendation 17) Russia should not have a veto over NATO membership. The costs of NATO closing the door on further enlargement are as great as the costs of premature enlargement. (Paragraph 122)

18. (Recommendation 18) Acceptance of new NATO members should continue to be performance-based; if a country meets the criteria for membership, and can demonstrate that it is able to contribute to the security of existing NATO members it should be permitted to join. We believe it is essential that NATO's open door policy is maintained on this basis. Ending it is not in the interests of NATO or of European stability as a whole. Signalling that the Alliance has reached its outer limits, or ruling out further expansion, would consign those countries left outside NATO to an uncertain future, potentially creating instability on the Alliance's Eastern fringes.

Perpetuating this instability is not in the interests of any member of the NATO Alliance. (Paragraph 123)

The Government supports NATO's open door policy on enlargement and believes that recent history has demonstrated that the enlargement process has contributed significantly to stability in Europe. It is also right that this process should be performance-based and that aspirant members of NATO must carry out the democratic and defence reforms required for eventual membership. As the Declaration on Alliance Security issued at the 2009 NATO Summit made clear, "NATO's door will remain open to all European democracies which share the values of our Alliance, which are willing and able to assume the responsibilities and obligations of membership, and whose inclusion can contribute to common security and stability."

The Government fully agrees that there should be no third-party veto over enlargement and that democratically elected governments of sovereign, independent countries should be allowed to pursue integration into the Euro-Atlantic community. While we recognise that Russia has some concerns over NATO enlargement, we do not share their analysis that it represents a threat to Russia's security.

19. (Recommendation 19) Georgia's unresolved territorial disputes considerably complicate NATO's decision making on whether to grant Georgia membership or not. On the one hand, Georgia's membership may strengthen democracy and stability within the country and possibly beyond. On the other hand, its unresolved territorial disputes could risk NATO becoming embroiled in a direct conflict with Russia. While Georgia is working towards meeting the performance criteria for membership this issue can be avoided. But it can not be avoided indefinitely. At some point in the future, NATO will need to make a difficult decision on whether to grant Georgia membership in light of the harsh reality of the situation on the ground. It is vital that NATO does not allow Russia to dictate this decision; yet it is also vital that NATO considers the possible consequences arising from allowing a country to join while it has unresolved territorial disputes which it is in Russia's interests to perpetuate in the short term. (Paragraph 127)

The UK and NATO stand by the 2008 Bucharest Summit commitment given to Georgia. It is undeniable that the situation in South Ossetia and Abkhazia presents complications and the Committee's report summarises the dilemma well, but it is not inconceivable that a solution could be found in due course. As agreed by Foreign Ministers in December 2008, Georgia must now implement the reforms necessary for membership through Annual National Programmes submitted to NATO. It is important that Georgia dedicates sufficient resources and effort to this process in order to move closer to NATO membership.

20. (Recommendation 20) If NATO does grant Georgia membership it should do so to the whole of Georgia's sovereign territory, including Abkhazia and South Ossetia. To do otherwise would be to recognise Russia's actions in those parts of Georgia as having some legitimacy. This is a very serious issue to which we do not have an answer. Yet the international community must work to address it to produce an answer and, in doing so, reduce the tension between Georgia, Russia and NATO. This will be achievable only with recognition by Russia that its long-term interests lie in stable and harmonious

relations in the South Caucasus region, rather than a relationship of threats and domination. (Paragraph 128)

The Government remains committed to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia. The 2009 Summit Declaration repeated NATO's condemnation of Russia's recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent states and called on Moscow to reverse the decision. The UK and NATO allies continue to press Georgia and Russia to use the forum of the Geneva talks to work towards a comprehensive peace that addresses the status of Georgia's separatist regions.

The UK considers that Russia's continued military build up in the territories of South Ossetia and Abkhazia raises serious concerns over the long term stability of the region. We agree that it must be in Russia's long term interests to have Georgia as an economically viable, stable and democratic neighbour.

