

# DEFENCE AND SECURITY SURVEY 2011

November 2011



**RUSI**  
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## Propositions

- 1 The UK now has a strategy for its national security that is appropriate to the geopolitical challenges the country faces.
- 2 The senior military leadership should have a greater role in the development of strategy for security and defence and to protect the national interests of the United Kingdom.
- 3 The Libya campaign will increase the political willingness to engage in comparable interventions in the future.
- 4 Experience of the Libya campaign validated the equipment and capability changes set out in the Strategic Defence and Security Review.
- 5 The Government should stick to its commitment to withdraw all UK combat forces from Afghanistan by 2014, whatever the conditions on the ground.
- 6 The Ministry of Defence has done well in handling the resource constraints under this Government.
- 7 The implementation of the recommendations of the Defence Reform Unit (the Levene Review) is likely to improve the management of defence resources.
- 8 The Government's approach to the defence industry and procurement will assure access to necessary defence capabilities.
- 9 The need for a carrier strike capability has become more apparent since last year's Strategic Defence and Security Review.
- 10 The UK should invest more resources in the enabling capabilities necessary for independent operations, even if this reduces the size of deployable forces.

## Introduction

It has been a very difficult year for defence in general and for the Ministry of Defence (MoD) in particular. Against this background, military and defence officials might be grateful that results in this RUSI 2011 survey are not worse than they are. This annual survey among defence and security professionals and those most interested in the subject, show that around one-third of our respondents expressed support for the security strategy of the Coalition Government, the way the MoD is handling severe austerity, and are optimistic that the recommendations of the Defence Reform Unit (the Levene Review) will improve defence management. A majority would not pull combat forces out of Afghanistan regardless of what happens in 2014, and a bigger majority would switch more resources to the 'enabling capabilities' to allow the UK more freedom for independent operations. These may be regarded as the positive aspects of the results for defence planners.

Overall, however, the survey still reveals a good deal of scepticism among the clear majority of respondents at the way defence is being handled. By almost two to one, the respondents feel that the UK's current strategy for national security is not appropriate for the geopolitical situation the country faces; a majority of 45% to 35% criticise the way the MoD has handled the resource constraints of the last year, and a three to one majority of them are sceptical that defence procurement and the relationship with industry is being handled in a way that will assure access to the capabilities the Armed Forces will need in the future. More of our survey (46%), are unsure whether the Defence Reform Unit's recommendations will have any effect at all than those who are either optimistic or pessimistic about them. Clearly the Ministry of Defence is not getting majority endorsement from the defence and security professionals on any of the key issues covered by this year's survey.

The effect of the Libya operation can also be seen in these responses and if the Armed Forces are congratulated for their efforts, the MoD is not obviously sharing the credit. The evident success of the air and maritime operations highlighted the key role played by intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance (ISTAR) technologies in allowing external forces to operate with discrimination and precision. This has almost certainly highlighted the importance of 'enabling capabilities' among our respondents, alongside transport, refuelling and other necessary assets. There is a clear majority view that more resource should be put into this.

Not least, the troubled issue of aircraft carriers appears to be a touchstone of discontent. Despite the Government's claim – backed by operational success – that Libya validates the decision to retire our strike carriers until the next generation is ready in 2020, a 68% majority (to 24%) 'agree', or 'strongly agree', that the need for carrier strike is more evident now than a year ago. For many of those who have generally opposed the directions of the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR), the issue of carrier strike seems to have symbolised the essence of their objections. One might have expected the success of the Libya operation to shift opinion more towards Government policy in this respect. But it appears to have done the opposite; an indication that this may have emerged as the totemic issue in current defence debates.

**Professor Michael Clarke**  
Director-General, RUSI

1543 people took part in this survey between 20 and 27 October 2011. For further information, go to page 12.

## Proposition One

# The UK now has a strategy for its national security that is appropriate to the geopolitical challenges the country faces.

