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British Defense Policy:  
A New Approach?

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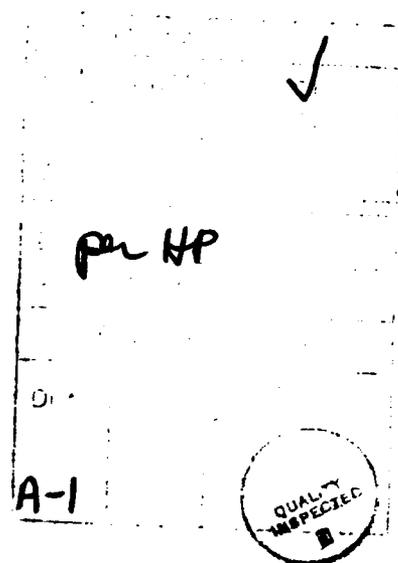
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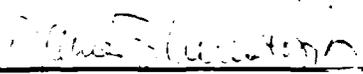
British Defense Policy:  
A New Approach?

William R. Applegate

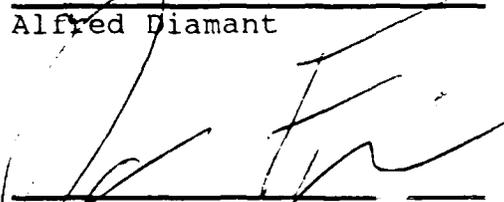


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Master of Arts.

  
James Christoph, Chairman

  
Alfred Diamant

  
Norman Furniss

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the lady who introduced me to young Willie McBride -

Who didn't mind that I sat down by his graveside.  
I saw by his gravestone he was only nineteen,  
when he joined the great fallen of 1916.  
I hope he died well and I hope he died clean,  
or Willie McBride, was it slow and obscene?

The trenches are vanished now under the plough,  
no gas and no barbed-wire, no guns firing now.  
But there in that graveyard it's still no-mans land,  
and the countless white crosses in mute witness stand,  
to man's blind indifference to his fellow man,  
and the whole generation that was butchered and damned.

And I can't help but wonder now, Willie McBride  
do all those who lie there know why they died?  
Did you really believe them when they told you the cause,  
did you really believe that the war would end wars?  
But the suffering, the sorrow, the glory, the shame,  
the killing, the dying, it was all done in vain.  
For Willie McBride it's all happened again,  
and again and again and again and again.

Did they beat the drum slowly, did they play the fife lowly,  
did they sound the death march as they lowered you down?  
Did the band play the last post and chorus?  
Did the pipes play the flowers of the forest?\*

\*Transcribed from an English folk song. Unfortunately, the author is unknown to me.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The completion of this thesis would not have been possible without the assistance of many people. First and foremost, I wish to thank my wife Linda. Her superior typing support was matched only by her love, patience and understanding. When I needed a push, she provided it. When I didn't need one, none was forthcoming.

Second, my warmest appreciation is extended to our family and friends in England. Their encouragement and logistical support proved to be invaluable while I conducted some of my research for this project during June and July of 1988. A special thanks must also go to my brother-in-law Peter, who provided me with material from the Ministry of Defence that I would not have acquired otherwise. Additionally, my thanks go out to my parents, whose consideration was more than gracious during a Thanksgiving visit to Bloomington while I finalized the text.

It is also respectfully appropriate for me to thank the members of my thesis committee: Professors Christoph, Diamant and Furniss. Their insightful comments and timely responses to my writings have enabled us all to successfully accomplish this mission.

- W.R.A.  
Bloomington, Indiana  
December, 1988

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## Introduction

As I began to formulate ideas for this project and conduct initial research, there were numerous occasions when I discussed British defense policy with my military colleagues. To the man, and in one case woman, their immediate response to me was, "Does Britain actually have a defense policy?" The question always startled me. How could a nation that has defended its territorial integrity for more than 900 years, destroyed the Spanish Armada, helped defeat Napoleon, established the most far-reaching empire known to man, and won two world wars not have a defense policy? My reaction was not so much an indictment of my colleagues, for it is not, but rather an acknowledgement of the need to improve our understanding of Britain and her current contribution to the defense of the western world.

Yes, Britain does indeed have a defense policy. It is based upon many factors, a few of the most important being historical experience, threat analysis, utilization of increasingly scarce resources and political ideology. Britain's defense policy is both ambitious and somewhat precarious. She does possess the wherewithal to execute it, but problems both lingering and futuristic, could threaten the continuity of current initiatives. But has this always been the case?

This thesis will examine changes in British defense policy from several perspectives. First the evolution of the operational components of policy, e.g., the Admiralty, War Office, Army, Air Ministry, and original Ministry of Defence will be reviewed in Chapter I. This is for foundational purposes rather than an exercise in historical regurgitation. One is usually better equipped to comprehend current situations by first understanding what had existed before. Second, the above mentioned operational components, or rather their successors, will be investigated as they exist today. As a US Army Foreign Area Officer, it has been my experience that thorough knowledge of organizations is invaluable when dealing with allies. If any of my colleagues ever read this thesis, they hopefully will find Chapter II to be beneficial in this regard. In Chapter III, past defense policy positions will be examined, with primary emphasis upon the period from the end of World War I until the late 1970s. This was a period of considerable operational change within British defense policy. In Chapter VI, British defense policy under Margaret Thatcher will be discussed in detail. As the "resolute" Prime Minister, she is noted for rejecting the postwar consensus and taking a "new approach". The Epilogue will assess whether, and to

what extent, her new approach has pervaded British defense policy.

Because I am simultaneously a graduate student and an Army officer, this thesis is designed to pursue two purposes. It is being submitted as partial fulfillment toward the requirements of a Master of Arts in West European Studies and therefore must exhibit a level of academic analysis commensurate with an advanced university degree. It will also be submitted as required by US Army Regulation to the Defense Technical Information Center. This requirement unofficially stipulates that it be written in such a manner as to provide reference information to any of my colleagues who may have contact with the British defense policy apparatus. It is not however, an examination of the British defense policy-making process. This thesis is an effort to serve two higher authorities. Hopefully it will provide sufficient intellectual stimulation without an excess of Army "How-To Manual" structure.

## Chapter I - Former Operational Components of British Defense Policy

### The Admiralty and Naval Development

The geographical reality of island nationhood dictated that the development of Britain and naval assets became inseparable and concurrent events. Sea power resulted in the economic benefits of trade, which in turn produced growth and national wealth. This symbiotic relationship, recognized by Britons as inherent to their well-being, was also acknowledged by the remainder of the world in its attitude toward Britain. Is not "Rule Britannia, Britannia Rules the Waves" the first English song that one learns?

King Edward III was the first English monarch to formally recognize the importance of sea power to his nation. In an attempt to coordinate and control the trade protection efforts of localized sea captains, he established the High Court of Admiralty in 1360.<sup>1</sup> Its charter was to place the naval activities of the nation under monarchical control. Although this body proved to be more successful in coordinating than controlling, it did establish the notion of centralized naval authority.

By the reign of Henry VIII, monarchical hegemony over the nation's sea assets began to become a reality.

King Henry was both revolutionary and visionary. He created the nucleus of a government-financed navy with the construction of 53 warships during his reign.<sup>2</sup> These ships were the first in England specifically designed for naval combat. On 24 April 1546 he established the Naval Board under the control of a Lord High Admiral. The Naval Board served as a policy consultation body and was responsible for official governmental administration of the navy. The Lord High Admiral became the personification of supreme naval power under the monarch. Henry also issued King's Regulations and Admiralty Instructions designed to enforce discipline among the seamen, establish operational standing orders, and codes of conduct for officers.<sup>3</sup> Thus, King Henry established sea power as the principal means of national power projection and rightly deserves his title as founder of the Royal Navy.<sup>4</sup>

After King Henry's strong initial foundation, the Royal Navy received widely divergent levels of governmental support for the next 150 years. Despite the stunning victory against the Spanish Armada in 1588 and the popular support for naval operations that resulted, Queen Elizabeth I, concerned primarily with economizing the cost of government, built only seven

warships during her 45 year reign. King James I followed, allowing another 22 years of deterioration.<sup>5</sup>

King Charles I, crowned in 1625, attempted to restore the navy and built 12 new warships by 1639.<sup>6</sup> Despite his efforts, his relationship with echelons below the Naval Board and Lord High Admiral were poor. Although corruption, especially concerning the supply of ordnance and victuals, is characteristic of British naval history until the 19th century, the reign of Charles I was particularly notorious for nepotism and profiteering. It is not surprising that much of the Royal Navy provided at least tacit support to the Roundheads in the 1642 Civil War. Naval administration during the period of Commonwealth was conducted by a series of Parliamentary Commissions until the restoration of the monarchy in 1660.<sup>7</sup>

During the reign of Charles II, 1660 to 1685, warship construction increased due to successive wars with Holland. Substantial naval administrative reorganization also occurred. In 1675, King Charles established the Board of Admiralty, later to be known simply as the Admiralty. This bureaucratic innovation became responsible for Royal Navy policy formulation and execution.<sup>8</sup> The Naval Board from the time of Henry VIII still existed, but had evolved into an administrative organization primarily concerned with the provision of

stores. By 1688 the Admiralty had established superiority over the Naval Board and consumed it through incorporation in 1832.<sup>9</sup> Although Charles initially muddied the waters by adding a competing organization to the direction of England's naval affairs, he laid the organizational foundation that elevated policy concepts and execution to a position above simple administration. By the time of his death, the Royal Navy numbered approximately 100 warships and was actively engaged in European affairs and colonial acquisition. King William and Queen Mary doubled the number of ships within 14 years and further increased Britain's capability to compete in the rapidly changing international environment.<sup>10</sup>

In 1694 the Board of the Admiralty consisted of ten members: four civilian and six naval. All were appointed by the Crown. A First Lord, who was also a Cabinet Minister, was appointed as head of the board.<sup>11</sup> Administrative support included only one secretary, two chief clerks, six subordinate clerks, one messenger, two servants, one porter, one watchman and a woman cleaner<sup>12</sup> - obviously a very humble beginning for an organization that would evolve into one of the most powerful and intractable elements of the modern, although not current, British bureaucracy.

The Admiralty was organized into three operating groups. The Division of Naval Staff was responsible for advising on general and technical policy, strategy, tactics, and operational planning. This included the disposition of the fleet, methods of naval warfare and material requirements. The second group, the Naval Departments Division, advised on personnel and material policy. It was responsible for the provision of men and training. After the incorporation of the Naval Board, this group also assumed responsibility for the provision of ships and supplies. Finally, the Secretariat Branches Division coordinated Admiralty activities, provided advice on policy priorities, administered pay, and conducted financial oversight.<sup>13</sup>

The Admiralty under Charles II was indeed a fledgling organization when compared to the Admiralty of 1964 that was abolished and incorporated into the Ministry of Defence. It did, however, possess the basic organizational structure that was to last for nearly 300 years. It was also subject to the whims of many more monarchs and the circumstances of history.

Naval development during the 18th century tended to fluctuate with the advent of war and peace: highly prepared, then grossly neglected. For example, after the War of the Spanish Succession, 1702 - 1713, naval personnel strength declined from 27,000 in 1715 to 7,000

in 1720. This pattern of expansion and contraction continued through the War of Jenkin's Ear against Spain in 1739, the War of the Austrian Succession against France from 1740 until 1748, the Seven Years War, again against France from 1756 until 1763, and the American War of Independence from 1776 until 1781.<sup>14</sup> Although the absolute size of the Royal Navy increased throughout this period, the practice of alternate expansion and contraction did not cease until the middle of the 19th century.

The 18th century also produced a series of significant innovations. In 1731 the Naval Academy was founded at Portsmouth for the "sons of the nobility and gentry", thus establishing the basis for a professional officer corps. Grog, which is rum diluted with water, was created in 1748 to combat seamen drunkenness. Technical innovations included the use of copper sheathing on ship bottoms to protect against teredo worms, carronade guns for close-in fighting, ship to ship communication by flag signalling, and the introduction of the chronometer by Captain James Cook as a longitudinal navigation device.<sup>15</sup>

One final development of the 18th century worthy of mention was the encouragement by the Admiralty of the exploration and charting of unknown coasts and the investigation of scientific phenomena in distant

lands.<sup>16</sup> Although sending a troublesome captain or rival on a long exploration voyage was a good means for the Admiralty Board to get rid of him, such activity ultimately led to the establishment of the British Empire, a wealth of scientific knowledge and navigational charts that are still in use today.

At the outbreak of the Napoleonic Wars, the Royal Navy numbered approximately 300 warships and 45,000 men. By 1810 these numbers increased to more than 600 ships and 130,000 men. Throughout the Napoleonic Wars, Britain lost only ten ships to enemy action and sunk or captured 377 opposing vessels.<sup>17</sup> The Royal Navy had truly come of age, once again capturing the patriotic affection of the nation and firmly establishing the importance of sea power for British prosperity. British naval superiority had been achieved by the technological advances of the 18th century and a long tradition of naval organization. Nonetheless, from 1815 until 1845 Royal Navy personnel strength was reduced by two-thirds.<sup>18</sup>

In 1837 a young woman named Victoria became Queen. She was to remain the British monarch for 63 years, rule over much of Britain's imperial expansion and reign for more than half of the Pax Britannica. She also ended the disruptive policy of war-peace expansion-contraction and ruled during a period of Royal Navy modernization

that can be directly traced to its present day configuration.