21. (Recommendation 21) For Ukraine to have a realistic chance of joining NATO, it not only needs to meet the performance criteria for membership, but it needs also to demonstrate that its public are supportive of its membership. (Paragraph 129)

We agree. The Government remains firmly supportive of Ukraine's NATO ambitions and stands by the commitment made in Bucharest in 2008. However, if Ukraine was to meet the necessary criteria for membership and an invitation to join NATO issued, it would ultimately be for the people of Ukraine to decide whether to accept that invitation. The Ukrainian Government has already publicly stated that a referendum would be held before Ukraine joined the Alliance. In the meantime, we have urged the Ukrainian Government to raise public awareness of NATO, including correcting any false perceptions, as it is important that the people are able to make an informed choice. NATO can assist in these efforts through the NATO Liaison Office in Kiev.

22. (Recommendation 22) NATO needs to ensure that a continued commitment to mutual protection—Article 5—is at the heart of the new NATO Strategic Concept. NATO's global role is vital, given the shared challenges its Member States face. Yet this should not come at the expense of the Alliance's commitment towards mutual defence. (Paragraph 133)

We agree. As the Declaration on Alliance Security (Strasbourg/Kehl Summit, April 2009) states, "Article 5 of the Washington Treaty and collective defence, based on the indivisibility of Allied security are, and will remain, the cornerstone of our Alliance". That will not change. But the Strategic Concept will also need to underscore the Alliance's determination to work together to address the full range of challenges to its security, wherever these occur. It is not, and cannot be, a question of one or the other. The two are tightly linked: the out-of-area operation in Afghanistan emanates from our Article 5 commitment, and indeed, the capabilities that NATO needs for Article 5 collective defence and for crisis response operations beyond the transatlantic area are pretty much one and the same. We need an Alliance that is flexible and capable enough to respond to every eventuality it faces.

23. (Recommendation 23) Central and Eastern European NATO members are understandably concerned about their security. Countries such as Estonia have proved to be valuable allies, particularly in the ISAF mission in Afghanistan, and it is right that

we reassure them about their security. NATO should take steps to reassure Central and Eastern European NATO members that their security is of vital importance to the Alliance. (Paragraph 134)

24. (Recommendation 25) We believe that NATO’s decision to enhance the remit of the NATO Response Force, rather than creating new structures, is sensible. It is vital that the NATO Response Force is able to reassure Central and Eastern European Member States. NATO should maintain a visible military presence in the Baltic States, including through the use of air-policing and conducting exercises in the region. (Paragraph 139)

A recognition of the particular security concerns of NATO’s Central and Eastern European allies, and the political importance to them of a tangible demonstration of NATO’s resolve to deliver its Treaty obligations to all, was the genesis of the UK’s proposal for an Allied Solidarity Force (ASF)—a rapidly deployable, multi-national task force to provide assurance to those Allies who are, or feel themselves to be, at risk. The UK welcomed the discussion this proposal sparked in NATO. The agreed way forward neatly subsumes the intended effect of the ASF into a revised model for the NATO Response Force by giving it clear responsibilities in relation to Article 4 and 5, made visible through planning, training, exercises and liaison visits. Importantly, it balances the demands of collective defence and expeditionary operations. It is quite understandable that some Allies argue for a slightly different mix of forces than others. NATO needs to accommodate that. But equally, we need to be careful to resist being drawn back into Cold War-era thinking, with static defensive forces, postures and infrastructure we do not need.

25. (Recommendation 24) NATO should update its contingency plans for responding to an armed attack on its members, including ensuring that these plans cover the eventuality of attack on Baltic Member States, and setting out NATO’s planned military response. (Paragraph 137)

NATO’s contingency plans for responding to armed attack against Allies are reviewed in line with its threat assessments. It is also important that NATO refreshes its thinking on what constitutes threats in the 21st Century, and is prepared for all these eventualities. We expect this to be an important theme in the work NATO has commissioned on its new Strategic Concept.

26. (Recommendation 27) We welcome the Government’s publication of a National Cyber security Strategy and the establishment of new offices to coordinate and implement cyber security measures. Despite information from the MoD, we are still not clear what the exact role and contribution of the MoD is towards national cyber security. In the Government’s response to our Report, we recommend the Government to set out more clearly the MoD’s current and future work in relation to national cyber security. The MoD should also ensure that the importance of cyber security is reflected within its planning and resource allocation. (Paragraph 152)

The Government welcomes the Committee’s continuing interest in cyber security work. The Ministry of Defence would also welcome the opportunity to offer the Committee a further briefing to explain more fully the department’s role and contribution to the Government’s wider National Cyber security Strategy.

