

## DETERRENCE

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Deterrence depends upon actions that could be taken and would be taken and which would definitely harm the attacker or prospective perpetrator. So the action needs to be evidently available, ready to be used and sufficient to make any planned action socially unacceptable. Deterrence does not need to be used, but be evidently available for use.

The question that arises in the world today is what sort of deterrence is, and will be likely to be, appropriate for present and future threats. In particular this question arises in the UK relation to nuclear missiles and the replacement of Trident. But it is also much wider and relates to the whole military strategy and capability of the UK.

Nuclear missiles may have been appropriate as a deterrent during the cold war period. Then there was a definite and identifiable possible 'enemy' whose policies and actions could be judged to pose a possible threat and who certainly had a substantial nuclear arsenal and capability. At the present time it does not seem plausible that such threats exist from sources that in any way could justify the use of nuclear weapons or that the prospect of such use would deter or modify recognisable present day and likely future threats.

The threats we see today arise mainly from religious fundamentalist groups. Western democratic culture seems to be alien to the views of such groups and in some cases they feel justified in not just protesting against such culture but of attacking and killing people who do not support their views – whether locally in their own country or in other parts of the world. The threats are at present more from local activists within countries, so not easily identifiable and targetable as different from the local community – so risks of 'collateral damage'.

Pressures between countries and groups of people are likely to increase as global warming progressively reduces availability of land for agriculture and sea level rises reduce the use of low level land. Increases in world population increase pressures on natural resources, such as fresh water, local agricultural capability. Such pressures are likely to increase risks of conflicts between groups and lead, as we now see, to large-scale migrations. Migrations themselves are likely to increase pressures on countries along migration paths and in target ending countries. The conflicts likely to arise are not combated by military deterrence. Nuclear deterrence is even less relevant.

The maintenance and pursuit of nuclear deterrence by western democracies involves high direct financial costs and employs large numbers of skilled people. The sale of military supplies to other countries involves similar resources. Do these activities add to the security of those countries or of the UK? Also, this may create a political image to the world at large of lack of concern for real world problems and approaches that do little to assist their solution. Is military and nuclear capability the best and most effective justification for inclusion of the UK on the UN Security Council? Would not the UK better provide a constructive role in the world by use of the resources involved in nuclear deterrence to improve the sustainability of its way of life and to demonstrate the advantages and attractions of this?

While there can be good justification for the maintenance of military capabilities, the objectives and modes of use need to be properly assessed. Surely the role for UK military forces is more likely to be to assist UN peace keeping, and perhaps peace making activities. Army, air and naval resources can be expected to be needed for this, but probably not as continuations or extensions of earlier or even present military resources.

There needs to be more thought given to how conflicts may be avoided and how groups of people experiencing problems may be best helped to resolve problems for themselves in their countries. This requires an appreciation of the needs of and respect for those societies and effort to ensure that support is actually used to help resolve the problems. This is 'deterrence' in another and constructive form.