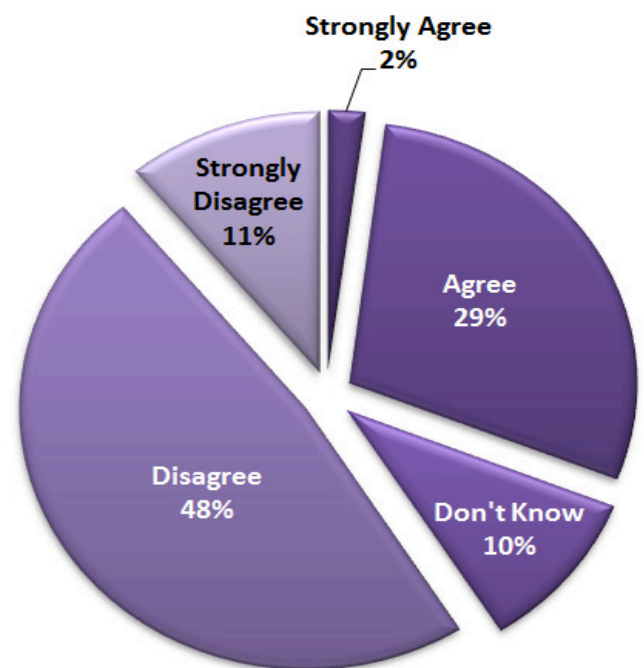
### Expert View

By a strong majority of 59% to 31%, our audience did not feel that the Government's National Security Strategy measured up to the geopolitical challenges faced by the country.

This was a result not very different to the 68-26% margin in last year's survey, in which respondents expressed their view that the Strategic Defence and Security Review was a 'lost opportunity' for a more radical reassessment of the UK's role in the world. Both results express a more general sense of unease that by adopting an 'adaptive approach' to risk management, the National Security Strategy has failed to take the tough decisions on priorities which, it would be argued, are needed in a rapidly-changing world.

While there may be a large majority who do not believe that the current approach is appropriate, however, it is less clear whether there is a consensus around any specific alternative.

Analysis by  
Professor Malcolm Chalmers  
Research Director, RUSI



Answer Options	Response (%)	Response Count
Strongly Agree	2	27
Agree	29	458
Don't Know	10	150
Disagree	48	744
Strongly Disagree	11	164
Total	100	1543

## Proposition Two

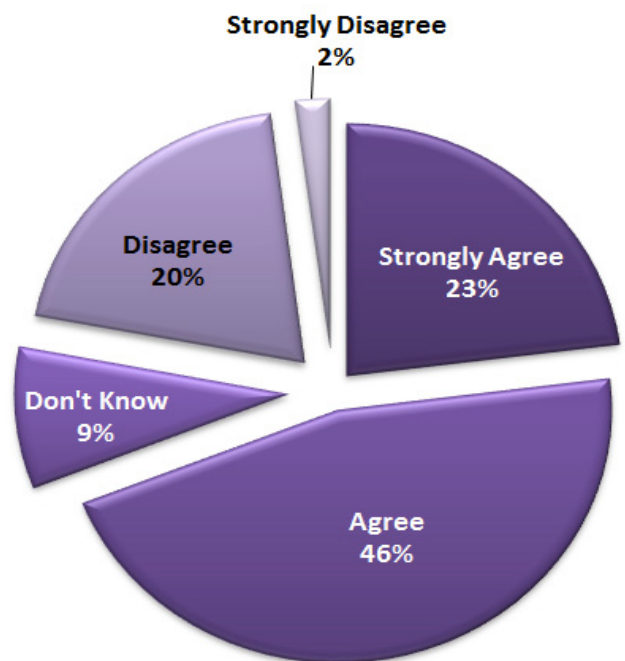
# The senior military leadership should have a greater role in the development of strategy for security and defence and to protect the national interests of the United Kingdom.

### Expert View

This year's survey results reflect a concern across Whitehall – and in the Ministry of Defence in particular – that the UK does not do strategy well in its original sense of integrating ends, means and ways. There is also a view that politicians have not shown proper respect for or given appropriate consideration to the advice of senior military officers, the Chief of Defence Staff, Heads of Services and operational commanders. Overall, the UK does not have a long term grand strategy integrating all the instruments of power (diplomatic, economic, and informational as well as military) towards a vision of where the country wants to be in security terms and how to go about this.

To this question, 46% of respondents endorse these views (23% strongly agree). There are four challenges, however, with senior military figures having a greater role in strategy. First, for grand strategy British senior officers are not typically perceived to be visionary. Secondly, it is not possible to present a grand strategy that addresses such issues as the UK's global influence and emergent threat nations in the public domain for obvious diplomacy reasons. As for specific strategies for operations, in the case of both Iraq and Afghanistan, the overarching strategy was and still is not British. In Iraq it was American. In Afghanistan it should be NATO's and is becoming increasingly American again. So for the UK it has to be a strategy within a strategy. Finally, it must be asked whether senior military officers could be trusted to make recommendations that would not support the interests of their own services or defence as a whole.