Developmental innovations during Victoria's century were both technological and organizational. The Royal Navy was transformed from sail to steam and screw propulsion. Ironcladding, first introduced during the Crimean War, 1854 - 1856, became standard practice by 1860. Rifled barrels, breech loading, and turrets were also developed, thus greatly increasing the range and accuracy of naval armament. During 1873, "HMS Devastation" was launched. She was the first modern battleship to incorporate all technological innovations of the time. Organizationally, the most significant development of the 19th century was the introduction of the Continuous Service Scheme of 1853.<sup>19</sup> This act established a permanent professional navy, abolished press gang enlistment methods and temporarily ended the counter-productive war-peace personnel and equipment variances that had been the practice for centuries. Britain continued to possess the most powerful, and now most modern navy in the world.

During World War I, the Royal Navy again demonstrated superiority of the seas, albeit somewhat diminished, by effectively blockading the German coast and essentially confining the German surface fleet to home port after the Battle of Jutland. However, during

the inter-war years, British naval superiority began to come into question. Britain not only faced competition from an emerging United States and rearmed Germany, but allowed the practice of peacetime deterioration to return due to domestic anti-war sentiment and economic constraints. Although this condition was partially corrected during the late 1930s in anticipation of World War II, Britain emerged from the war no longer being the world sea power. She has not since attempted to regain that position.

Royal Navy development since World War II has been characterized primarily by two factors. Modernization and technological advances continue to be important. Nuclear propulsion, nuclear weapons, and computer technology are among the most significant innovations. Continuous governmental support for naval operations is the other recognizable modern era characteristic. Relatively speaking, the Royal Navy has not suffered from dramatic expansion and contraction as it had in the past. This tendency has generally proven to be true regardless of whether a Labour or Conservative government has been in power. However, what has occurred is that the Royal Navy has lost its predominant position within the British defense establishment.<sup>20</sup> It is now at best a co-equal partner with the Army and Royal Air Force in competition for a piece of the

British defense pie. In fact, on several occasions during the last 25 years, the Royal Navy has had to content itself with being a junior partner.

#### The Army and War Office

Unlike the universal support provided to the Royal Navy by the British public, the Army has historically been viewed as a necessary evil; and often, not quite so necessary. The Royal Navy never posed a threat to civil liberties, was relatively inexpensive until the modern era due to the capture of enemy ships and goods, and naval expenditure was beneficial to the national economy because of merchant fleet expansion. Through the 18th century, the Army was considered to be more an agent of the monarch, through which he or she could enforce varying degrees of despotism and conduct expensive foreign wars.<sup>21</sup>

Until the 20th century, the British populace had a genuine mistrust of a large standing army. Several factors contributed to this popularly-held belief. As previously discussed, Britain historically relied upon the Navy for defense. Although militias had been in existence for localized security since Anglo-Saxon times, Britons saw no need for a properly constituted

Army. The Cromwellian experience during the English Civil War reinforced this notion harshly. When the need for a substantial land force did periodically arise, primarily for continental wars, the government demonstrated the ability to quickly raise and disband mass forces. Although still not popularly accepted, it was not until the 18th century and the advent of British colonial expansion that a national Army came into being.<sup>22</sup>

The term "Army" was first officially used in 1755 when Army Lists, depicting unit organization and command personnel, were published. The officer corps was entirely aristocratic, with commissions being purchased from the Crown. Enlisted personnel joined for life. Some willingly volunteered to escape boredom, unemployment, poverty or prison. Others suffered the fate of "Beat of Drum" recruitment; when usually in a drunken state, they accepted the sovereign's shilling from the press gang or were kidnapped outright. Service conditions during the 18th century corresponded to the brutality of the press gang. Living conditions were primitive, food and clothing poor, pay was bad and frequently in arrears, and punishment was barbaric. It was not until the second half of the 19th century that conditions significantly improved.<sup>23</sup>

The Crimean War marked the turning point for the Army. Inefficient press gang tactics could no longer provide required manpower and were abolished.<sup>24</sup> In place of sporadic and decentralized Crown and Parliamentary acts, the War Office was established in 1854 and became responsible for all matters pertaining to Britain's land forces. It was organized along the lines of the Admiralty and was under the direction of a Secretary of State for War, a Cabinet position. The War Office assumed control of Army administration, including appointments, promotions, pay and assignments. It directed policy on force composition, weapons and equipment, coordinated military intelligence, and conducted planning, operations and training. It also assumed responsibility for all Army financial matters and contracts.<sup>25</sup> Most importantly, the War Office oversaw organizational innovations that enabled the Army to recruit sufficient personnel and modernize toward the 20th century.

In 1868 flogging as punishment in peacetime was abolished.<sup>26</sup> The Army Enlistment Act of 1870 reduced service from life to twelve years; six years each in the active army and reserve militias.<sup>27</sup> These actions, along with improved pay and living conditions, served to increase the attractiveness of Army service, greatly improve morale, and establish links between the active

army and militias. The result was the creation of a trained reserve. The abolition of commission purchase in 1871 further improved the standing of the Army, although it still lagged considerably behind the Royal Navy in public acceptance.<sup>28</sup>

Between 1902 and 1909 additional organizational innovations included the establishment of the Territorial Army for home defense and creation of a small well-equipped Expeditionary Force (BEF) formed within the Regular Army, designed to serve as a highly mobile brigade for overseas action. By the outbreak of World War I, the British Army consisted of 247,432 men, with reserves and Territorial Army totaling more than 500,000 personnel.<sup>29</sup>

Although many believed that World War I would be of short duration and won primarily by the Royal Navy, Secretary of State for War Field Marshal Kitchner predicted that the war would last for at least three years and require more than one million British soldiers to win. By the end of 1914, 1,186,000 men had enlisted. However, by 1915 patriotic euphoria subsided due to mass casualties in France, voluntary recruitment slackened, and it became increasingly obvious that mandatory service would be required. Conscription came to be accepted as inevitable. Although conscription, initiated during May 1916 by the National Military

Service Act, supplied manpower to all services, it was the Army that utilized and became associated with it the most.<sup>30</sup> Thus for the first time in British history, virtually all males of draftable age were subject to compulsory military service.

Following the war, anti-military, pacifist, and economic considerations resulted in the rapid disbanding of the mass Army and repeal of conscription. Both the Army and Royal Navy suffered drastic budgetary reductions during the inter-war period. However, the European political events of 1936 to 1939 once again created the need for another large Army. In January 1939, the National Service Appeal called for volunteers for the Armed Services. During March, Parliament approved a plan to double the size of the Territorial Army. And on 26 April 1939, Prime Minister Chamberlain announced that conscription would be reinstated. By the end of 1941 more than 4,320,000 men had been drafted, the majority of whom went into the Army.<sup>31</sup>

Demobilization and repeal of conscription followed World War II as they had World War I. However, Britain still clung, albeit precariously, to a vast empire and world power status. Immediate postwar Army postings included Germany, Austria, Yugoslavia, Italy, Egypt, Libya, Palestine, Aden, Abyssinia, Eritrea, Somaliland, Sudan, India, Malaya, Singapore, Hong Kong, North

Borneo, Indo-China, Dutch East Indies, Japan, Jamaica, British Honduras, Gibraltar, Malta and Cyprus.<sup>32</sup> It soon became apparent that the Army strength required to maintain such a world-wide influence could not be satisfied by volunteers from a populace ready to return to normal after five and one half years of war. Thus conscription was reinstated in 1947.<sup>33</sup> However, unlike 1916 and 1939, 1947 represented the first, and thusfar, only period in British history when men were drafted during peacetime.

The Army's success during World War II resulted in two significant attitude changes within the British populace. They came to value and express gratitude for the Army's faithful service because of the national effort expended to defeat the Axis powers. Peacetime conscription was not only accepted, but considered as a positive experience. It became to be regarded as a patriotic duty and important element of a man's maturation process.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, the Army had finally overcome its status as a second class citizen in the defense establishment. This position was further enhanced by its contribution to the Korean War and permanent assignment to the European continent via the NATO Treaty of Brussels.<sup>35</sup> After the experience of two world wars, especially the second, the British finally began to realize that the defense of their nation did

not start at the island's coastline and depend exclusively on the Royal Navy, but rather mandated that a professional, well-equipped standing Army be incorporated into the complete spectrum of national defense.

However, as it is often said, all things, be they good or bad, must come to an end. Fortunately, only the acceptance of peacetime conscription and not the generally positive attitude toward the Army's modern configuration came under attack. By 1955 conscription became politically unpopular.<sup>36</sup> Reasons abounded. Economically, conscription hindered job transference after demobilization and exacerbated labor shortages that began to appear by the late 1950s. The emergence of Britain as a nuclear power in 1957 changed strategic tactics and thus, it was believed, required fewer men. Finally, as the memory of World War II receded after a decade, the attitude of willing loyal service to the country began to diminish considerably. Young Britons wanted to share in the nation's economic standard of living improvements, not "waste" a few years in the Army. Army conscription was relegated to history when the last conscript was demobilized during May 1963.<sup>37</sup>

Since that time, the Army and other services have been all-volunteer organizations. Although the Army has received varying levels of governmental support up to

the present day, the concept of a standing army, primarily stationed as forward defense on continental Europe, with home-based active reserves, has remained consistent through all post-war governments.

#### The Royal Air Force and Air Ministry

The British experience with air power has truly been a roller coaster ride. After a very modest beginning, the Royal Air Force emerged from World War I as the world's premier aerial combat organization. Almost twenty years of devastating neglect followed. Bolstered by the Battle of Britain, unquestioned acknowledgement of air power as an integral element of national defense, and tremendous technological advances, the Royal Air Force has attained and generally maintained parity with the Royal Navy and Army throughout the postwar period. This parity takes the form of not only resource allocation, but also strategic importance within Britain's overall defense effort.

During November 1911, Prime Minister Asquith designated a sub-committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence "to consider the future development of aerial navigation for naval and military purposes, and the measures which might be taken to secure to this country an efficient aerial service." This sub-committee

recommended the creation of a British aeronautical service, designated "The Flying Corps", consisting of a Naval Wing, Military (Army) Wing, and a Central Flying School. An Army Brigadier named David Henderson was placed in charge of implementing the proposal, an effort which earned him the title of father of the Royal Air Force, and the Flying Corps was constituted by Royal Warrant on 13 April 1912.<sup>38</sup>

By the start of World War I, the Flying Corps consisted of only four squadrons, all of which were deployed to France. These squadrons totalled 63 planes, 105 officers and 755 enlisted personnel. When the war ended, British air power consisted of 2,600 planes and over 300,000 officers and men. Within six years, Britain had created the largest air force in the world with a corresponding industrial base capable of producing approximately 2,000 planes per month.<sup>39</sup>

On 17 August 1917, General Smuts, a staff officer in the War Office, issued a report that recommended the creation of a third fighting force and corresponding ministry. His plan called for the combination of the Royal Flying Corps Military Wing and Royal Navy Air Service, thus creating a separate Royal Air Force to be placed under the direction of a newly established Air Ministry. The Smuts proposal was accepted by the War

Cabinet within one week and both organizations came into being on 1 April 1918.<sup>40</sup>

The Air Ministry was organized around five major departments under the direction of a Secretary of State for Air. The Chief of the Air Staff headed one department and was responsible for operations, strategic planning and all training. Other departments included personnel, supply and organization, development and production, and administration and finance. Additional Air Ministry responsibilities included staffing of air reserve and auxiliary units, acquisition of lands for Royal Air Force purposes and direction of the National Meteorological Office providing weather services to the general public, government, armed forces, and civilian shipping and aviation.<sup>41</sup> Unlike the Admiralty and War Office, both of which were born in less sophisticated ages, the Air Ministry was a full-fledged bureaucratic entity from its inception. Its organizational structure remained relatively constant until its absorption into the Ministry of Defence in 1964.

Between 1919 and 1933, after such a strong beginning, the Air Ministry and Royal Air Force suffered a series of setbacks. Demobilization in 1919 reduced the Royal Air Force from 280 squadrons to 28. With no enemy in sight, government activity regarding both air policy and funding was characterized by indifference.

The Royal Air Force was expected to operate on a lean budget, but still possess the the capacity to expand rapidly, if necessary. This policy severely restricted research and development efforts and caused a general deterioration of existing equipment. Additionally, both the Royal Navy and Army launched several unsuccessful attempts to regain control of their air wings. In addition to the scarcity of resources exacerbated by the Great Depression, pacifist movements within Britain, which considered air power to be strictly offensive weapons, called for the abolition of military aviation.<sup>42</sup> Although their political base was relatively weak, it took the political situation developing within Europe by 1936 to free the Air Ministry from its critics and provide it with sufficient resources for rearmament.

The February 1936 Defence White Paper proposed a home defense air force capable of countering the anticipated threat from Germany. This plan called for an increase to 124 squadrons by March 1939, replacement of light bombers with medium bombers and official establishment of the Royal Air Force Reserves. Despite this eleventh hour recovery, the Germans held a two to one numerical superiority over the British at the start of World War II.<sup>43</sup> Were it not for dramatically increased aircraft production during 1940, superior

pilot training, German tactical blunders, and the elements of luck and courage, Britain could have lost its air battle for survival.

