# The new tide of militarisation

*"Public understanding of the military and recognition of their role will always determine the climate within which the Forces can recruit, and the willingness of the taxpayer to finance them adequately."*[1]



*Special Forces Support Group Inaugural Parade at RAF St Athan, Wales in May 2006. Photo: Crown Copyright*

# Contents

# 1. Introduction

Militarism is ever-present in British society. Soldiers have always marched at state events; cadet forces are part of state and private schools; armed forces recruiting offices can be found in many town centres. Successive governments have been under constant pressure from arms manufacturers to buy more weapons.

But there is a new and different tide of militarisation that has developed over the last five years. The general public do not seem to be aware of it, and it is not being discussed or scrutinised. In this briefing I will show that there is a coherent government strategy behind this tide, which is aimed at increasing support for the military.

This document demonstrates that the main reason the government is seeking to increase support for the military is to raise the willingness of the public to pay for the military, to make recruitment easier, and stifle opposition to unpopular wars. Quaker Peace & Social Witness hope this briefing will start a conversation about these issues.

This briefing does not cover all aspects of militarism and the government strategy to promote it in our society, as this is a vast topic. There is much more work to be done to scrutinise the new tide of militarisation breaking over our society.



*Crowds cheer as soldiers march through a ticker tape parade in Cardiff for the Armed Forces Day 2010 National Event. Photo: Crown Copyright*

# 2. The meaning of militarisation

This section will outline a model for thinking about what the militarisation of society is.

'Militarisation' as used in this briefing is based on the following statement: "To become militarised is to adopt militaristic values and priorities as one's own, to see military solutions as particularly effective, to see the world as a dangerous place best approached with militaristic attitudes".[2] 'Militarism' is also used, and refers to "the belief or desire of a government or people that a country should maintain a strong military capability and be prepared to use it aggressively to defend or promote national interests."[3]

The relationship between the military establishment and society needs to be thought about. The military establishment tends to conceptualise its relation to society as part of a "Clausewitzian Trinity of Government, Armed Forces and Society."[4]



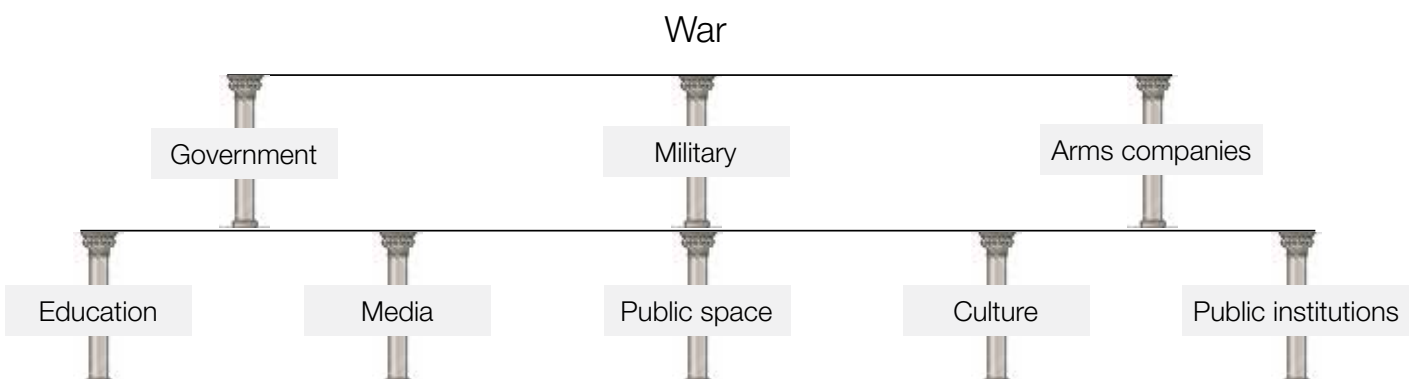The military

The government

The people
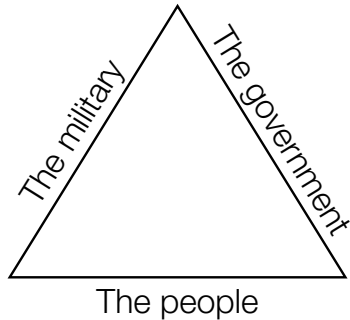
support war directly: the military, arms companies and government. The bottom layer is the wider society, which supports the second layer: schools, colleges, universities, media, public spaces and culture.