27. (Recommendation 26) The UK, alongside many other countries, faces an increasing threat of cyber attack. Cyber security is an issue of increasing significance for the UK and NATO as society becomes increasingly dependent on information and communication technology. The cyber attacks on Estonia and Georgia demonstrate the importance of the UK and NATO developing robust resilience. (Paragraph 151)

28. (Recommendation 28) Given the importance that the Government now attaches to national cyber security, we call on it to explain its decision not to sponsor the NATO Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence. The UK Government should urge NATO to recognise the security challenge posed by electronic warfare in NATO's new Strategic Concept. NATO should give cyber security higher priority within its planning to reflect the growing threat that this poses to its members. NATO should ensure that the work of the Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence is fully supported, including financially. (Paragraph 153)

As the UK and indeed the world becomes more reliant on information and communication technology, cyber attacks against Government, UK businesses, institutions and individuals have increased, are becoming more complex and better organised. The recent attacks against Estonia and Georgia demonstrate the potential of cyber attacks to undermine government and critical national infrastructure. The UK has therefore continued to increase its ability to combat cyber attacks and published a Cyber Security Strategy in June 2009.

The UK fully supports NATO's policy on cyber security which gives NATO responsibility for protecting NATO communications and information systems while nations retain the responsibility for safeguarding their own systems. We expect NATO's new Strategic Concept to address cyber security issues and the UK will encourage NATO to give cyber security higher priority in its planning. The Government also supports the NATO Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence and its endeavours in this important area. Senior defence officials and officers have visited the Centre, participated in its conferences and provided additional assistance to its development over the past two years. The Government believes the best way of making use of its resources is to contribute to the work of the Centre by assisting with specific workstreams, rather than by attaching personnel permanently. HMG will continue to seek out opportunities to engage with NATO and improve its cyber security.

European security and Russia

29. (Recommendation 29) We welcome the resumption of a dialogue between the EU and Russia on a new Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. Yet the Government's position, that the 'pace and tone' of negotiations on a new PCA will be informed by Russia's fulfilment of its obligations under the ceasefire agreements in Georgia, does not provide sufficient clarity on the Government's position. The Government should make a clear public statement that it will not sign up to a new Partnership and Cooperation agreement unless Russia honours its ceasefire commitments. (Paragraph 158)

We support the resumption of negotiations on the new EU-Russia framework agreement because we believe that this is in the EU's interests as well as Russia's. Negotiations on a

new agreement are a pragmatic way of pursuing our interests across a range of important issues, including energy, climate change and trade, as well as extending the rules-based framework to our relationship. However, while steady progress has been made on these talks, we expect them to continue for some time. The EU has made clear, in the context of these negotiations, that it will continue to press Russia to abide by international agreements to which it has signed up, including on Georgia. We continue to raise Russia's commitments on Georgia at every opportunity, bilaterally as well as multilaterally.

30. (Recommendation 30) We note the concern expressed by witnesses about Russia's motives in proposing a new European security architecture. We are not convinced that there is a need for such a new architecture, which may undermine the primacy of NATO's security role. Nevertheless, engagement with Russia on this matter is necessary to understand their security concerns. The current proposals are vague; Russia needs to come forward with further details of its proposals to enable a meaningful dialogue to take place. The UK Government should maintain its willingness to engage with Russia on this issue, but should make clear that it will not commit to an agreement that overrides existing commitments to NATO and human rights. We support the OSCE's role in taking forward initial discussions on the new security architecture. (Paragraph 166)

The Government agrees that Russia has an important role to play in European and international security and will continue to engage with Russia on these issues. But we also agree that Russia should provide a clearer explanation as to what their proposals would mean and how these would enhance our collective security. The Committee is also correct to highlight that this process cannot be allowed to undermine NATO, or the other institutions that provide security in Europe such as the EU and OSCE. We have made clear our red lines to Russia, as detailed in our original memorandum to the Committee.

OSCE Foreign Ministers discussed European security at an informal meeting in June 2009 and there was broad agreement that the OSCE was the right forum for this debate and that any discussion must cover the full range of threats to security in, and of, Europe. Ambassadors in Vienna were tasked to consider in more detail what these threats now are (across all three dimensions of our security) and report back to Ministers at the OSCE meeting in December.