The postwar period has been and is still characterized by resource competition with the sister services and incredible technological advances. The Royal Air Force is a full partner with the Royal Navy and Army in Britain's defense establishment. This was codified by the Treaty of Brussels, which stipulated the assignment of the 10,000 man Second Tactical Air Force to Germany as part of NATO's central front defense.<sup>44</sup> Technologically, one can consider Britain's postwar air force as being world class. Although the Royal Air Force has never attempted to regain its World War I dominance numerically, its airplanes can compete with any in the West or Warsaw Pact.

#### The Ministry of Defence

The experience of World War II, with its complexities of joint service action and nationally mobilized resources, convinced the British government that bureaucratic reform was in order. As a result the Ministry of Defence, the youngest element of the British defense establishment, was constituted in January 1947 by the Ministry of Defence Act of 1946. Its mandate

made it responsible for the formulation and application of a unified defense policy relating to the armed services and their requirements in accordance with general policy set forth by the Cabinet. The Ministry of Defence was also responsible for the administration of the Joint Intelligence Bureau, Imperial Defence College, Joint Service Staff College and Amphibious Warfare Headquarters.<sup>45</sup>

Despite what appears to be an extensive charter, the Ministry of Defence developed more into a coordination agency than a policy formulation body. Essentially, its role as policy maker was doomed by the continued existence of the Admiralty, War Office and Air Ministry as separate entities. Although willing to cooperate with the new ministry in the sphere of resource allocation, the well-entrenched service departments had no inclination to relinquish policy prerogatives. The Ministry of Defence was further hampered by sectional loyalties toward the services, from both civilians and military, within its own ranks. This situation continued until 1964.<sup>46</sup>

On 31 March 1964, the Admiralty, War Office and Air Ministry were abolished and incorporated the following day into the Ministry of Defence as respective service boards.<sup>47</sup> The goal of this reorganization was correction of past operational deficiencies by

integrating the services at staff level and establishing the now greatly enlarged Ministry of Defence as the definitive organization for all matters pertaining to defense policy.

In an effort to combat sectionalism, the "new" ministry was organized along functional lines under the direction of the Secretary of State for Defence and a Defence Council. Three main functional staff groupings were envisaged: the Defence Staff responsible for plans and operations, the Defence Secretariat concerned with all administrative matters, and the Scientific Staff directing research and development efforts.

Unfortunately, this arrangement was inadvertantly sabotaged by the Defence Council itself. As the Defence Council was primarily comprised of senior service board members, it tended to perpetuate the sectional rivalries inherent in the pre-1964 system. Despite efforts to reorganize along three functional groupings, the Ministry of Defence unofficially evolved over the next 15 years into an organization comprised of five staff elements: the Defence Council, Royal Navy, Army, Royal Air Force, and the Procurement Executive, added in 1972.<sup>48</sup>

There were four major reasons why the reorganization plan of 1964 failed. First, the Service Boards, representing the abolished Admiralty, War Office

and Air Ministry, asserted themselves and took a much greater role in running the Ministry of Defence than had been anticipated. Second, the functional approach never permeated below the highest echelons of the new ministry. The personnel that actually executed the policy process continued to operate along sectional lines. Third, the reorganization called for the amalgamation of four powerful departments. Two had long autonomous histories, and all four possessed separate identities. The original Ministry of Defence was relegated to the position of junior partner, and thus was unable to accomplish effective unity. Fourth, the new ministry now had a civilian staff of more than 200,000. This was further enlarged by the creation of the Procurement Executive in 1972. The sheer size of this "super ministry" made coordination difficult and fostered the feeling among its personnel that there were definite limits to organizational change.<sup>49</sup>

To a considerable extent, the Ministry of Defence between 1964 and 1979 continued to mirror its pre-1964 existence. Perhaps the only significant differences were that a single Secretary of State had assumed overall responsibility for defense and that key staffs had been brought together under the same roof. The Thatcher government has made serious attempts to change this situation. Chapter II will discuss the current

configurations of the Ministry of Defence and its subordinate elements: the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force.

#### Conclusion

The four operational components of British defense policy exhibit considerably different evolutionary patterns. The Royal Navy, the oldest of the four, enjoyed an extended period of primacy within the defense establishment and can be directly associated with empire building. The Army, long mistrusted by Britons until the 20th century, earned its spurs, so to speak, during two world wars and finally emerged as a co-equal partner with the Royal Navy. The Royal Air Force was the only one of the three Armed Services to be constituted in the modern era and thus avoided some of the growing pains suffered by the other two. Finally, the Ministry of Defence, originally the hand maiden of the Armed Services, has been transformed from little more than a coordinating agency to the principal defense policy formulating organization of Britain in a span of only forty years.

Yet the four components also share some common tendencies. They all experienced very modest beginnings, but have substantially developed as

organizations through varying measures of administrative and technological innovation and reorganization. They have also experienced widely divergent levels of governmental support, both philosophical and financial. After years of fostering sectional rivalries, they have now moved toward integration and cooperative development of British defense policy.

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## Chapter II - Current Configuration of British Defense Establishment Components

### The Ministry of Defence

The Ministry of Defence has emerged as the dominant partner in the British defense establishment. Its mission is essentially threefold: to advise Her Majesty's Government on defense matters so that realistic defense policies are achieved, to direct the Armed Forces in the implementation of defense requirements through the management of policy, operations, equipment, support, intelligence and personnel, and to be able to respond quickly and effectively to the complete spectrum of defense-related demands.<sup>1</sup> Although the role of the Ministry of Defence can correctly be traced to the 1964 reorganization effort, it has been further refined during the Thatcher governments since 1979. This consolidation of authority has stemmed from both evolutionary development and additional major reorganization.

No bureaucracy, especially a large one, is a static entity. Forces, both internal and external, are always at work causing change. The Ministry of Defence has been no exception. Despite the inherent failures of the 1964 reorganization, operational improvements did develop. The theme of increased bureaucratic efficiency during Mrs.

Thatcher's first government has proven to be a catalyst for reform.

John Nott, who replaced Francis Pym as Secretary of State for Defence in September 1981, introduced a series of internal operational improvements, primarily concerned with financial resource utilization.<sup>2</sup> These included the institution of an annual review of the long term project costing system, functional consolidation of contract inspection and audit procedures, and creation of Responsibility Budgets; a system whereby line managers accept responsibility as budget officers to achieve desired project or equipment performance within stated budgetary constraints. Organizationally, Mr. Nott abolished the three separate Service Minister positions and replaced them with two ministerial positions responsible for the Armed Forces as a whole and two positions dealing with tri-service procurement.<sup>3</sup> It was also during his tenure that the first significant reductions of civilian staff occurred.

However, it was Michael Heseltine, replacing John Nott during January 1983, who enacted the organizational changes reflected in the current configuration of the Ministry of Defence. In fact, he was appointed by Mrs. Thatcher specifically because of his skills as an administrator.<sup>4</sup> He employed MINIS, a high level management information system that he had developed at the Department of the Environment, to evaluate the Ministry of Defence. Heseltine concluded

that substantial organizational changes were needed to achieve the Thatcher government's goal of increased efficiency at lower cost and his own desire to enhance the personal involvement of ministers in the management of their departments through strong centralized control. His reorganization scheme, initiated during March 1984, was designed to establish clear distinctions between policy functions and management tasks. He redefined the roles and responsibilities within the higher defense organization and restructured corresponding staffs in support of those roles. In this way, the ministers and senior advisors would be more capable of handling major defense policy issues and programs across-the-board, and thus improve the quality of defense related decisions.<sup>5</sup>

The principal vehicle by which Heseltine accomplished his objectives was the creation of a new Defence Staff. It is a combination of large parts of the pre-existing Naval, General (Army), and Air Staffs with the civilian Defence Secretariat Staff. The new Defence Staff was placed under direction of the Chief of Defence Staff, a four-star billet and a Vice Chief, also a four-star billet. It was organized into four subordinate staffs responsible for policy, commitments, programs and personnel, and systems. Each subordinate staff is directed by a three-star flag officer. Because the new Defence Staff was structured from each of the three single service "building blocks", it was designed

to break down the sectionalism of the past, yet retain the professional expertise of the individual Service Staffs. In this manner, all Defence Staff proposals are now tri-service oriented.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, according to The Economist, the departmental reorganization and creation of the new Defence Staff has greatly reduced inter-service rivalries and is estimated to have saved 500,000 pounds per year.<sup>7</sup>

Key personnel positions and staff elements of the Ministry of Defence are as follows:

Secretary of State for Defence: Within the Cabinet, the Secretary of State for Defence is the Department Minister responsible for defense policy and the management of the Ministry of Defence. He is supported by two Ministers of State, one for the Armed Forces and one for Defense Procurement, and two Parliamentary Under Secretaries of State, again one for the Armed Forces and one for Defence Procurement. His principal official advisers are the Chief of the Defence Staff and The Permanent Under Secretary of State for Defence. The Secretary of State for Defence is chairman of the Defence Council and each of the single Service Boards of the Defence Council. He is also chairman of the National Defence Industries Council.

Defence Council: The Defence Council is the statutory authority for controlling the three services, exercises command and administrative authority over them, and advises the government on major defense policy issues. Members of

the Defence Council include the Secretary of State for Defence, the Ministers of Armed Forces and Defence Procurement and their Under Secretaries, the Chief and Vice Chief of the Defence Staff, the Permanent Under Secretary, the Chiefs of the Naval, General and Air Staffs, the Chief Scientific Adviser, the Chief of the Procurement Executive Management Board, the Chief of the Defence Equipment Collaboration Board, and the Second Permanent Under Secretary.

Chief of Defence Staff: The Chief of the Defence Staff is the principal military adviser to the government and chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee. He has the right of direct access to the Prime Minister and is responsible for providing advice on strategy, overall priorities in resource allocation, programs, current commitments and operations. He is also responsible for directing the work of the Defence Staff.

Permanent Under Secretary of State: The Permanent Under Secretary of State is the permanent head and principal accounting officer of the Ministry of Defence. He is responsible for the organization of the ministry and management of all civilian staff. As principal accounting officer, he conducts long-term financial planning and budgetary control of the entire defense program and supervises the resource allocation process. He also advises on the political and Parliamentary aspects of the Ministry's

work in relation to other government departments.

Financial Planning and Management Group: The Financial Planning and Management Group, chaired by the Permanent Under Secretary, reviews allocation of resources over the entire defense program and reports to the Secretary of State.

Chiefs of Staff Committee: The Chiefs of Staff Committee is comprised of the Chiefs of the Naval, General and Air Staffs and the Vice Chief of the Defence Staff. The Committee is the forum in which the Chief of the Defence Staff seeks the advice of the Chiefs of Staff.

Service Chiefs of Staff: The Service Chiefs of Staff are the professional heads of their respective services. They are responsible for the fighting effectiveness, management, overall efficiency and morale of their services. Although they normally report and provide advice through the Chief of the Defence Staff to the Secretary of State, they have right of direct access to him and the Prime Minister. Management of the services is exercised through Service Executive Committees, chaired by the respective Chiefs of Staff, as sub-committees of the Service Boards.

Defence Staff-Policy: The Defence Staff-Policy Section reviews defense strategy and policy with an emphasis upon long-range studies. The grouping brings together nuclear planning, policy and operational issues without affecting arrangements for the command, control and maintenance of the

strategic nuclear deterrent.

Defence Staff-Commitments: The Defence Staff-Commitments Section is responsible for formulating defense commitment policy, including joint and single service operational deployments and transition to war. It issues directives for operations and major exercises. The grouping brings together central military and secretariat staffs and includes a logistics and movement planning capability.

Defence Staff-Programs and Personnel: The Defence Staff-Programs and Personnel Section is responsible for determining military priorities and the allocation of resources. The grouping includes the capability to address programs on a defense-wide basis and also three directorates representing single service expertise. It also directs central coordination of all service personnel matters.

Defence Staff-Systems: The Defence Staff-Systems Section is responsible for the formulation of operational concepts, the determination and sponsorship of operational requirements, and establishing the goals of the military research program. The grouping brings together single service research programs and scientific support.

Chief Scientific Adviser: The Chief Scientific Adviser is responsible for supervision of the Scientific Advisory Staff and the scientific staff sections deployed to the Defence Staff. He is also chairman of the Defence Research Committee and the Equipment Policy Committee.

Office of Management and Budget: The Office of Management and Budget scrutinizes ministry financial matters in four main areas: Resources and Programs, Finance, Personnel and Logistics, and Civilian Management. The Resources and Programs Section is responsible for annual long term costings and review of major expenditure proposals and new equipment programs. The Finance Section is responsible for the ministry's financial management, cost control and accountability. It is the executor of the Responsibility Budgets system. The Personnel and Logistics Section is responsible for scrutinizing expenditure proposals concerning service personnel and logistical areas. It deals with defense lands and works, legal claims, and health and safety policy. The Civilian Management Section is responsible for civilian personnel training, industrial conditions, office services, and headquarters security.

Defence Equipment Collaboration Board: The Defence Equipment Collaboration Board is responsible for fostering a systematic approach to international collaboration concerning equipment development and procurement.