Analysis by Michael Codner  
Senior Research Fellow and Director of Military  
Sciences, RUSI



Answer Options	Response (%)	Response Count
Strongly Agree	23	355
Agree	46	715
Don't Know	9	129
Disagree	20	307
Strongly Disagree	2	37
Total	100	1543

## Proposition Three

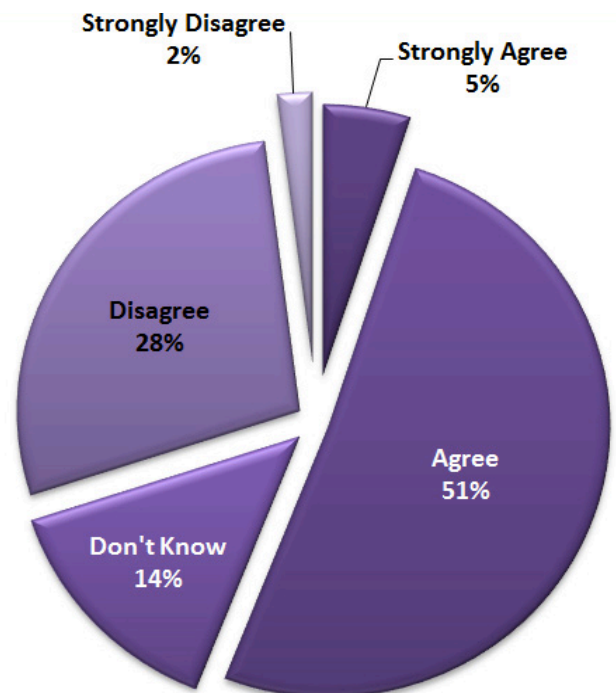
# The Libya campaign will increase the political willingness to engage in comparable interventions in the future.

### Expert View

This is a striking result. When the Coalition Government came to power, it appeared that the tide had turned against discretionary interventions: a shift reflected, most notably, by the Prime Minister's decision to set a firm and unconditional date for withdrawal of front line forces from Afghanistan. Yet, scarcely six months after the ink dried on the SDSR, the UK took the lead (alongside France) in a new military operation whose result could not be foreseen, and about which there was much scepticism, not least in our leading ally. Now that the operation has come to a militarily successful conclusion, however, our respondents may well be right in believing by a majority of 56% to 30% – that this can only strengthen those in the Cabinet, and our political elite more generally, who believe that humanitarian intervention can be successful, both in garnering wide international support (including at the UN) and in achieving its objectives.

But the key word may be comparable. The Libya campaign has been a very different beast from the large-scale military operations (Iraq and Afghanistan) to which UK armed forces have devoted most of their energies over the last decade: smaller scale, more dependent on local and regional allies, forces on the ground limited to advisory roles, and zero UK casualties. Libya may have made politicians more willing to undertake future operations that replicate these conditions. There is little or no sign that it will make them more willing to undertake major occupation/stabilisation operations any time soon.

Analysis by  
Professor Malcolm Chalmers  
Research Director, RUSI



Answer Options	Response (%)	Response Count
Strongly Agree	5	81
Agree	51	790
Don't Know	14	220
Disagree	28	423
Strongly Disagree	2	29
Total	100	1543

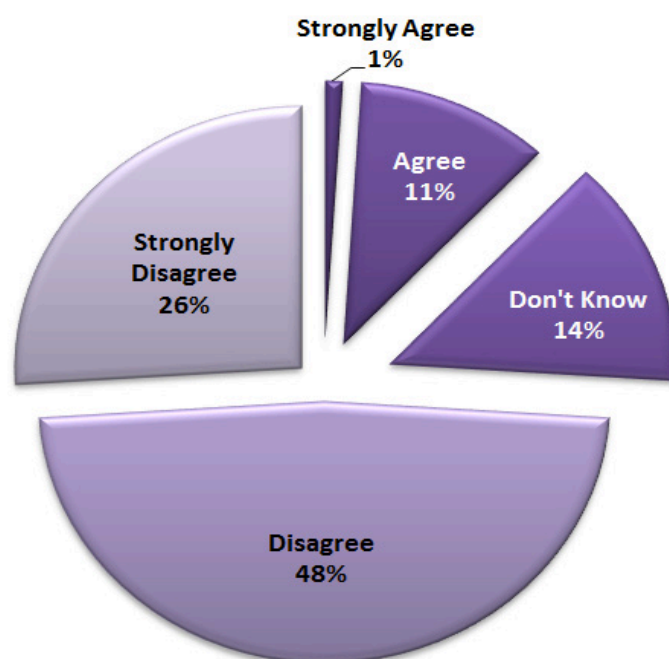
# Experience of the Libya campaign validated the equipment and capability changes set out in the Strategic Defence and Security Review.