For war to occur, the military, arms companies and the government need to be in a position to support war. But in order to be in this position, they need to have enough support from the general public.[6]

The military, arms companies and the government influence society in order to make sure the public supports their work preparing for war. The involvement of society (bottom layer) by those who prepare for war (middle layer), and the influence of the latter on the former, is the militarisation of society. This briefing looks at how the government is driving a strategy of militarising society to ensure that the military, arms companies and government are war-ready.

## The Clausewitzian Triangle[5]

However, to understand militarism in our modern society (General von Clausewitz died in 1831), perhaps a better place to start is to consider a pyramid of three layers, with war at the top.[5] The middle layer contains the institutions needed to

War



| Government | Military | Arms companies |

| Education | Media | Public space | Culture | Public institutions |

# 3. What we see happening

## Recent history

The Iraq (2003–2011) and Afghanistan wars (2001–present) have had an impact on military recruitment and public willingness to support the armed forces in Britain.

While the UK has been regularly involved in wars for hundreds of years, this is the first time since World War II that Britain has has had troops deployed abroad in war situation for so long.[7] Furthermore, despite media propaganda, the invasions of both Iraq and Afghanistan have been unpopular and not widely understood. These wars, combined with the absence of a perception amongst the general public of a significant threat to the nation (an analysis that the government agrees with),[8] have not made things easy for the military in terms of recruitment.

Likewise, while a significant majority of the general public are keen to fund equipment – especially protective equipment – for the troops that are deployed, they are less keen to fund the more expensive elements of military equipment required to project force to all corners of the globe, for example aircraft carriers, long-range missiles and jet aircraft.

## New militarism

This section looks briefly at the principal areas in which the new militarism is having an effect on society. This is an extensive area spanning the whole of society, so there will be gaps, but many areas are touched on.

### Education

The military have a long history of involvement with schools in Britain, most familiarly through the Combined Cadet Force (CCF).[9] However, in recent years the military's influence in all schools has grown in sophistication, reach and political support.

The Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, has said that "Every child can benefit from the values of a military ethos."[10] His enthusiasm for military involvement has resulted in a 'Military Ethos Programme', designed to "foster confidence, self-discipline and self-esteem whilst developing teamwork and leadership skills."[11]

This involves the Department for Education working in partnership with the Ministry of Defence to fund a range of projects across many aspects of education. These include a £10.85m expansion of the cadet forces so that 100 more state schools will be able to develop cadet forces by 2015; 'Troops to Teachers', to fast-track graduate and non-graduate ex-military personnel into teaching; and £8m for 'alternative provision with a military ethos'[12] – educational programmes for young people permanently excluded from school, staffed by ex-military personnel, and some of which involve doing activities in military uniforms.

The government is also keen to encourage academies and free schools to use their 'new freedoms' to foster a military ethos. There are also projects to support ex-military personnel to work with schools, mentoring the most 'at risk' young people.

This political support for the 'military ethos' is taking place amidst the armed forces' own efforts to reach out more effectively to schools. In addition to hundreds of thousands of visits to schools, they provide an increasingly wide range of free resources and lesson plans to primary and secondary schools, offer trips to bases, run activity days, support schools to get involved with Armed Forces Day and play an active part in careers events.

Michael Gove's fervour for military involvement in education appears to be founded on his personal admiration for the military, but may also be driven by more pragmatic agendas, such as defence needs. It has become a key part of the government's education policy, despite an absence of any evidence, to support 'military ethos' in order to supposedly provide young people with improved life chances, apparently without any committee scrutiny or parliamentary discussion

## Public space

**Armed Forces Day**[14] focuses on the individuals in the armed forces and not on military policy or the wars the armed forces are fighting. It takes place in the summer so that children can be involved, and so that exciting sporting and outdoor events can be hosted.

The day has been well resourced, with a website where one can register an event one is running, as well as a shop where one can buy not only bunting, flags and mugs but also whole party packs and a range of clothing. The events mainly consist of fundraising activities for service personnel relief charities, parades, school-linked events or tea parties.

**Remembrance Day**, formerly Armistice Day, is not a new phenomenon. It is observed on 11 November, the date on which WWI ended in 1918. It traditionally focused on commemoration, with money from poppies sold going to support the war disabled and bereaved, and at a national level has a careful message about the cost of war. However, in the last few years, the tone of the Royal British Legion, which sells and markets the red poppies that are such a big feature of the day, has shifted. This may be partly the tone of Help for Heroes and other new armed forces personnel relief charities.