The Procurement Executive: The Procurement Executive undertakes the physical procurement of equipment for all three services.<sup>8</sup>

The above listing represents only high level staff elements and authorities within the Ministry of Defence. An extensive subordinate staff structure exists to support each

major department or key personality and is much too detailed for the purposes of this study. What should be obvious is that the reorganization of 1984 has created a Ministry of Defence that is based upon functional management techniques and civilian-dominated defense policy direction. Although it is still too early to fully assess the effectiveness of the reorganization, several potential problems appear evident. In future years, after the departure of personnel associated with both the pre-1984 and current organizations, a rather monolithic central structure created by the new Defence Staff and Office of Management and Budget could emerge and concentrate power in too few official hands. This could be exacerbated by how well or poorly the Defence and Service Staffs work together. Second guessing each other and work duplication would not enhance efficiency. Finally, with the diminished role of the Service Chiefs, the potential for military-civilian conflict increases.<sup>9</sup> Such potential problems become all the more hazardous, not only in relation to the importance a nation places upon defense, but in the sheer size of the Ministry of Defence as an element of the British Government.

Today, the Ministry of Defence employs almost 505,000 people, 327,500 military and 177,200 civilian.<sup>10</sup> The civil servants can be divided into 99,200 non-industrial and 78,000 industrial, of which a combined total of more than 32,000 are assigned outside of the United Kingdom.<sup>11</sup>

Although all of these personnel figures are fewer than those of 1979, the Ministry of Defence remains a major employer within the British governmental system. It is also a significant resource consumer with a 1988-89 budget of 19,635,800,000 pounds representing 4.7% of Britain's gross domestic product and 12% of all public spending.<sup>12</sup>

### The Royal Navy

Estimated personnel strength of the Royal Navy during 1989 is a total of 57,200 servicemen and women. Of this figure, 53,800 personnel, or 94%, are men, with 9,200 officers and 44,600 other ranks. Female strength is 3,400, only 400 of whom are officers. In addition to these totals, the Royal Marines, an element of the Royal Navy, totals 700 officers and 7,000 other ranks. The Royal Marines are organized into three brigade size commando units with supporting artillery, engineer, light helicopter and logistics elements. There are no women assigned to the Royal Marines. Royal Naval and Marine Reserve and auxiliary forces total 28,800 and 3,700 respectively.<sup>13</sup>

The total Royal Naval and Marine active duty strength of 64,900 personnel, of whom almost 8,000 are assigned outside of Britain.<sup>14</sup> These postings include the Eastern Atlantic, North Sea, Northern Ireland, English Channel, Western Atlantic, West Indies, Central Atlantic, Falkland

Islands, Gibraltar, Mediterranean Sea, Persian Gulf, Diego Garcia and Hong Kong. Postings range from small garrisons with as few as sixty personnel to larger sea deployments totalling more than 5,000.<sup>15</sup> Despite the apparent world-wide naval commitment, overseas deployments account for only 12.3% of total personnel strength.

The Royal Navy consists of a total of 185 ships representing 13 major vessel type groupings as depicted in Table 1. The Royal Auxiliary Fleet totals 32 ships, most of which are fuel tankers, general logistic support or repair ships.

Table 1. Ships of the Royal Navy as of 1 April 1988<sup>16</sup>

<u>Vessel Grouping</u>	<u>Type/Class</u>	<u>Number Operational</u>	<u>Number Undergoing Refit</u>
Submarines	Polaris	3	1
	Fleet	13	3
	Type 2400	1	
	Oberon Class	9	2
Anti-Submarine Warfare Carriers		2	1
Assault Ships		1	1
Guided Missile Destroyers	Type 82	1	
	Type 42	10	2
Frigates	Type 22	11	2
	Type 21	5	1
	Leander Class	16	2
	Rothesay Class	1	
	Training Ship	1	
Offshore Patrol	Castle Class	1	1
	Island Class	7	

Mine-Counter Mine	Minesweepers	2	2
	River Class	12	
	Ton Class	10	3
	Hunt Class	12	1
Patrol Craft	Bird Class	5	
	Coastal	15	
	Peacock Class	5	
	Search and Rescue	2	
Support Ships	Submarine Tender	1	
	MCM Support	1	
	Seabed Operations	1	
Royal Yacht/ Hospital Ship		1	
Training Ships	Fleet Tenders	4	
Ice Patrol Ship		1	
Survey Ships		8	1
Total		162	23

The other significant naval equipment resource is aircraft, assigned primarily to anti-submarine warfare carriers, assault ships, and mine-counter mine vessels. British naval aircraft is as depicted in Table 2.

Table 2. Aircraft of the Royal Navy as of 1 April 1988<sup>17</sup>

<u>Role</u>	<u>Type of Aircraft</u>	<u>No. of Squadrons</u>
Air Defense/ Recce/Attack	Sea Harrier FRS1	2
	Sea Harrier FRS1/T4	1
Anti-Submarine	Sea King HAS 5	7
Anti-Sub/Anti-Ship	Lynx HAS 2/3	3
Airborne Early Warning	Sea King AEW 2	1

Commando Assault	Sea King HC 4	3
Aircrew Training	Gazelle HT 2	1
	Jetstream T 2/3	1
	Chipmunk	1
Search and Rescue	Sea King MK 5	1
	Sea King MK 4	1
Fleet Training	Hunter T8/GA11	1
	Canberra TT18	1
General Support	Sea Devon	1
	Sea Heron	<u>1</u>
Total		26

Equipment modernization efforts during the past ten years have been substantial. Since 1979, 39 new ships and 72 naval aircraft have been brought into service. Currently there are 25 more ships and ten aircraft on order, scheduled for deployment between 1989 and 1992.<sup>18</sup> These include three nuclear-powered Fleet Class submarines, four diesel-electric Type 2400 submarines, four each Type 22 and 23 frigates, five single-role minehunters representing the most advanced countermine technology in the world, Sea Harriers and Sea King helicopters.<sup>19</sup> As of 1988-89, the Royal Navy will receive 30.9% of the Ministry of Defence equipment procurement budget.<sup>20</sup>

The final element of significant military importance concerning the Royal Navy is its role as possessor of Britain's strategic nuclear deterrent. Since 1969, this deterrent has been provided by four Polaris submarines armed with 16 each single-warhead missiles. At least one of these

vessels is on patrol at all times.<sup>21</sup> During December 1979, the Thatcher government decided to replace Polaris with four Trident II nuclear powered submarines, each capable of carrying 32 Trident D-5 missiles with up to sixteen warheads. This decision and the existence of purchase contracts with the United States was announced to Parliament on 15 July 1980.<sup>22</sup> Britain is building the submarines under license from the United States and supplying the nuclear warheads. The United States will provide and service the missile delivery systems. The first two submarines, HMS Vanguard and HMS Victorious, are currently under construction and are scheduled to undergo sea trials in the early 1990s. All four Trident Systems are scheduled to be completed by the middle 1990s.<sup>23</sup> Initial cost estimates were 7 billion pounds, but have since risen to more than 9 billion pounds.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, Trident is state of the art, represents only 5.6% of the 1988-89 defense budget and is considered by the Thatcher government to be the most deterrent for the money.<sup>25</sup>

#### The Army

The Army is by far the largest of the three Armed Services, having almost triple the personnel of the Royal Navy and more than half again that of the Royal Air Force. It is estimated that as of 1 April 1989, Regular Army forces

will total 159,000 with 17,500 officers and 141,500 other ranks. Of this total, 6,400 are women with 1,000 officers and 5,400 other ranks, representing 4% of the active force. The Regular Reserves, Territorial Army, Ulster Defence Regiment and Home Service Force are also extensive, with 164,800, 67,700, 5,600, 3,200 personnel respectively.<sup>26</sup>

Overseas postings are considerable; including Northern Ireland, West Germany, West Berlin, Canada, Belize, Falkland Islands, Cyprus, Gibraltar, Sinai, Hong Kong, and Brunei.<sup>27</sup> Army personnel stationed overseas total almost 71,000, ranging from a small training detachment in Canada to the almost 56,000 strong British Army of the Rhine.<sup>28</sup> The latter is indicative of Britain's commitment to NATO and the concept of forward defense. Other interesting deployments include garrisons paid for and supplied to the independent Commonwealth countries of Belize and Brunei, and United Nations Forces participation in Cyprus and the Sinai.

The regiment is the basic foundational unit of the British Army. Regiments, many with lineages traceable for centuries, were originally constituted and continue to be associated with a specific geographic region of Britain. Their organization is based upon continuity of personnel and training. Unlike the American Army personnel management system, where until recently overseas replacement was conducted on an individual-soldier basis, the British Regimental System rotates entire regiments to replace others

at overseas postings. Regiments are grouped under brigade, divisional and corps headquarters and are also organized on a regional basis. Major British Army headquarters and combat units are as depicted in Table 3.

Table 3. Major Army Combat Headquarters and Units as of 1 April 1988<sup>29</sup>

<u>Type</u>	<u>BAOR</u>	<u>Berlin</u>	<u>UK</u>	<u>Elsewhere</u>	<u>Territorial Army</u>	<u>Total</u>
<u>Headquarters</u>						
Corps	1					1
Armored Div	3					3
Infantry Div			1			1
Brigade	9	1	20	1		31
<u>Armor</u>						
Armored Reg	12		2			14
Recon Reg	2		3		5	10
<u>Artillery</u>						
Field Reg	8		6		2	16
Heavy Reg	1					1
Missile Reg	1					1
Depth Fire Reg	2					2
Air Defense	2				4	6
Regiments						
Locating Reg			1			1
<u>Engineers</u>						
Engineer Reg	5		5	1	7	18
Armored Eng Reg	1					1
Amphibious	1					1
Eng Reg						
<u>Infantry</u>						
Battalions	13	3	31	3	41	91
Gurhka Battalions			1	4		5
<u>Special Air Service</u>						
Regiments			1		2	3
<u>Army Air Corps</u>						

Regiments	3	1	4
<u>Honorable</u> <u>Artillery</u> <u>Company</u> Regiment			1

As with the Royal Navy and Air Force, Army equipment modernization has been extensive during the past ten years. Since 1979, major new weapon systems in the areas of armor, mechanized infantry, logistics, helicopters, air defense, and light infantry have been fielded. These include five regiments of Challenger Main Battle Tanks, one battalion of Warrior and six battalions of Saxon Armored Personnel Carriers, 2,884 logistics or recovery vehicles, 25 Lynx helicopters, two tracked Rapier and 12 Javelin Air Defense Batteries, 48,000 SA 80 rifles and full operational stocks of LAW 80 light anti-tank weapons. Already contracted, but still to be delivered through 1993, include two Challenger regiments, 12 Warrior and two Saxon battalions, 1510 logistics and recovery vehicles, three Multiple Launch Rocket and one Bates System Artillery regiments, 16 air defense batteries and 284,000 SA 80 rifles.<sup>30</sup> By any standards, it is an impressive shopping list. As of 1988-89, the Army receives 18.2% of the Ministry of Defence equipment procurement budget.<sup>31</sup>

The Army also possesses a tactical, although not strategic, nuclear capability. The British Army of the Rhine operates one regiment of Lance surface-to-surface

missiles and four regiments of artillery. Both systems are capable of firing nuclear warheads supplied by the United States.<sup>32</sup> The British Army does not, however, have chemical weapons. Britain has not possessed them since the late 1950s and no change in this policy is anticipated. All research in Britain regarding chemical warfare is dedicated to improving defensive protective measures.<sup>33</sup>

#### The Royal Air Force

During 1989, the personnel strength of the Royal Air Force is estimated to be 93,100. Officers account for 15,600 and other ranks total 77,500. Of this amount, females total 1,000 officers and 5,300 other ranks, for a force ratio of 6.7 percent. That is significantly higher than either the Royal Navy and Army. Royal Air Force Reserves and auxiliary units total 33,600 and 1,500 respectively.<sup>34</sup> Unit organization is based upon a squadron system for strictly aerial elements and a regimental system for land based air defense and ground defense forces. Unlike the United States Air Force, which attaches or opcons most of its land based defense units from the Army, the Royal Air Force includes these units as integral organic elements of its force structure.

Overseas Royal Air Force postings overlap considerably with the Royal Navy and Army, thus highlighting the

significance of air assets in support of both naval and land operations. Overseas postings include Northern Ireland, the Eastern Atlantic, North Sea, English Channel, Gibraltar, West Germany, West Berlin, Sardinia, Cyprus, Belize, Ascension Island, Falkland Islands, Canada and Hong Kong.<sup>35</sup> Of the almost 17,000 Royal Air Force personnel stationed outside of Britain, more than 10,000 of them are assigned to the Second Tactical Air Force located in West Germany, in support of NATO's Central Front.<sup>36</sup> Other overseas postings range from small detachments of as few as nine personnel to fully deployed squadrons of approximately 1,700 members. Royal Air Force front-line units, both aerial and land based are as depicted in Table 4.