European Energy Security and Russia

31. (Recommendation 31) Regardless of the causes of the Ukraine-Russia gas dispute, it is clear that it has damaged the reputations of both countries as reliable suppliers. The threat and reality of Russia cutting off energy supply demonstrates the need for the EU to reduce its energy dependency on Russia and diversify energy supply. (Paragraph 176)

32. (Recommendation 32) It is too early to judge what the long-term effect of the global economic crisis will be on future EU energy demand. Yet the EU needs to press ahead in diversifying its energy supply to ensure that it is not vulnerable to supply disputes. (Paragraph 178)

33. (Recommendation 33) The UK Government should work within the EU to pursue a united approach to energy security and the prioritisation of developing the Nabucco pipeline. (Paragraph 184)

We agree with the Committee's assessment that the EU needs to diversify the routes, sources and types of its energy supplies and to reduce its energy dependence on any one single supplier. Following the disruption to EU gas supplies at the beginning of this year, the Spring European Council conclusions highlighted specific actions to improve EU energy security. In particular we welcomed the conclusions' emphasis on the need to diversify sources of gas supply into the EU. The development of a Southern Corridor, including the Nabucco pipeline, will be an important component in the diversification of EU gas supplies. We look forward to further proposals from the Commission later this year on facilitating access to the Caspian and continuing EU engagement in the region.

We also welcome the Commission's proposal for a new regulation to replace the Gas Security of Supply Directive. This is intended to help facilitate, where appropriate, a more coordinated approach to emergency planning and encourage greater transparency and exchange of information. In addition, action is needed to improve interconnection within the EU in the short and longer term. In this regard we welcome the Commission's intention to revise the current TEN-E infrastructure programme next year, and the additional funding for interconnection agreed under the Economic Recovery Plan in March.

As the Spring European Council also confirmed, an open and competitive EU energy market remains a pre-requisite for ensuring energy security, and should help facilitate a more coherent external EU voice on energy issues. We therefore welcome the recent adoption of the Third Package of internal market legislation, and hope that Member States will begin implementation as soon as possible.

34. (Recommendation 34) In our view NATO should have a role in energy issues but it should not play a leading role; this is more appropriately a matter for the EU. Nevertheless, energy is an issue that it is legitimate for NATO to be concerned about because there are significant security implications arising from the possibility of disputes between countries over energy supplies and the potential for states to use their military assets to defend pipelines. The Government should work within NATO to develop an approach on energy issues that focuses on the security aspects of the energy agenda. (Paragraph 187)

The UK already works within NATO on energy security, where the Alliance is able to make a significant contribution to the energy security agenda. We are working to ensure that focus remains on the five areas identified as specific work is taken forward by the appropriate parts of that organisation.

Global security

35. (Recommendation 35) A strong bilateral relationship between the US and Russia is vital for global security. Yet it is also important for European security that this relationship does not come at the expense of the NATO-Russian relationship. (Paragraph 190)

36. (Recommendation 36) We welcome the US-Russian negotiations on a nuclear arms reduction treaty to succeed START I. We support the recommendation made by the Foreign Affairs Committee in its Report, Global Security: Non-Proliferation, that the Government should offer every assistance to facilitate a speedy and productive conclusion to the negotiations on a treaty to replace START I. We ask the Government, in its response to our Report, to set out what steps it has taken to facilitate an agreement. (Paragraph 195)

The Government agrees. We support the Obama Administration's desire to reset the relationship with Russia and are confident that this would not be at the expense of the NATO-Russia relationship.

The Government welcomes the commitment of the US and Russia to conclude a successor to START I by the end of 2009. We understand that talks are progressing well and are on track to reach agreement before the current treaty expires. The START negotiators will visit London on 3 September to report on their progress. The Government has taken a leading role in catalysing the renewed global momentum on nuclear disarmament, and we stand ready to provide any specific assistance should it be requested.