This shift was pointed out in a letter to *The Guardian* in 2010, signed by six veterans:

*The Poppy Appeal is once again subverting Armistice Day. A day that should be about peace and remembrance is turned into a month-long drum roll of support for current wars. This year's campaign has been launched with showbiz hype. The true horror and futility of war is forgotten and ignored.*

*The public are being urged to wear a poppy in support of "our Heroes". There is nothing heroic about being blown up in a vehicle. There is nothing heroic about being shot in an ambush and there is nothing heroic about fighting in an unnecessary conflict.*

*Remembrance should be marked with the sentiment "Never Again".*[15]

The involvement of the military in the Royal British Legion's campaign has also increased. Whereas in the past the role was mainly to participate in the ceremonies around Remembrance Day, now troops and cadets sell poppies.

An example of the change in the tone of the Royal British Legion is given by troops in public places selling poppies with the cry: "Support our troops!" This is a substantial departure from the Royal British Legion's historic message of remembering the horror of war, towards supporting those involved in current war. Whilst Remembrance Day is not uniformly celebrated across the whole of Britain, and aspects of the 'support our troops' message have always been there, QPSW is not alone in identifying a discernible change. If anything this change seems to be accelerating and adding new dimensions of commercialisation[16] and corporatisation.[17] Signs of disagreement about these changes are also growing[18].

**Returning parades** occur when military units return from overseas and march through a town.

The military were very prominent during the **2012 Olympics**, providing security, mooring a warship on the Thames and in Weymouth Bay, installing missiles on roofs in the vicinity and playing a public part in the ceremonies. We are witnessing a period in public life when it seems impossible to run a public event without it becoming controlled and securitised, and the military are often involved. At royal events, the military have a very public non-security role which is primarily ceremonial.

The national press do not critically analyse the presence and use of soldiers in events such as the London Olympics. They have a strong tendency to be supportive.

The prominent and regular attendance of the military in public life and in public space desensitises people to and normalises the presence of soldiers.

## Politics, media and culture

Mainstream politicians, perhaps rightly, have identified the armed forces as like "motherhood and apple-pie" – something that the vast majority of people think is unconditionally a good thing. This happens to such an extent that most of the time it is felt that if the military are present or involved in a media or cultural event, there is no need for a balancing presence, whereas there would be if there were an advocate for any particular cause or way of thinking.

Many politicians are clearly keen to grab opportunities to mention how great they think the armed forces are. David Cameron has a tendency to begin an answer to any question about the military with a phrase such as:

> *I am absolutely full of support for our armed services and what they do and yes, we do ask them to do a lot on our behalf.*[19]

Politicians more generally seek to avoid talking about wars and instead seek to focus on the people in the armed forces. This associates them more with the popular armed services personnel and less with the unpopular wars they are sending them off to fight. In our view, this is a deliberate conflation.

The coalition government currently in power has publicly criticised much of the public sector including teachers, NHS staff, local government, the fire service and police – yet the same criticism is not levelled at the armed forces. This creates a clear imbalance in the way in which public services are regarded.

'Militainment' – entertainment with military themes that celebrates the armed forces – is also increasingly prevalent in society.[20] Military violence is often used in games and films. Although this is not a new development, the frequency, sophistication and depth of military involvement in entertainment is growing. Killing and death as entertainment can be seen as a further example of the normalisation of military options.

## Non-military state actors

MPs and local councils often have a tendency to take initiatives to associate themselves with the armed forces in their wards whenever they can. The majority of local authorities have introduced Community Covenants[21] to make it easier for people serving in the armed forces to access services, though they are seen by many in the armed forces as a gimmick.[22] Some have even appointed Armed Forces Champions for their areas.

# 4. The strategy behind militarisation

## A note on methodology

In a bill of law or an official government paper the government will usually outline what they intend to do, but will not always explain why they are doing it. However, the reasoning and logic behind government policy become apparent at the step before: in the reports, reviews, 'task forces' and commissions that the government sets up at the start of implementing a new policy.

The research which produced this briefing has included looking at the *National recognition of our armed forces* report, *Future reserves 2020*, and the *Youth engagement review*. Most of the recommendations made in all three have been adopted by the government.