Table 4. Royal Air Force Front-line Units as of 1 April 1988

<u>Role</u>	<u>Aircraft or Equipment</u>	<u>UK</u>	<u>FRG*</u>
<u>Aerial</u>			
Strike/Attack Squadrons	Tornado GR1	2	7
	Buccaneer	2	
Offensive Support Squadrons	Harrier	1	2
	Jaguar	2	
Maritime Patrol Squadrons	Nimrod MR	4	
Reconnaissance Squadrons	Canberra PR9	1	
	Jaguar	1	1
Air Defence Squadrons	Tornado F3	2	
	Lightning	1	
	Phantom FG1	2	
	Phantom FGR2	1	2

	Phantom F4J	1	
	Bloodhound	2	
Early Warning Squadron	Shackleton	1	
Air Transport Squadrons	VC10	1	
	Hercules	4	
	HS125/Andover/Gazelle	1	
	Pembroke/Andover		1
	Chinook	1	1
	Wessex	1	
	Puma	1	1
Tanker Squadrons	Victor K2	1	
	VC10 K2/3	1	
	Tristar K1	1	
Search and Rescue Squadrons	Sea King	1	
	Wessex	<u>1</u>	-
Total		37	15

Land Based

Air Defence Regiments	Rapier	2	4
	Skyguard	2	
Grand Defence Regiments	Light Armor	4	
	Infantry	<u>6</u>	<u>1</u>
Total		14	5

\*Figures include squadrons and regiments, or parts thereof, assigned to the Falkland Islands, Cyprus, Hong Kong and Belize during peacetime, but subject to NATO operations upon hostilities.<sup>37</sup>

The Royal Air Force has also shared in the equipment modernization programs of the Thatcher governments. Since 1979, new aircraft have been placed into service in the strike/attack, offensive support, air defense and transport/tanker roles. These include 55 Tornado GR1s, two Harrier GR5s, 85 Tornado ADVs, 15 Phantom F4Js, three

Tristar tankers and eight Chinook helicopters. Aircraft already contracted and scheduled for delivery by 1993 include 27 Tornado GR1s, 93 Harrier GR5s, 77 Tornado ADVs, seven Boeing E-3s, six Tristar tankers, and 130 Tucano basic trainers.<sup>38</sup> The Royal Air Force portion of the 1988-89 Ministry of Defence equipment procurement budget is 33.3%, greater than either the Royal Navy or Army.<sup>39</sup> Although aircraft as big-ticket items account for a portion of this higher spending percentage, it is also indicative of the present government's goal toward a fully intergrated modernized armed forces.

As with the Army, the Royal Air Force also possesses a tactical nuclear capability. Its nine Tornado and two Buccaneer squadrons, based both in Britain and West Germany are capable of operations with British free-fall nuclear bombs. Nimrod aircraft are also capable of operations against submarines with United States supplied nuclear depth bombs. However, strategic nuclear deterrence remains the purview of the Royal Navy and no policy change in this area is anticipated.<sup>40</sup>

#### Conclusion

Although comparative analysis is not the purpose of this study, one might naturally have the tendency to compare the multitude of strength figures and equipment

types presented in this chapter to the more familiar asset totals of the United States. A few simple comparisons are quite revealing. The armed forces of both nations are all-voluntary, but the size of active duty forces as a percentage of general population is significantly different; .057% for Britain and .092% for the United States. Percentage of the uniformed females is also widely divergent. The United States Armed Forces consist of approximately 12% women. Britain's active duty female contingent is only 5%.

Equipment technologies between the two forces are generally comparable and in any event, difficult to measure in the absence of the ultimate test. Although the United States can claim some measure of air superiority with F14s, 15s, 16s and 18s; the Harrier pioneered verticle takeoff and the Tornado horrifies the Soviets with its low level penetration capability. Although the M1 Abrams and Challenger Main Battle Tanks are roughly comparable, the individual British soldier has long been known as one of the best trained, but poorly equipped members of NATO. The modernization program of the past ten years has not entirely dispelled this belief. Britain does possess modern and materially capable forces, but the technological edge would have to go to the United States.

Expenditure is the other major area of difference between the two forces. Whether measured as percentage of

gross domestic product, per capita, or total defense expenditure, the United States far exceeds the efforts of Britain. Comparative figures are as follows:

	<u>US</u>	<u>UK</u> <sup>41</sup>
GDP	6.6%	4.7%
Per capita	\$ 1,209	\$ 544
Total expenditure	\$295,000,000	\$31,000,000

There are as many reasons for these and other differences between the armed forces of the two nations as there are differences themselves. In one respect, it is an unfair comparison. On the other hand, rhetoric from both sides of the Atlantic would lend one to believe that the difference should not be as divergent as they are. Perhaps the one word that simplifies the explanation is policy. To that we now turn, first through the background and foundation of British defense policy, and then as it exists today.

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### Chapter III - British Defense Policy Prior to Mrs. Thatcher

British defense policy prior to Margaret Thatcher can be divided and broadly categorized into three distinctive periods: from the 14th century until World War I, World War I through 1967, and 1968 up until her election as Prime Minister in 1979. Although the periods are vastly different in duration, all are associated with empire. The first period deals with defense policy in the establishment, expansion, and protection of empire, the second with its preservation, and the third with the reluctant acceptance that the empire no longer existed.

The change from one period to the next is based upon generally recognizable shifts in defense policy direction. This is especially the case with the advent of World War I and the change in strategic tactics used to fight it. However, as with any attempt to classify occurrences on a time continuum stretching across an extended evolutionary period, there are some events that are transitional. The entry of Britain into NATO, increased focus upon the Soviet threat, and development of British nuclear weapons are three such events. Although all three occurred during the later stages of the second period, their effects upon defense policy became more fully realized after governmental admission that the empire was essentially lost. Therefore, their impact will be discussed during the examination of the

third period, although they will also be mentioned as developmental events of the second. Comprehension of all three periods will provide a foundation for the understanding of the defense policy inherited by Mrs. Thatcher and how she has acted upon it.

#### 14th Century Until World War I

From its earliest inception, British defense policy was based upon the successful conduct of foreign trade. This trade, somewhat coordinated and aggressively pursued with the neighboring Low Countries and Scandinavia as early as the 14th century, expanded into the Mediterranean Sea via Venice by the 15th century. It was soon to be followed by the discovery of the New World, Newfoundland fishing areas, and sea routes to the Far East during the 16th century. Protection of this trade and its associated national wealth resulted in the development of naval power.<sup>1</sup>

Beyond the economic benefits to trade provided by naval power, several other defense-related implications developed. Britain's maritime success and natural defensive posture associated with island nationhood dictated a heavy reliance upon sea power at the expense of land forces. There was no need for a large standing army to fortify cities. These concepts were reinforced by the fact, already being exalted by the early 17th century, that Britain had not been

successfully invaded for more than 500 years.<sup>2</sup> Thus British defense policy was sea power; considered as sufficient to safeguard the realm and provide continued economic expansion. The singular direction of this policy essentially remained in effect until German airships dropped bombs on Britain in 1914.

Although the focus of British defense policy during most of the 19th century can correctly be categorized as strictly defensive in nature, defense policy during the 17th and 18th centuries was employed as a means of colonial expansion. Empire building through defense policy was aggressively accomplished by piracy, direct conquest, and as the spoils of successful defensive wars.<sup>3</sup> Piracy is the opportunistic seizure, without significant military action, of territory or possessions belonging to other nations. The seizure of Jamaica from Spain during the Commonwealth period and that of New Amsterdam from the Dutch in 1664 are two excellent examples of British use of this technique. The Seven Years War, resulting in British hegemony over Canada at the expense of the French in 1763, represents a direct conquest through military action. Territorial spoils gained from the final defeat of Napoleon in 1815 included the islands of St. Lucia, the Seychelles, Mauritius, Malta and Trinidad, plus the territories of Ceylon, British Guiana and the Cape of Good Hope.<sup>4</sup> Despite the belief commonly held by Britons that their defense policy has always been defensive

in nature, the above examples clearly illustrate at least a measured dose of aggression prior to the 19th century.

From the end of the Napoleonic Wars until the beginning of World War I, British defense policy, although continuing to rely heavily upon naval power, assumed a more defensive posture. Although empire expansion continued, primarily through colonial and trade policy, the focus of defense policy was to protect the empire that Britain had acquired. Britain also used its naval supremacy during this period to defend against potentially hostile continental coalitions. In return, the European powers reluctantly tolerated the existence of the British Empire because the British Army remained small, causing them no serious threat, and the Royal Navy was not used to hinder the foreign trade of Britain's continental rivals.<sup>5</sup> Annual British defense expenditure averaged 2.03% of GDP between 1870 and 1900, with the exception of during the Boer War, and was indicative of the defensive stability achieved by the Pax Britannica.<sup>6</sup>

This status quo remained until the emergence of Imperial Germany during the late 19th century, her belated entry into the colonial race for Africa, and associated decision to challenge Britain's supremacy of the seas. By 1913, naval rivalry and the threat of war with Germany had caused British defense expenditure to rise to more than 3% of GDP.<sup>7</sup> However, the ensuing defense policy shift

necessitated by the conduct of World War I was not anticipated.

#### World War I through 1967

World War I was a turning point for the strategic balance of British defense policy. British defense planners came to two realizations not long after hostilities commenced. First, if Germany overran France, as appeared quite possible during the initial campaign of the war, sea power alone would not save Britain. Second, a massive Army deployed to Continental Europe would be required to repulse the Germans and win the war.<sup>8</sup> Although Britain had sent large temporarily-constituted armies to continental wars in the past, these practically pale to insignificance when compared to the conscript force of more than one million men deployed to fight World War I. As a result, postwar defense policy, although subdued by demobilization, anti-war sentiments, and a return to pre-war spending levels, developed with a sense of appreciation for combined arms and joint service actions. The Royal Navy ceased to be the be-all and end-all instrument of British defense policy. This evolution was further reinforced by the conduct of all three services during World War II.

Throughout the period from the beginning of World War I until the conclusion of World War II, Britain continued to

closely associate its defense policy with maintenance of empire. Military might and global territorial holdings allowed Britain to continue to perceive herself as a world power. However, after World War II, one stark reality and several political decisions combined to eventually alter British defense policy in significant ways. The reality may not have been acknowledged in a timely manner, nor the ramifications of the decisions fully comprehended, but nonetheless, British defense policy was considerably changed as a result.

First, despite being victorious, Britain emerged from World War II economically weakened. Although this fact was not disputed, its effect upon the capability of defense policy to continue as one of the pillars of empire was. Second, after the sacrifices endured during the war, the populace was eager to build a future and experience the quality of life improvements anticipated with economic recovery. The government responded with innovative, justifiable, and expensive social programs. Despite the Korean War and the decision to deploy strategic nuclear weapons, defense policy became a relative non-issue for both politicians and the general public at the expense of welfare state building.<sup>9</sup> Third, after deploying mass armies to Continental Europe to fight two wars, future peace in Europe became a defense priority equal to empire preservation. This was substantiated by the stationing of a large land

force on continental soil for the first time in history.<sup>10</sup> Thus the mission of British defense policy was actually expanded following World War II, but the financial resources required to execute it were constrained by political decisions and economic reality. This is not to suggest that substantial funds were not expended on defense during the first postwar decade, only that what was allocated to defense was insufficient to accomplish the unrealistic mission of both peace in Europe and continued empire preservation without retrenchment.

Initially, both defense policy missions were actively pursued. The escalation of the Cold War, heightened by the 1948 communist coup in Czechoslovakia and the Soviet blockade of Berlin, provided a catalyst to the establishment of NATO in 1949.<sup>11</sup> Britain was an active participant in the creation of this alliance. Britain's decision to develop nuclear weapons, taken by the Labour government during 1947, represented an acknowledgement of the Soviet Union as the principal threat to Europe.<sup>12</sup> This decision was also made in response to some doubts about US reliability regarding the nuclear defense of Europe. Britain also remained militarily active in the preservation of empire during the period 1947 - 1967. Although mostly to restore or maintain civil order, military actions were undertaken in British Guiana, British Honduras, Kenya, Aden, The Gold Coast, Hong Kong, Jamaica, Cameroon, Zanzibar, Borneo, Tanganyika,

Uganda, Mauritius, Malaya and Korea.<sup>13</sup> Defense spending actually reflected the ambitious nature of the British pursuit of her dual European-Empire policy. After the large, but still only partial, demobilization following World War II, when defense spending was 16.1% of GDP during 1946, spending levels averaged 7.2% between 1947 and 1956, never dropping below 5.8% of GDP in any single year.<sup>14</sup>

However, both political and economic factors began to surface that called into question the dual priority defense policy and its relationship to Britain's continuance as a world power. Perhaps the single most important indicator to the world that the Empire was in retreat, despite British protestations to the contrary, was the independence granted to India in 1947.<sup>15</sup> Another indicator, more subtle, but equally revealing, was Britain's discreet passage of part of her defensive global gauntlet to the United States. Two good examples were Britain's request to the United States for funds in support of the Greek government fighting Antartes rebels in 1947<sup>16</sup> and the ratification of the ANZUS Treaty in 1951, whereby Australia and New Zealand became dependent upon the United States for a large measure of their defensive security.<sup>17</sup> Further pullbacks from empire were beginning to loom as possible in South-east Asia, the Middle East and Africa; yet Britain continued to pursue defense policy as a world power.