### Expert View

The fact that the Libyan campaign was clinically accurate and has resulted in political success for the NATO powers, has not, in the view of our respondents, validated the cuts and changes made in the recent defence review. Only 12% of the survey thought that it had. Almost half of the total respondents 'disagreed' and over a quarter 'strongly disagreed'. Such negative responses amounted to 74% on this question. This reaction is consistent with later responses on the proposition for aircraft carriers (Proposition Nine), where 68% of those surveyed thought that the need for carrier strike capabilities 'has become more apparent' in the last year (which was dominated by the Libyan campaign). Compared to last year's survey, this indicates a strengthening of the opposition to the Government's decisions to decommission current aircraft carriers. Last year, a slight majority, 51%, agreed with the proposition that the Government made the right decision on future carrier strike capability.

Nevertheless, in the earlier question on Libya a two-to-one majority of respondents felt that the success of the campaign would 'increase the political willingness to engage in comparable interventions'.

It appears that our respondents attribute the success of the Libya campaign either to improvisation or luck – or perhaps a combination of both. The lack of endorsement for the SDSR's capability shifts certainly implies that our respondents think that the Armed Forces somehow 'coped' with the needs of the Libyan operation rather than that they took them in an appropriate stride.



Answer Options	Response (%)	Response Count
Strongly Agree	1	18
Agree	11	168
Don't Know	14	214
Disagree	48	742
Strongly Disagree	26	401
Total	100	1543

Analysis by Professor Michael Clarke  
Director-General, RUSI



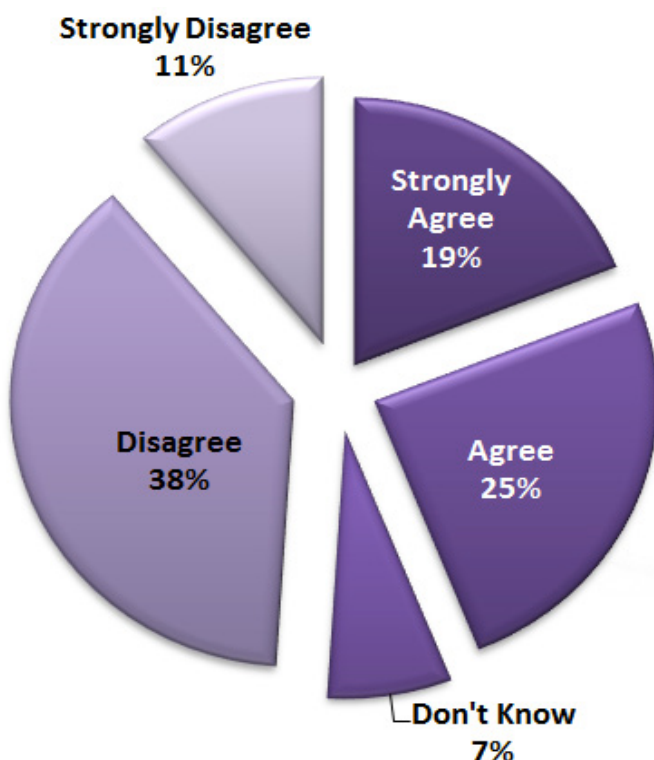
# The Government should stick to its commitment to withdraw all UK combat forces from Afghanistan by 2014, whatever the conditions on the ground.

### Expert View

Our survey indicates that views on Afghanistan may be equally split between 'staying or going' after 2014 (49% to 44%) with the lowest 'don't know' score in this year's survey of only 7%. The majority opinion on both sides hovers around a sense of commitment to see the operation through to some sort of satisfactory conclusion – around 2014 if possible, later if necessary. There may be some prospect of combat operations winding up earlier than 2014 if US policy changes dramatically. But in general, this question concerns the certainty of a UK withdrawal from a combat role in Afghanistan, and on that point, elite opinion is evenly divided over the most appropriate timing.