37. (Recommendation 37) We are not convinced that European security will be enhanced by the United States' planned ballistic missile defence (BMD) system as currently envisaged. If the US decides to press ahead with its BMD plans, we recommend that the Government seek ways to involve Russia in its development. (Paragraph 203)

The new US Administration has made clear that it wants to consult closely with its allies on missile defence. It has also confirmed that cooperating with Russia on the issue will be a priority and we welcome recent moves to reinvigorate discussions. On 6 July 2009, President Obama and President Medvedev signed a joint declaration, undertaking to "work together to analyse the ballistic missile challenges of the 21st century and to prepare appropriate recommendations, giving priority to the use of political and diplomatic methods". They also reaffirmed "their willingness to engage in equitable and mutually beneficial cooperation with all interested countries that share their assessments of the danger of global proliferation of ballistic missiles".

38. (Recommendation 38) Russia has an important bilateral relationship with Iran and thereby has a vital role in preventing Iran from developing nuclear weapons. We call on the Government to encourage Russia to persuade Iran to comply with its nuclear obligations. 208)

We agree that Russia has a vital role in preventing Iran from developing nuclear weapons. As part of the E3+3 group of countries Russia has recently reiterated its commitment to the dual-track strategy, which aims to secure a diplomatic solution to the Iran nuclear issue. We welcome the Committee's recommendation and assure them that in all contact with Russia, the Government encourages Russia to act in a manner conducive to bringing about our shared objective of getting Iran to enter into negotiations. This is likely to have to include supporting tough sanctions should Iran continue to fail to respond to the E3+3's invitation to talks.

Conclusions

39. (Recommendation 39) Although Russia does not pose a military threat to NATO as an Alliance, some Central and Eastern European NATO Member States are understandably concerned about the military threat that Russia poses to them individually, given Russia's actions in Georgia. It is important they are reassured. (Paragraph 211)

40. (Recommendation 40) It is in NATO's interests to continue to support the territorial integrity of Georgia. If Russia believes it has carte blanche to disregard international law there is an increased risk of other countries suffering the same fate as Georgia. The credibility of NATO as a military alliance is based on its ability to provide mutual defence to its Member States, as outlined in Article 5. NATO's new Strategic Concept should contain a renewed commitment to Article 5 as well as ensuring that NATO is militarily capable of acting inside and outside of NATO boundaries. NATO is strongest when its Member States are united; the UK Government should work within NATO to ensure that this is achieved. (Paragraph 212)

41. (Recommendation 41) It is right that NATO, the EU and the UK Government engage with Russia both on areas of cooperation and areas of disagreement. Russia has much to gain from positioning itself firmly within the community of nations. Engagement is important to build trust and avoid a new confrontation arising between Russia and the West. The Government should adopt a hard-headed approach to engagement with Russia, based on the reality of Russia's foreign policy rather than abstract and misleading notions of shared values. (Paragraph 213)

We reiterate our agreement with the Committee that Russia does not pose a military threat to the Alliance and that we wish to see a constructive relationship between NATO and Russia. The formulation of NATO's new Strategic Concept over the next year or so will provide the opportunity for clear elaboration of the role the Alliance sees for itself in the coming years. We believe that the goals and objectives that will be set out therein will, in the main, be ones on which we want to work together with Russia. Consideration of the workings and priorities of the NATO-Russia Council and discussion of the future of European security at the OSCE, are further opportunities to discuss, and agree, how best to tackle threats to all our security.

Engaging Russia bilaterally and through multilateral organisations enables us to develop common approaches to these issues where we face common challenges. We need to work together on tackling climate change, enhancing trade relationships and on shared foreign policy objectives, including Afghanistan, promoting peace in the Middle East and combating the threat of a nuclear Iran. Increasing our levels of engagement gives us the opportunity to raise those issues where we fundamentally disagree, like Russia's disproportionate actions in Georgia last summer, Russia's cutting off gas to Ukraine and EU member states in January 2009, and its blocking of the UN and OSCE monitoring missions to Georgia. Where Russia's actions threaten our interests and those of our partners, we will continue to say so firmly. And where Russia has misunderstood our actions as a threat to its interests, such as NATO enlargement and the EU's Eastern Partnership initiative, it is important we explain why this is not the case.

The relationship can only improve if there is respect for existing principles, commitments and institutions. The Government shares the view that it is right to adopt a hard-headed approach to the relationship with Russia. We are under no misconceptions about shared values, the absence of which has been brought into clear focus by recent Russian actions. Further progress at bilateral and multilateral level is conditional on Russia's policy and behaviour, but we remain committed to building as constructive a relationship as possible.