Although economic factors affected all aspects of

British defense policy, it was in Europe where they were most visible. The nuclear decision, designed strategically to combat the Soviet threat against Europe, but also politically to enhance Britain's status as a world power, gobbled up an estimated 20% of the defense budget during the 1950s. As a result, conventional weapon modernization suffered. This was most noticeable in BAOR, the largest single grouping of British conventional forces.<sup>18</sup> Another European problem was directly related to financial resources. Through 1954, the Federal Republic of Germany paid for BAOR and Second Tactical Air Force units as an occupation expense. During 1955, the Federal Republic was granted full sovereign status, became a member of NATO and began to rearm. As a result, occupational payments from the Federal Republic to Britain ceased and Britain had to assume the full cost of her European-based forces.<sup>19</sup>

The military failure in Suez during 1956, and the associated international political criticism of Britain's policy there, forced a serious review of Britain's dual approach, European-Empire defense policy.<sup>20</sup> The resulting 1957 Defence White Paper reached the conclusion that the spending levels of 1947 through 1956 could no longer be continued. However, the Conservative government, supported by its Labour opposition, decided to maintain a still significant presence east of Suez that included military units in Aden, Ceylon, Singapore and Hong Kong.<sup>21</sup> Defense

expenditure was cut between 1957 and 1967, but still averaged a healthy 5.9% of GDP throughout the period.<sup>22</sup> It was the European tier of the defense policy that bore the brunt of expenditure reduction. From 1957 to 1958, BAOR was reduced from 77,000 personnel to 64,000. It was further reduced to 55,000 by 1960. The Second Tactical Air Force personnel strength was decreased by one-half during the same period. Equipment reductions for British European forces corresponded to those of personnel.<sup>23</sup> Although defense expenditure savings were achieved, combat capability in Europe was considerably reduced. The panacea of a "cheap" nuclear deterrent was offered as justification. Britain was still resolved to cling, albeit precariously, to the by-now myth of world power status and a defense policy based upon peace in Europe and maintenance of her remaining empire. The events that culminated in the national economic crisis of 1967 were to change this situation dramatically.

1968 Until 1979

Britain's economic crisis of 1967 forced the abandonment of her dual European-Empire defense policy. With reluctance, the Labour government accepted the fact that Britain could now play only a reduced role in world affairs and could no longer financially justify a continued permanent military presence east of Suez. This realization

caused the withdrawal of all units from Asia, with the exception of the Hong Kong garrison, by 1971.<sup>24</sup> Tactical force structure changes were also necessitated. By 1970, the government decided to eventually scrap the Royal Navy's aircraft carriers and cancelled several domestic aircraft projects in favor of the purchase of cheaper United States planes. Correspondingly, defense spending throughout the period decreased to an average of 4.7% of GDP per annum.<sup>25</sup>

The decision to purchase foreign military hardware was politically difficult. Until this time, British Armed Forces had been equipped during periods of peace almost exclusively with domestically-produced armaments. This not only facilitated political and operational independence of the Armed Forces, but was strongly supported by domestic industrial and military lobbies. However, the cost of keeping up with the technological advances of the United States and Soviet Union during periods of economic crisis was enormous. Beyond purely financial concerns, justification for the move away from military hardware self-sufficiency took several forms. Primarily, Britain decided to focus upon the peace in Europe platform of her defense policy and NATO membership as explanations for the change. As conventional war in Europe was anticipated to be of short duration, the purchase of equipment off the shelf was an attractive alternative to long and costly developmental programs. Nonetheless, the British domestic armaments

industry continued to provide 75% of all new equipment purchased for the Armed Services during the 1970s.<sup>26</sup>

After retreat from east of Suez, British defense policy focus shifted markedly toward Europe. NATO membership not only provided the best chance of national security through the cost effectiveness of capability sharing within the alliance, but also represented the only remaining area of the world where Britain could exercise influence through its defense policy. Although the border between the two Germanies had in fact been the front line of British national defense since 1945, with retreat from empire acknowledged as policy, it now assumed its rightfully realistic significance.<sup>27</sup>

The relationship between Britain and NATO is mutually supporting. Just as Britain receives the benefits of collective security and international influence, NATO depends upon Britain as one of its stronger members. Britain's geographical position between the United States and Europe represents the single most critical logistical anchor point in the alliance. She also serves as a major aircraft operations base, as a significant contributor of ground, naval and air forces, and as provider of an additional political center of nuclear strategy decision-making. However, the economic crises experienced throughout the period 1968 - 1979 prohibited Britain from taking full advantage of, and responsibility for, her membership in

NATO.<sup>28</sup>

Britain's re-focus upon Europe also reinforced the already acknowledged specter of the Soviet Union as the principal threat. Throughout the period, the Soviet Union continued to increase and modernize its conventional and nuclear military capabilities. Much of this effort was directed toward Europe. Its invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, continuous support of communist liberation struggles world wide, and invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, were indicators of Soviet aggression and willingness to use military strength.<sup>29</sup>

In addition to her conventional forces, Britain has relied upon nuclear weapons to deter the Soviet Union. Although initially and still under the nuclear umbrella provided to NATO by the United States, Britain has possessed nuclear weapons, principally in the form of Polaris nuclear missile submarines, since the 1960s.<sup>30</sup> As a submarine-launched system, Polaris is invulnerable to a first strike when the vessels are at sea. The Polaris fleet consists of four British built submarines: HMS Resolution, Repulse, Revenge, and Renown.<sup>31</sup> Originally they carried 64 single-warhead missiles with a range of 2,500 miles. Although the missiles were purchased from the United States, the nuclear warheads were British-made. During 1974, a modernization program was initiated, replacing the single warheads with British-made Chevaline multiple-warheads. This program

increased the total number of warheads to 192 at a cost of 1 billion pounds.<sup>32</sup>

Although Britain possesses nuclear weapons primarily as a strategic deterrent, several other policy reasons have been offered as justification for their development and deployment. As a member of an exclusive, but unfortunately enlarging club, Britain does retain some measure of world power status through the possession of nuclear weapons. She also presents the Soviet Union with an additional center of decision making during a crisis. Soviet strategists would be faced with assessing a potential nuclear response from Britain if Europe were invaded. Britain's nuclear deterrent also provides NATO some insurance, albeit very modest, against the loss of long term United States commitment to defend Europe. Finally, nuclear weapons are cheap in relation to conventional forces. As an integrated element of Britain's defense policy, they offer the most deterrent for the money.<sup>33</sup>

The final significant development of this period occurred during 1974 with the publication of the Labour Government's Mason Review Defence White Paper. This document officially certified the preservation of peace in Europe and commitment to NATO as being the premier goal of British Defense policy. It divided this policy into four major missions: continued maintenance of a strategic nuclear deterrent against the Soviet Union, defense of

NATO's Central European Front and North Sea shipping lanes, defense of the Eastern Atlantic for NATO resupply and reinforcement routes from the United States, and defense of the home base and residual colonial commitments. Although less ambitious than previous policies, especially through the acknowledgement of Europe rather than the world as Britain's sphere of influence, the programs outlined in this document were generally underfunded for the remainder of the decade. This was essentially the state of British defense policy inherited by Margaret Thatcher.<sup>34</sup>

#### Conclusion

British defense policy prior to 1979 has ranged across a wide spectrum of purposes. It was initially utilized as an element of empire building, then empire protection. Although somewhat aggressive originally, it has evolved into a strictly defensive endeavor. Its earlier global perspective, ambivalence toward Europe, and fear of alliances has been transformed by retreat from empire and NATO membership. Strategic defensive policy changes have also been considerable. The British defense policy execution structure has changed from singular reliance upon the Royal Navy to a three-service and Ministry of Defence combined arms team that incorporates both conventional and nuclear weapons. Throughout the evolutionary history of

British defense policy, with very few exceptions, adequate financial resourcing has been a major problem. This has occurred because of widely divergent levels of governmental support for defense spending, the emergence of other national priorities, e.g. social welfare programs, and periods of economic difficulty. Chapter IV will now address what, if anything, Mrs. Thatcher has done to correct this problem and how she approaches the issue of British defense policy in general.

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## Chapter IV - British Defense Policy Under Margaret Thatcher

Defense policy is a complicated business. Its formulation requires the evaluation and integration of many different factors, not all of which are controllable. It not only represents a nation's commitment to protect a way of life, but also the decisions of how best to protect it and against whom. Of all the inter-related factors of defense policy, I consider the allocation of financial resources used to conduct it as being the most critical. Regardless of how a threat is perceived or the national will to combat it, defense policy will be less than optimal, and perhaps fail, if not adequately funded.

However, the question of financial resources is not simply how much money to spend on defense. A government must also decide precisely what to spend it on, and what policies should be enacted to insure that the nation receives the most defense for the money. It is when these questions are addressed that the complexity and inter-dependent nature of defense policy emerges. What are politically acceptable spending levels and policy goals? Should or could alliances be entered into as a means of achieving economies of scale and the benefits, but also responsibilities, of collective security? What should be the relationship between the nation's industrial base and its defense policy? These questions are only a few of

many that highlight the inherent difficulties associated with defense policy.

The first three parts of this chapter will trace the Thatcher experience with British defense policy. Much of the focus will be upon financial resourcing. The final part will examine significant other aspects of defense policy as addressed by the Thatcher governments. As a whole, this chapter will report on what could be called the Thatcher approach to defense.

#### The Thatcher Approach and Economic Reality

During the 1970s, a number of events served to transform defense policy from a non-issue to one of increased significance. Worsening East-West relations as a result of the apparent failure of a decade of arms control negotiations between the United States and Soviet Union heightened public awareness of defense issues. The technological developments of the neutron bomb, Cruise Missile, Pershing II and SS-20, and the decisions to deploy them, elevated the nuclear question to prominence within British defense policy. Large segments of the public developed the opinion that nuclear war was increasingly possible. This intensified public concern was quickly transformed into political attention and led to the breakdown of Labour and Conservative bipartisanship on

defense issues.<sup>1</sup> Labour's 1979 Party Manifesto, calling for unilateral disarmament of the British nuclear force, stood in sharp contrast to the Conservative intention to strengthen defense.<sup>2</sup>

Mrs. Thatcher contributed significantly to the re-emergence of defense as a policy issue during this period. As opposition leader she made defense the topic of numerous addresses, both at home and abroad. She was highly critical of the Soviet Union's lack of effort in the detente process with the United States. She attacked the Soviet Union's massive military build-up and considered the growth of Soviet global influence as a threat to the security of the West.<sup>3</sup> During the campaign, Mrs. Thatcher pledged "to strengthen Britain's defences and work with our Allies to protect our interests in an increasingly threatening world".<sup>4</sup> By the time of her election as Prime Minister in 1979, defense policy had once again become a national concern in Britain.

Mrs. Thatcher concurred with the basic four mission structure of British defense policy, as discussed in Chapter III, but contended that the overall policy had been inadequately funded by her predecessors.<sup>5</sup> Despite a commitment to the reduction of public expenditure, support of defense was one of five major planks in the 1979 Conservative Party Manifesto.<sup>6</sup> She wrote:

We shall only be able to decide on the proper level of defence spending after consultation in government

with the Chiefs of Staff and our allies. But it is already obvious that significant increases will be necessary. The SALT discussions increase the importance of ensuring the continuing effectiveness of Britain's nuclear deterrent..... We will give our servicemen decent living conditions, bring their pay up to full comparability with their civilian counterparts immediately and keep it there. In addition we must maintain the efficiency of our reserve forces. We will improve their equipment too, and hope to increase their strength.<sup>7</sup>

Upon attaining office, Mrs. Thatcher and Francis Pym, her Secretary of State for Defence, proceeded to address the military problems identified within the 1979 manifesto. After initial briefings from the Joint Intelligence Committee for the OD (Overseas and Defence), they formulated a broad policy involving a three percent per year real term defense expenditure increase through 1984. This compares to an annual three to five percent real term decline during the 1970s. This policy placed emphasis on four issues within the overall defense program.<sup>8</sup>

Britain's strategic nuclear deterrent was aging. Polaris had passed the half-way point of its expected thirty year operational life, and developmental and deployment estimates for a replacement system were more than ten years. Additionally, Soviet anti-ballistic missile capabilities had been considerably improved since the deployment of Polaris.<sup>9</sup> By December 1979, the Thatcher government decided to replace Polaris with 128 United States Trident II D-5 Missiles and build nuclear powered submarines to carry them.<sup>10</sup> HMS Vanguard, scheduled to enter service in 1994, will be the

first of the new four-vessel nuclear fleet.<sup>11</sup> With this early decision, Mrs. Thatcher planned for the continuance of a credible British strategic nuclear deterrent through the 2020s.<sup>12</sup> Mr. Pym announced the decision and existence of purchase contracts with the United States to Parliament on 15 July 1980. Initial cost estimates were seven billion pounds, with the majority of the bills becoming due between the late 1980s and mid-1990s.<sup>13</sup>

Home defense had suffered particular neglect throughout the postwar period. Mrs. Thatcher responded to this by announcing a plan to increase the personnel strength of the Territorial Army from 70,000 to 86,000 men and women.<sup>14</sup> However, as of 1 April 1988, the Territorial Army numbered 75,300 personnel, down from a peak of 78,500 achieved during 1987.<sup>15</sup> Territorial Army training was also expanded from 38 to 42 days per year.<sup>16</sup> Although neither action represented considerable defense cost increases when compared to Trident or other programs, the Thatcher government's decision to improve home defense was somewhat significant in that it attempted to address a serious defense policy deficiency.