This is consistent with the clear majority of respondents (61%) last year who felt that making military resources available for Afghanistan, even at the cost of other capabilities, was the clear priority for the UK at that time. A generally strong sense of commitment to the Afghanistan operation is a feature of defence community polling, even if the wisdom or strategic rationale of engaging in Afghanistan is heavily questioned. On the basis of individual comments made by respondents at their own discretion, it is also evident that the story of Afghanistan is now unrelentingly one of drawdown and disengagement. The argument about 'success' in Afghanistan is not now about defeating the Taliban as such, but creating some sort of sustainable future for the Afghan authorities after 2014.

Analysis by  
Professor Michael Clarke  
Director-General, RUSI



Answer Options	Response (%)	Response Count
Strongly Agree	19	297
Agree	25	388
Don't Know	7	106
Disagree	38	582
Strongly Disagree	11	170
Total	100	1543

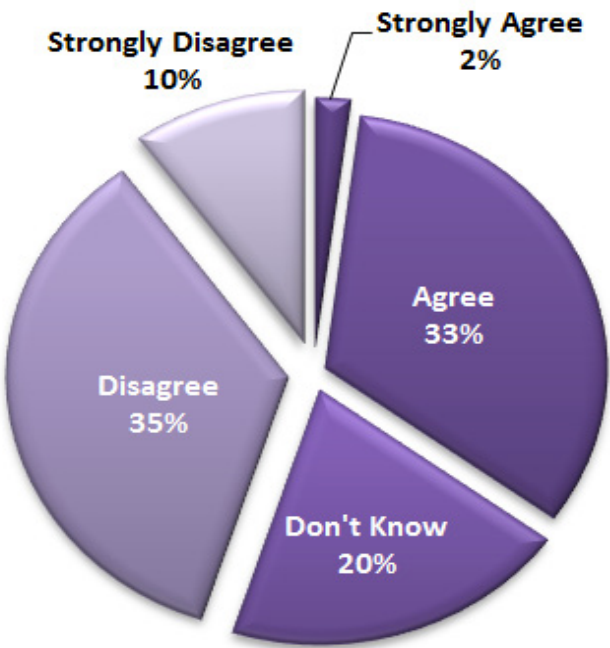
# The Ministry of Defence has done well in handling the resource constraints under this Government.

## Expert View

Of all the challenges faced by the Ministry of Defence (MoD) over the last year, none has been so difficult, and all-encompassing, as the need to respond to the cut in its budget announced in the October 2010 Spending Review. The need to deliver this cut was the central driver for the 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review and for the subsequent ‘Three Month Exercise’ in 2011, which announced a further package of force reductions.

45% of our respondents do not believe that the MoD has done a good job in responding to these difficult circumstances. Given the extent to which the SDSR has been criticised for lacking any sense of strategic priorities, however, the Government may be somewhat heartened by the 35% who believe that the MoD has done a reasonably good job in this respect. A significant proportion of defence community opinion does appear to accept that the MoD is at least beginning to get its act together, in what are very difficult fiscal circumstances.

Analysis by Professor Malcolm Chalmers  
Research Director, RUSI



Answer Options	Response (%)	Response Count
Strongly Agree	2	35
Agree	33	500
Don't Know	20	309
Disagree	35	541
Strongly Disagree	10	158
Total	100	1543

# The implementation of the recommendations of the Defence Reform Unit (the Levene Review) is likely to improve the management of defence resources.