Adequate military compensation, although integrally important to the maintenance of an effective volunteer force, is not perceived by the general public, as is new weapon system procurement, as a critical defense expenditure. Mrs. Thatcher inherited armed forces that were disillusioned and demoralized by the perception that their

government did not appreciate their sacrifices. She responded with a 32 percent catch-up pay raise on 11 May 1979, achieving compensation parity with comparable civilian employment.<sup>17</sup>

Mrs. Thatcher, perhaps more than any previous Prime Minister, has focused on Europe as the linchpin of British defense policy. The commitment to NATO is politically justified as an agreed bipartisan treaty obligation and is militarily justified as the forward defense of Britain. She embraced both aspects of this commitment and launched an extensive equipment modernization program for the British Army on the Rhine. Weapons such as the Challenger Main Battle Tank, Multiple Launch Rocket System, TOW (tube launched, optically guided, wire directed) equipped anti-tank helicopters, and Rapier Air Defense Missiles were deployed during 1979-84 and greatly enhanced the fighting capability of BAOR.<sup>18</sup> The sincerity of Mrs. Thatcher's commitment to NATO was evidenced by the four percent per year real growth in the BAOR that these weapon systems represented during her first term.<sup>19</sup>

Based upon these decisions by Mrs. Thatcher during the early phases of her first government, British defense policy expenditure could definitely be characterized as having been progressively positive. However, despite three percent real growth in the defense budget, continued inflation made it painfully evident that all four defense missions could not

be adequately sustained. The peculiarities of defense-related inflation, causing it to rise six to ten percent above the domestic inflation rate, served to exacerbate the problem. The high cost of research and development, money expended on policy decision studies, and higher unit costs associated with limited system production tended to compound the defense inflation rate. These factors, coupled with persistent domestic economic difficulties, world-wide fuel cost increases, and the generous 1979 pay raise all contributed to this untenable situation.<sup>20</sup> By mid-1981, Mrs. Thatcher had publicly announced that defense must share the burden of budget reductions.<sup>21</sup> Similar to the stop-go cyclical nature of the postwar British economy, defense policy expenditure was shifted to a stop cycle by late 1981. The details of this shift, as outlined in the 1981 Defence White Paper "The Way Forward", were orchestrated by John Nott, who had replaced Francis Pym as Secretary of State for Defence in September 1981.<sup>22</sup>

Mr. Nott proposed contraction of the Eastern Atlantic defense mission and reduction of the Royal Navy surface vessel fleet. The number of frigates was reduced from 59 to 50, to be further reduced to 42 by 1984. One aircraft carrier was reverted to reserve status, leaving only two active duty carriers. High cost and the increasing vulnerability of surface ships to advanced technology sea skimming missiles served as the reasoning for this action.

New surface ship construction and mid-life modernization programs were halted. Operational fuel allowances were cut to only three days sailing time.<sup>23</sup> Equally revealing were the alternative measures rejected by the Thatcher government. Trident was left untouched, BAOR continued to be the beneficiary of massive equipment modernization, the Territorial Army expansion slowly progressed, and a return to cost-cutting conscription was not seriously contemplated.<sup>24</sup> All measures that were taken were designed to stretch and reallocate an inflation strained defense budget at the expense of the senior service! This decision is all the more incredible from both a past and at that time, immediately future historical perspective.

#### The Falklands Factor

The Falklands War of April through June 1982 not only tested the validity of Mr. Nott's decisions regarding the Royal Navy, but also highlighted the gross shortsightedness of his overall defense policy. Without question, the war proved the vulnerability of surface ships. Of 23 British surface combat vessels participating in the conflict, six were sunk. Ten more were hit with weapons that malfunctioned.<sup>25</sup> Had these missiles exploded as designed, 70 percent of the task force surface combat fleet would have been damaged or destroyed by the forces of a nation that at

best can be categorized as an average regional power. Despite vulnerability, the constriction of the surface fleet hurt the war effort. Civilian maritime assets had to be pressed into service and played a critical role. The reduced amount of naval combat power that Britain was able to muster in the South Atlantic came perilously close to shifting the outcome of the war in favor of Argentina. Mr. Nott's naval reduction program almost proved to be too much to overcome.

The Falklands War produced both negative and positive effects upon British defense policy. In addition to the loss of life, the war cost 900 million pounds to conduct.<sup>26</sup> The resulting fortification of the islands, designed to preclude further Argentinian aggression, cost 624 million pounds in 1982-83. Maintenance of the Falklands garrison has since averaged 400 million pounds annually.<sup>27</sup> This has created further pressure on an already strained defense budget.

However, the resources expended on constructing and maintaining Fortress Falklands have produced both civilian and military benefits. The runway completion and road network projects and the construction of life support, maritime, and warehousing facilities was contracted exclusively to British firms at a time when the building industry in Britain was severely depressed. Militarily, the Fortress Falklands' mentality was quickly transformed into

an excellent training opportunity. Army and Royal Air Force units are rotated to Falklands duty every ninety days, and Royal Naval units serve there during their Southern Atlantic mission sequence. While there, units from all three services perform the Falklands defense mission and take full advantage of training opportunities. Use of the Falkland Islands as a major tri-service training base lessens land-use pressure within Britain and greatly expands the scope of training. Units can conduct realistic live-fire exercises, cold weather training, and experience virtually no distractions due to the remote location. Additionally, improved unit proficiency has resulted from the real-world intelligence and surveillance missions and occasional air interdiction of Argentine aircraft.<sup>28</sup>

Despite the successful conduct of the war, the Ministry of Defence emerged from it suffering considerable loss of credibility. During the course of the war the Ministry of Defence utilized censorship, news release delays, pre-planned leaks and misinformation campaigns to manipulate the press. Although much of this activity was designed to inhibit the Argentinian war effort, the relationship between the Ministry of Defence and the press could only be characterized as being devoid of cooperation.<sup>29</sup> As a result, the press was not reluctant to continue to hound the Thatcher government about specific and often embarrassing policy decisions made during the war. Mrs. Thatcher's

decision to sink the Argentinian light cruiser General Belgrano was still in the news up until 1985 with the Ponting trial.

However, the euphoria of the Falklands' victory produced a boon for defense policy that was to last until 1985. Increased defense spending became much more politically acceptable. Although all services benefited, the Royal Navy became the priority recipient. Not only was lost equipment replaced with new, thus modernizing the fleet, but additional equipment beyond battle losses was procured. The plan to further reduce the frigate fleet from 50 to 42 vessels, scheduled to commence in 1983, was cancelled.<sup>30</sup> The frigate surface fleet was actually readjusted upwards to a planned 55 ships and the reserve aircraft carrier was reactivated. Fourteen Sea Harriers were ordered; seven replacing battle losses and seven additional for the reactivated carrier. The mid-life vessel modernization program was also reinitiated.<sup>31</sup>

The heavy use of civilian assets during the war was transformed into increased emphasis on reserve forces. New minesweepers were ordered for the Royal Navy Reserve. The Royal Auxiliary Air Force, however, received the most substantial gains. Its strength of three air regiments was doubled to six. Even the Territorial Army was a Falklands' beneficiary, with the creation of a new 4,500 man force designed to protect key installations within Britain.<sup>32</sup>

The 5th Infantry Brigade, the principal Army unit that fought the Falklands War, was transformed into the 5th Infantry Parachute Brigade.<sup>33</sup> Its reconstitution as an airborne, flexible-response unit marked Britain's re-entry into the business of world-wide power projection via a Rapid Deployment Force. Although the brigade's principal mission is to meet non-NATO contingencies, it is also designated as a RDF reinforcement for NATO, thus enhancing the justification for its existence. During December 1986 this unit participated in a ten day joint training exercise in Oman.<sup>34</sup> During November 1987, the 5th Infantry Parachute Brigade combined with the 3rd Royal Marine Commando Brigade for Exercise Purple Warrior in South-west Scotland. The exercise area was depicted as a notional state under attack from a hostile neighbor and this military training action represented the largest airborne-amphibious exercise mounted by Britain since 1945. Exercise Fire Focus, conducted during March 1988, rehearsed the 5th Infantry Parachute Brigade's capability to rapidly reinforce the Falkland Islands.<sup>35</sup> The above examples clearly demonstrate the continued resolve of the Thatcher government to possess this type of military capability.

#### Post-Falklands to Present Day

By late 1984, the post-Falkland euphoria that had so

materially benefited the military had exhausted itself. The Thatcher government continued its pursuit of lower public expenditure, a manifesto pledge from both 1979 and 1983 that had yet to be realized in any appreciable measure. Despite considerable economic improvement by this time, Mrs. Thatcher, primarily because of political reasons, refused the temptation to increase defense spending further. She did just the opposite. Fiscal year 1985-86 marked a three percent real term annual decline in defense expenditure.<sup>36</sup> After reversing almost 35 years of postwar defense spending decline by achieving GDP expenditure levels of 5.0 to 5.4% from 1980-84, the downward trend was resumed.<sup>37</sup> In May 1986, the policy of 3% real growth to NATO, which actually achieved almost 4% from 1980-85, was officially abandoned.<sup>38</sup> By fiscal year 1986-87, defense expenditure was down 4.7% from the level of 1984.<sup>39</sup> With the resourcing decisions of late 1984-1986, British defense policy was now once again, and continues to remain in a financial stop cycle.

Equipment procurement and personnel expenditure, consuming approximately two-thirds of the defense budget, absorbed the brunt of this constriction.<sup>40</sup> Equipment spending, which peaked at 45.8% of the defense budget in 1984-85 is estimated to be 42.9% during fiscal year 1988-89.<sup>41</sup> Active duty uniformed personnel strength, reaching 326,200 by 1985, is estimated to be no more than 317,000 as of 1 April 1989.<sup>42</sup> This equates to a 3% reduction in force

structure in less than four years. Despite equipment procurement slowdowns, strength reductions and overall budgetary constraints, the defense policy mission did not correspondingly shrink. In fact, with the inclusion of Fortress Falklands and the Rapid Deployment Force, it has expanded. In view of this, it became apparent that improved defense spending procedures and oversight were needed to compliment the above mentioned cuts. As this theme was embraced by the contemporary conservative ideology of better, more efficient government, Mrs. Thatcher turned to Michael Heseltine, appointed as Secretary of State for Defence in January 1983, to get more pop for less pounds.<sup>43</sup>

As discussed in Chapter II, Mr. Heseltine proceeded to reorganize the Ministry of Defence in an attempt to improve efficiency and lower costs. In addition to the structural reorganization of the ministry, which included a considerable amount of privatization, he and his successor, George Younger, also focused on procedural changes within the defense equipment procurement process.

Defense-related privatization, very much in line with Mrs. Thatcher's economic preferences, has resulted in a 30% reduction in the UK based Ministry of Defence workforce since 1979.<sup>44</sup> Mr. Heseltine's contribution to this process began in March 1984 when plans were announced to transfer almost all research and development operations to the private sector. This resulted in the shifting of more than

4,000 jobs to civilian payrolls by 1988.<sup>45</sup> Then in March 1985, he directed privatization of naval shipyards and the Royal Ordnance factories. This resulted in a loss of 19,700 industrial civil servants, who were generally retained by the new private ownership, and according to The Economist, substantial savings to the government.<sup>46</sup>

Procedural changes in the equipment procurement process can be categorized as either commercial or collaborative in nature.<sup>47</sup> Competition is the essence of the commercial approach. Although it is difficult to foster for major systems at the prime-contractor level, such as the Trident submarine, sub-contracting competition has been encouraged and increased by the Ministry of Defence. By 1987, 64% of all defense equipment contracts were subject to competitive bidding, as compared to 30% during 1980.<sup>48</sup> Contracting methods and payment procedures are also elements of the commercial approach. When appropriate, package contracts for both development and production are offered. This provides the potential contractor considerable freedom to decide how much development work will be required to meet contract specifications. Payment procedures have also been changed. The Ministry of Defence has moved away from the process of paying contract costs incurred plus a set percentage fee for profit, to interim payment schedules related to actual production progress.<sup>49</sup>

Collaboration is a fairly straight-forward concept

based upon the theory that better value for expenditure can be achieved by sharing development costs, increasing production runs and pooling logistical resources.<sup>50</sup> Collaboration with NATO partners provides the added benefit of increasing equipment standardization within the alliance. Britain is currently involved in seventeen NATO collaborative projects where equipment is either in service or production and twenty future study and development projects. Major weapon systems among these include the Tornado, NATO Frigate Replacement (NFR 90), EH 101 Helicopter, and the European Fighter Aircraft.<sup>51</sup>

A good example of both a commercial and collaborative effort was undertaken in the area of research and development. During October 1985 the Ministry of Defence initiated a scheme whereby it would recoup some of its research and development costs. Defence Technology Enterprises were created by a private consortium established by Lazard Brothers Merchant Bank. This consortium, also open to NATO allies, placed executives into Ministry of Defence research and development departments to determine if any new technologies could be applied to the civilian economy. The consortium would then pay the Ministry of Defence for patent and marketing rights to these technologies.<sup>52</sup> As of 1988 more than 200 civilian executives were involved in this program.<sup>53</sup>

However, despite all these money saving attempts, the

Ministry of Defence has experienced a number of difficulties in its effort to obtain better value for expenditure. There have been several costly white elephants, serious cost overruns in the defense equipment procurement process, and other policy initiatives that have proven to be counter-productive to the efforts of Heseltine and Younger.