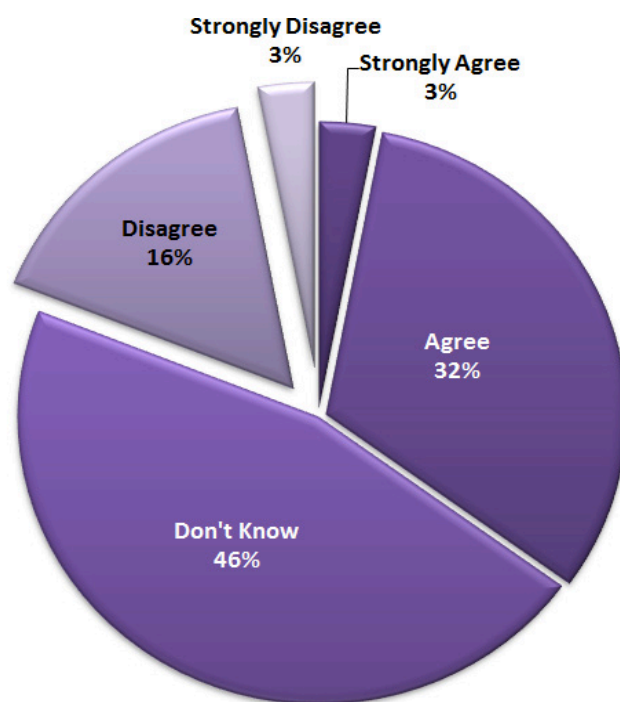
### Expert View

Our respondents expressed a high level of uncertainty regarding a potential impact of the Levene Review on the management of defence resources. This scepticism is likely driven by the understanding that the implementation of the report's recommendations faces major challenges. This includes how, in practice, to introduce a culture of accountability and responsibility in the Ministry of Defence (MoD), to cope with limitations of delegating to the single services and to establish the Joint Force as a strong and influential organisation.

Moreover, it may stem from the notion that the report in many areas raises more questions than answers and does not offer a straightforward, coherent change programme. The audience's reservation about the report's actual impact may also reflect the time lag between its publication and this survey. The follow-through of the reports' recommendations could take several directions and any judgement on its implications for the management of defence resources at this point in time would be unfounded and premature. In addition, due to the very detailed identification of the MoD's problems by the report, it was easy for its recommendations to remedy them to slip without too much attention. However, it seems that a significant part of our audience awards a leap of faith to the report's recommendations regarding the Levene Review as a foundation for the government's defence reform endeavours.

### Analysis by

Dr Henrik Heidenkamp, Research Fellow, Defence, Industries and Society Programme, RUSI



Answer Options	Response (%)	Response Count
Strongly Agree	3	47
Agree	32	498
Don't Know	46	711
Disagree	16	244
Strongly Disagree	3	43
Total	100	1543



# The Government's approach to the defence industry and procurement will assure access to necessary defence capabilities.

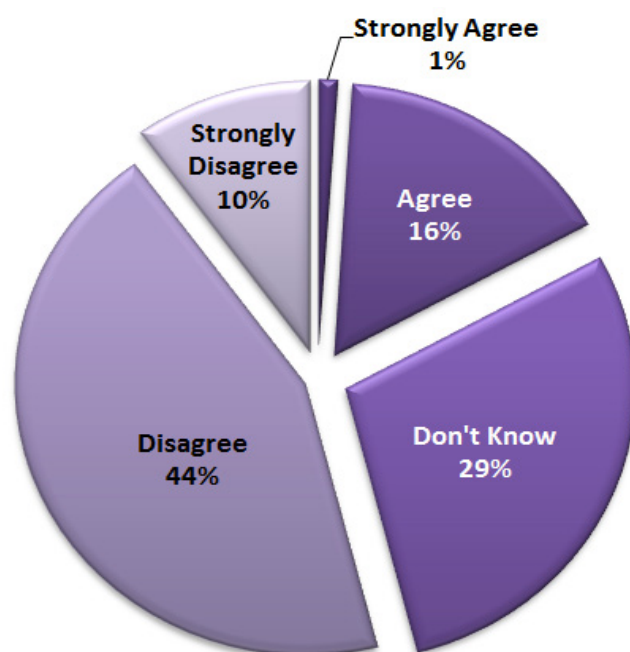
### Expert View

A large proportion of our respondents disagree with the proposition that the Government's approach to the defence industry and procurement will assure access to necessary defence capabilities. Key reasons for this disagreement may be the lack of a robust and considered industrial policy agenda within the 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review and the uncertain impact of the long-awaited and still not published White Paper. Furthermore, media reports of inadequate and the lack of equipment for deployed forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as the public conflict between some senior military officers and political leaders on this issue, raised doubts on the Government's willingness to acknowledge the defence industry as a crucial part of the national defence effort.