During 1986 two long-term weapon development programs were discontinued by the Ministry of Defence at considerable expense. After nine years and 1 billion pounds, the Nimrod Airborne Early Warning System production run was cancelled because the aircraft could not accomplish the tasks it was originally designed for. United States AWACS aircraft were purchased instead.<sup>54</sup> After 15 years of development the SP 70, Self-propelled Howitzer venture that was a joint effort of Britain, West Germany and Italy was scrapped. Through 1987 no new developmental project or off the shelf howitzer was identified to replace Britain's aging 105 mm Abbot field artillery piece.<sup>55</sup> In 1988 Britain, West Germany and Italy resurrected the howitzer program, now called the FH 70, and have thus re-instituted the long and expensive development and production process for a similar system the second time.<sup>56</sup>

Trident is perhaps the best known and most expensive cost overrun example in the British defense equipment procurement system. It is certainly the most publicized. Originally estimated at a cost of seven billion pounds in

1980,<sup>57</sup> cost estimates have escalated to approximately 9.3 billion pounds today. And this figure is based upon an exchange rate of \$2.00 to the pound.<sup>58</sup> Currently the exchange rate is approximately \$1.75 to the pound.

Policy decisions have also hampered British efforts to economize defense equipment procurement and to field optimum systems for the money in a timely manner. During October 1984, Mr. Heseltine reversed a decision to purchase 40,000 multiple-launch rocket system missiles and 48 launchers from the United States. The missiles and launchers were scheduled for delivery in 1985. Instead he opted to purchase the identical system from European producers. Although this decision served the interests of the European-wide rationalized arms industry, of which Britain is a part, the system was not yet available through European producers and will not be delivered until 1989-90 at an added inflationary expense.<sup>59</sup>

Although collaboration and direct import account for approximately 25% of the defense equipment budget, stated Ministry of Defence policy is to buy British whenever possible.<sup>60</sup> Justified as this policy may be, especially regarding the domestic economy, it has not always resulted in the acquisition of the best equipment at an optimum price. Mr. Heseltine's decision in January 1986 to purchase British Westland helicopters was a good example of the dilemma inherent in the buy-British policy. The helicopter

was viewed by many as inferior to that offered by the United States firm Sikorsky. Heseltine's decision was overruled by Mrs. Thatcher and ultimately led to Cabinet blow-up and his resignation. Although his resignation was more about policy and Mrs. Thatcher's style of decision making than individual ministerial responsibility,<sup>61</sup> this incident highlighted the perils of pursuing a buy-British policy too vigorously.

Other general defense policy decisions have contributed to the realm of financial difficulty. Continuance of the expensive all-volunteer force, essentially a political decision, has limited maneuverability within the defense budget. Maintenance of Fortress Falklands, also a political decision in lieu of serious negotiations with the Argentinians, has also added additional and arguably unnecessary expense.

#### Other Significant Policy Aspects

Although I have concentrated heavily on the financial resourcing aspect of British defense policy, there are three other significant elements that warrant further comment: NATO, the nuclear weapons question, and the Soviet threat. Although all three have been handled consistently by every postwar government, Mrs. Thatcher's views concerning them are of interest and merit a bit more elaboration.

Current British defense policy is essentially founded

upon NATO membership. Mrs. Thatcher has wholeheartedly endorsed this situation through both action and rhetoric. It is obvious to me that she embraced the NATO dual-approach policy and has furthered its incorporation into British defense policy.

The dual approach policy rests upon the twin pillars of deterrence and arms reduction. Deterrence is achieved through the concept of flexible response. This doctrine calls for the possession of a wide range of forces, both conventional and nuclear, and the capability and resolve to employ these forces in response to any attack in an appropriate way.<sup>62</sup> The British defense establishment does indeed possess a wide range of forces and frequently demonstrates the ability to employ them. Critics of Mrs. Thatcher have said many things about her, but to my knowledge, no one has ever accused her of lacking resolve. She, like Ronald Reagan, is very much a believer in the peace through strength philosophy. Her governments have demonstrated this, especially in regard to NATO, by both expenditure and policy decisions.

In the area of arms reduction, Britain under Margaret Thatcher has been an active participant in all NATO initiatives. Although many of the well-known agreements and ongoing negotiations were initiated before Mrs. Thatcher became Prime Minister, she has continued to support them and her governments have taken positive steps toward their

expansion. As stated in Chapter II, Britain unilaterally abandoned chemical weapons during the late 1950s. In 1979, a commission of international experts was invited by the Thatcher government to inspect the dismantled Cornwall nerve agent production plant.<sup>63</sup> This not only reinforced Britain's anti-chemical weapons position, but also demonstrated that such a facility could be eliminated safely. Britain has been an active participant in the NATO and Warsaw Pact Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions (MBFR) conventional weapons negotiations throughout the 1980s. On 5 December 1985, Britain proposed to the Warsaw Pact on behalf of NATO, a significantly new proposal to defer agreement on the current size of each side's forces until an initial reduction in Soviet and United States forces was made.<sup>64</sup> Most recently, Britain, in conjunction with 34 other countries, concluded an agreement known as the Stockholm Agreement of 1986 on security and cooperation in Europe.<sup>65</sup> Finally, Mrs. Thatcher has been an outspoken supporter of the 1987 US-Soviet Intermediate Nuclear Force (INF) arms reduction treaty and ongoing US-Soviet bilateral nuclear negotiations.<sup>66</sup>

The nuclear weapons question has been debated in Britain at various levels of intensity since the late 1940s.<sup>67</sup> Mrs. Thatcher's position on British nuclear weapons is clear. She considers them an essential element of British defense policy and has taken action to modernize

and strengthen her strategic deterrent force. She, and for that matter, also inferentially the British electorate in three successive elections, has rejected calls from critics for unilateral disarmament.<sup>68</sup> She further rebukes as nonsense a complete weapon-for-weapon disarmament accord with the Soviet Union, as this would leave Britain with no strategic deterrent while the Soviets retained 97% of their current arsenal.<sup>69</sup> Yet she remains prepared to seriously review current British policy if Soviet and United States nuclear forces were very substantially reduced and it became apparent that Britain could significantly contribute to arms control in such a reduced threat environment.<sup>70</sup>

Although Mrs. Thatcher's views concerning the Soviet threat are not quite as extreme as the "Evil Empire" mentality of the early Reagan administration, she has nevertheless maintained a consistently staunch position regarding the intentions of the Soviet Union. Her governments have correctly understood that the simple focus of Soviet foreign policy is based upon Russia's historic obsession with security through territorial expansion and the Marxist-Leninist ideology of the inevitable revolutionary transformation of the world from capitalism to socialism.<sup>71</sup> Beyond the sheer mass and might of Soviet military forces that threaten Europe, the British defense establishment is mindful of Soviet attempts to manipulate the press and utilize legitimate front organizations such as

the World Peace Council, World Federation of Trade Unions, and the Christian Peace Conference to influence defense policy in Western Europe.<sup>72</sup>

Concerning Mr. Gorbachev, Mrs. Thatcher has assumed an optimistic, but very cautious attitude. Her government has welcomed the reforms that are taking place within the Soviet Union and considers as desirable policies which bring the Soviet people more information about their own country and the outside world. Further, her government believes that more pragmatic, less aggressive, external policies should make the Soviet Union a less uncomfortable neighbor. The British government also believes, as demonstrated by Mrs. Thatcher's meeting with Mr. Gorbachev at RAF Brize Norton in December 1987, that it is now able to pursue bilateral dealings with the Soviet Union in an atmosphere that is more open and constructive than at anytime during the postwar past.<sup>73</sup>

However, her government is also cognizant of the fact that Mr. Gorbachev has yet to initiate any appreciable slowdown of the Soviet military modernization program, nor any reduction in defense expenditure. By the mid-1990s, virtually the entire Soviet strategic and theater nuclear force deployed against Europe during the early 1980s will have been replaced by new or modernized systems. Soviet advantages in conventional forces, especially armor and aircraft, continue unabated, as does their unjustifiable

capability to wage massive chemical warfare.<sup>74</sup>

Additionally, Soviet defense expenditure, at an estimated 15% of GDP and three times that of any European NATO ally, does not engender feelings of mutual trust.<sup>75</sup> Mrs. Thatcher and her government remain rightfully cautious and have declined to accept Soviet assurance of non-aggression. She believes that as long as doubts concerning Soviet intentions remain, it would be naive and irresponsible for the West to lower its guard.<sup>76</sup>

#### Conclusion

I consider the ideological foundation of British defense policy under Margaret Thatcher to be basically sound. Her government exhibits a realistic perception of the Soviet threat and the primacy of NATO membership required to counter that threat. I believe that her early efforts concerning the re-emergence of defense as a national policy issue were important, necessary for Britain at the time, and have been transformed into a consistent doctrinal approach to defense policy.

Operationally, she has in some ways successfully addressed the inherited deficiencies in home defense, British conventional contributions to NATO, and the overall well-being of her military forces. If one sets aside the basic question of nuclear weapons, e.g. whether or not to

possess them, Mrs. Thatcher's decision to modernize her strategic nuclear deterrent with Trident can be viewed as operationally astute and far-sighted. Although with hindsight one can question the decision to constrict the Royal Navy surface fleet in 1981, one should also acknowledge the political opportunism exercised by the Thatcher government regarding defense expenditure after the Falklands War. We should also recognize that defense has since been somewhat subordinated to other, primarily economic, Thatcher government goals.

Procedurally, she has attempted to improve the execution of defense policy through administrative reorganization, new initiatives, and spending control techniques. Some of these innovations have succeeded, while others have not. And in some cases, especially the reorganization of the Ministry of Defence, that has now been in place for less than four years, it is too early to accurately assess.

Just as I consider financial resource allocation to be the most critical factor in defense policy, I also believe that this aspect of Mrs. Thatcher's approach to defense has been, and continues to be suspect. This is not only from the standpoint of inconsistency, but also the fact that there seems to be a growing gap between the scope of Britain's defense missions and the level of funding.

The April 1988 Defence White Paper confirms two things.

The first is the continuance of the now five major mission British defense policy of strategic nuclear deterrence, commitment to NATO's Central Front, North Sea and Eastern Atlantic approaches, home defense, and out of NATO-Sector RDF capabilities. The second is that for the fourth year in succession, British defense expenditure has continued to decline in real terms.<sup>77</sup> With this real term decline and the bulk of the Trident bills becoming due, one may rightly wonder how Britain will sustain it all. As tempting as a speculative answer may be, in no way do I consider myself qualified to provide one.

Strictly from a financial standpoint, Mrs. Thatcher's defense policy can be characterized as having been subjected to go-stop-go-stop cycles, and inter-service trade-offs. Since 1985, the three principal services have taken turns receiving the short end of the budget stick. Continued commitment to a nuclear deterrent and an all volunteer force has resulted in recent conventional equipment shortcomings.<sup>78</sup> In some respects, Britain's military of 1989 may be on the verge of resembling Callaghan's military of 1978 more than at any other time during Mrs. Thatcher's tenure. Nevertheless, Margaret Thatcher has expanded British defense policy and vastly improved its capability of execution from the low points of the 1970s. She has also raised, perhaps unknowingly, one irrefutable fact. The breadth of Britain's defense policy will continue to be more

difficult to fund and perhaps also more difficult to justify.

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## Epilogue - The Nature of Change and a New Approach?

I had considered change in the British defense establishment to be a foregone conclusion. Just as life during the 1980s is vastly different from that of the 14th century, so too are the operational methods and scope of British defense policy.

Operational changes are easy to recognize. Technological progress has been the principal contributor. Britons today employ greatly superior military hardware to execute defense policy compared to that of their forefathers. The specter of nuclear weapons serves to magnify this difference. But is technological development really change?

The scope of British defense policy today is also significantly different from that of past eras. From an empire upon which the sun never set, Britain is now primarily concerned with one regional, but admittedly important, theater. The retreat from empire has considerably reduced the mission of British defense policy. But is a constricted mission really change?

One may rightly argue that both of the above aspects do represent considerable change to British defense policy. At least from a cosmetic standpoint, I would have to agree. However, I contend that the core element of British defense policy, and the driving force behind it, has remained

remarkably consistent. Since the attainment of world power status, Britain, through her defense policy, has been and continues to be determined to retain it. Her monarchs and governments have also demonstrated the tendency to attempt this as cheaply as possible, often providing resources that were inadequate for accomplishment of stated policy.

Margaret Thatcher is no exception to this. I believe that her decision to retain and modernize Britain's strategic nuclear force is directly connected to the misguided aspiration of preserving Britain's lost world power status. I consider as absurd the hope that the Soviet Union would negotiate to proportionately reduce its nuclear arsenal with that of Britain's. Although Trident is a potent system, the size of Britain's force in relation to Soviet nuclear capabilities is such that the Soviets cannot seriously be troubled by Britain, either as an independent nuclear power or through integration with NATO nuclear tactics. True, a nuclear exchange would cause considerable damage to the Soviet Union, but Britain would be obliterated. Polaris could have been allowed to age into obsolescence at considerable resource benefit to British conventional forces.

The re-establishment by Mrs. Thatcher of the British Rapid Deployment Force is another example of attempts to retain world power status. The extent of Britain's overseas responsibilities does not warrant its existence. It is an

expensive legacy of empire and the trappings of a super power. It does not realistically fit into Britain's defense needs, nor financial commitment to defense policy.

Mrs. Thatcher has also demonstrated similarities to her predecessors in the area of defense resourcing. Although she can take credit for reversing the operational deficiencies suffered by British forces during the 1970s, she has since been inconsistent regarding resource allocation and unrealistic in its relationship to the extent of stated policy. British defense spending is now 4.7% of GDP. This is precisely the average achieved between 1968 and 1979, an era she has been harshly critical of. Mrs. Thatcher may claim to govern Britain through resolve, but I contend that her "new approach", when applied to defense policy is better described as "more of the same".

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Ranger Tab

Parachute Badge