The Government's reluctance to reduce the UK's strategic ambition and the parallel decision to either cancel or reduce the size and/or capability requirements of major equipment programmes added to the fear that the government may not be able to assure access to necessary defence capabilities. Moreover, long histories of significant overspend and delay in major equipment programmes – often presented to the public through high profile reports by the National Audit Office – reduced the respondent's trust in the Government's capability to manage defence acquisition processes in an effective and accountable manner. Finally, the announcement of major job cuts in the British defence industry triggered a debate about the long-term sustainability of the British defence industrial base as well as on the availability and affordability of defence equipment.

### Analysis by

Dr Henrik Heidenkamp, Research Fellow, Defence, Industries and Society Programme, RUSI



Answer Options	Response (%)	Response Count
Strongly Agree	1	16
Agree	16	249
Don't Know	29	443
Disagree	44	682
Strongly Disagree	10	153
Total	100	1543

# The need for a carrier strike capability has become more apparent since last year's Strategic Defence and Security Review.

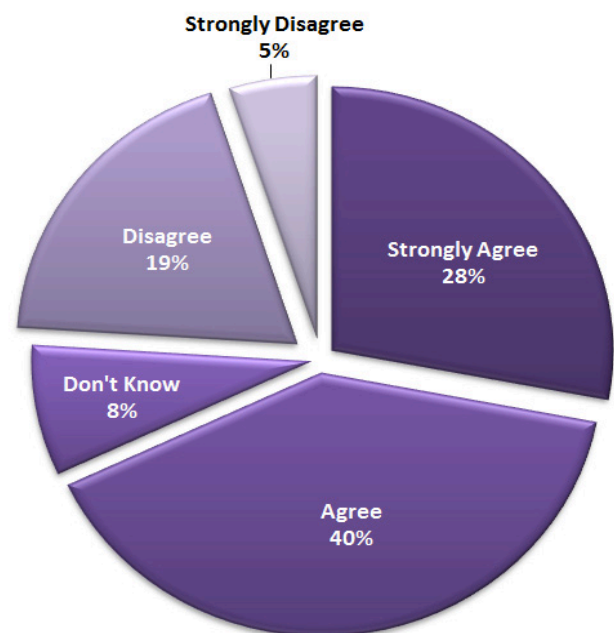
### Expert View

Last year's RUSI Survey saw 51% of respondents agree that the UK was right to continue with a carrier strike capability. One year on, a clearer majority of 68% now agree that the need for a carrier strike capability has become more apparent.

The Strategic Defence and Security Review argued that deploying a range of various capabilities from carriers, not just sea-borne aviation, would be fundamental to the UK's future requirements after 2020.

The Libya operation seems to have suggested to our respondents that the need is more short-term. Even without a carrier, the UK's contribution to Libya was significant. Arguments were made during the operation, however, that the UK could have contributed more with an available carrier, and a large majority of those surveyed seem to agree with this; or at least that UK operations between 2010 and 2020 are likely to demonstrate that this capability is required. Apache helicopters, for example, embarked in HMS *Ocean* capitalised on the flexibility and manoeuvrability of a large flat-topped ship, bringing both strike and coercive effects – effects which would have been bolstered by sea-based fast air with its reach, repeatability and increased time over target.

The SDSR intended to bring the strike carrier back into the UK's force mix in 2020, when it argues it can be afforded. The majority in our survey think that events indicate we will need it before then.



Answer Options	Response (%)	Response Count
Strongly Agree	28	436
Agree	40	623
Don't Know	8	121
Disagree	19	289
Strongly Disagree	5	74
Total	100	1543

Analysis by Dr Lee Willett, Senior Research Fellow, Maritime Studies, RUSI

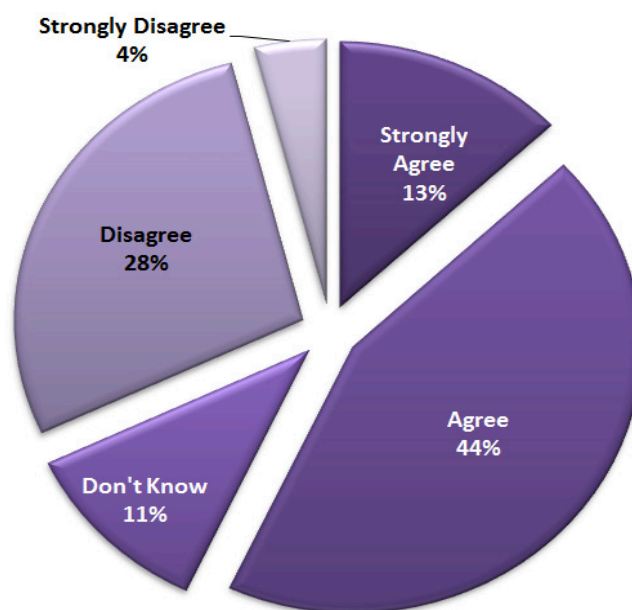
# The UK should invest more resources in the enabling capabilities necessary for independent operations, even if this reduces the size of deployable forces.

### Expert View

The unanswered question is of course: what sort of independent operations is the UK likely to commit to? The obvious answers are: national obligations to Overseas Territories and to the evacuation of civilians from a crisis zone where other nations have not the commitment or the resources (Sierra Leone comes to mind). Most importantly, there is the military contribution to domestic security and security of national airspace, territorial seas and the Exclusive Economic Zone; and finally humanitarian interventions and disaster relief where the UK feels a particular lone responsibility. It is most unlikely now and for the foreseeable future that the UK would go it alone for other sorts of operations. Interestingly over half the respondents agree. It is sensible that the capabilities required for these operations should form the basis of the future force.

But the UK government could not even meet its obligations for national security alone, for instance in dealing with direct security challenges from emerging major powers or for preserving the use of the seas, space and information domain for British purposes. So the UK needs to contribute capability to Alliances to get something in return. What this contribution should be is the question. If it is an expansion of the requirements for independent operations, future capabilities will have a maritime focus. Another objective in the UK's grand strategy, such as it is, is to maintain global influence. Perhaps ground forces show a stronger commitment in this respect but with the concomitant risks of embroilment. Where financial savings could be made are in this 'influence premium'.

Analysis by Michael Codner  
Senior Research Fellow and Director of Military  
Sciences, RUSI



Answer Options	Response (%)	Response Count
Strongly Agree	13	196
Agree	44	682
Don't Know	11	168
Disagree	28	439
Strongly Disagree	4	58
Total	100	1543

# 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review Survey

## Results

In 2010, RUSI asked 2,015 people from the defence and security community whether they agreed or disagreed to ten key statements covering the outcome of the defence review, future capabilities, national security and, the UK's position in the world.

### 1. The SDSR was a lost opportunity for a more radical reassessment of the UK's role in the world.

68% (1363 respondents) agreed with the statement, 26% (517 respondents disagreed) and 6% (135 respondents) were undecided.

### 2. The Government's spending review has struck a reasonable balance between cuts in the defence budget and cuts in other public services.

65% (1291) agreed, where as 30% (601) disagreed and 5% (103) didn't know.

### 3. The Government was right to make defence part of a wider review of national security.

94% (1901) agreed, 4% (83) disagreed and 2% (31) were undecided.

### 4. The SDSR has maintained an appropriate balance between ground, air and sea capabilities.

32% (658) agreed, 50% (992) disagreed and 18% (365) didn't know.

### 5. Given the contractual obligations that it has inherited, the UK Government has made the right decision on future carrier strike capability.

51% (1033) agreed, 37% disagreed (742) and 12% (240) were undecided.

### 6. The SDSR has eliminated the inherited over commitment in the defence programme.

23% agreed (455), 53% disagreed (1079) and 24% (481) didn't know.

### 7. The Government is right to make capabilities for Afghanistan the main defence priority for the next period, even if this means that greater cuts have to be made in other areas.

61% agreed (1236), 35% (701) disagreed and 4% didn't know (78).

### 8. The SDSR should have done more to emphasise the role of the armed forces in homeland defence, even at the expense of other capabilities.

39% agreed (777), 49% (997) disagreed and 12% (241) didn't know.

### 9. The SDSR provides a welcome opportunity for deepening UK-France defence co-operation.

45% (917) agreed, 31% (623) disagreed and 24% (475) didn't know.

### 10. After the SDSR, the US will take the UK less seriously in terms of military capability.

58% (1171) agreed, 30% (608) disagreed and 12% (236) didn't know.

## About Defence and Security Survey 2011

Between 20 October and 27 October 2011, RUSI invited its membership and wider defence and security network to offer their reactions to ten propositions posed by RUSI. 1543 people took part in this poll. The anonymity of contributors was preserved. In addition to giving their reactions to the ten statements posed by RUSI, our network was invited to offer its qualitative contributions. More than a third of those who took part offered their views, which we distill in this paper.

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