## *National recognition of our armed forces*

In May 2008 Quentin Davies MP reported to then Prime Minister Gordon Brown on the outcomes of an inquiry he had led into the 'national Recognition of our armed forces'.[23] The report aimed to address how

*the military... have become increasingly separated from civilian life and consciousness.*

It recognised that

*public understanding of the military and recognition of their role will always determine the climate within which the Forces can recruit, and the willingness of the taxpayer to finance them adequately.*

The recommendations centred around

*a re-appraisal by the Armed Forces themselves of the priority given to public outreach, and to relations with politicians and the media in particular.*

In short, it argued that the public are not sufficiently aware of the military, and therefore not sufficiently supportive. The military must proactively address this by relating better with politicians, the media and the public to ensure future recruits and funding.

The report made 40 recommendations in four areas:

- Increasing visibility, which included wider use of uniforms, a more systematic approach to homecoming parades and a British Armed Forces and Veterans Day (now Armed Forces Day).

- Improving contact, which included annual public outreach programmes, affiliations with local government, civic bodies and livery companies and encouraging more media activity.

- Building understanding, which included MP visits to combat zones, an increase in combined cadet forces in comprehensive schools and more content on the national curriculum.

- Encouraging support, which included greater use of military and veteran's identity cards, military discounts and greater military involvement in national sports events.

In October 2008 the Ministry of Defence published the government's response.[24] This endorsed the report and the vast majority of the recommendations.

## *Future reserves 2020*

In July 2011 a commission consisting of Nicholas Houghton, a general, Julian Brazier MP, and Graeme Lamb, a retired lieutenant general, published the findings and recommendations of their review of Britain's reserve forces.[25]

The commission was

*guided by the desire to meet four requirements:*

*First, that the overall capability and utility of our Armed Forces would be enhanced.*

*Second, that Defence would better harness the talents and the volunteer ethos of the country.*

*Third, that the Armed Forces would become better integrated with and understood by the society from which they draw their people.*

*Fourth, that Defence would become more cost effective to run.*

While the first and fourth requirements are fairly unsurprising, the second and especially the third make it clear that a significant aim of the commission was to find ways that the reserve forces can be used to strengthen the support for the military from society.

In the introduction the commission also refers to a lack of public understanding for the role of the military:

*Cohesion between what is referred to as the Clausewitzian Trinity of Government, Armed Forces and Society, has been weakened by misunderstanding over the UK's involvement in unpopular conflicts, and the absence of an existential threat.*[26]

It is unclear what the 'misunderstanding' being referred to here is, and which part of the trinity created it. Perhaps this refers to how for over a decade Britain has been engaged in wars where significant numbers of British soldiers have been killed, and their deaths have been relentlessly reported in the media.

The main thrust of the report is that we need to increase the number of reserves to about 38,000 from their current level of around 25,000.[27]

This is for reasons of cost and various points about efficiency and effectiveness, but also because reserves are effective at linking the military with society:

*The benefits of using Reservists to help connect with the Nation are extensive.*

*Defence could... use the Reserves better to reinforce the links with society.*

The report recommends:

*allocating the Reserves a more formalised role in connecting Defence with society and the Nation at large.*

Looking abroad, it explains how other nations already do this:

*Our allies recognise the value that Reservists bring in maintaining society's understanding of the reasons for continuing to invest in Defence.*

It also suggests that the government should use the reserves particularly for activities in the UK, as

*response in support of civil contingencies is an important area where localism, volunteering and the Defence narrative could be substantiated by visible, positive Reservist action. This role is seen as central to Community and Employer support in our principal allied nations,*

adding

*The higher profile that this will afford Reservists within their local communities should have significant long term benefits in developing a Society which is connected with and more supportive of Defence.*

In summary, it is not only the operational effectiveness of the reserves that wins them the role in UK-based activities, but the propaganda effectiveness for promoting support for the military.

But *Future reserves 2020* also talks about creating rationales for the military:

*In the UK, a revised National Security/Defence strategic narrative should be developed, to re-establish popular understanding of Defence and the rationale for the Nation's Reserves,*

as

*a greater perceived existential threat to a nation raises tolerance for the use of Reserves,*

noting that

*in the absence of an existential threat, some nations have successfully synthesised this narrative as a means to galvanising a people in the event of strategic shock.*

In summary, what they are saying is that we need to make sure there is a perceived existential threat to the UK so that the public will be willing to support the use of the armed forces and specifically the Reserves.

In July 2012 the Ministry of Defence presented to parliament the white paper *Reserves in the future force 2020: valuable and valued,*[28] which followed on from *Future reserves 2020*. This and the Defence Reform Bill that stems from it put in place the measures outlined in *Future reserves 2020*.

## Defence *Youth engagement review*

In November 2010 James Plastow was given the task of conducting a 'youth engagement review' to determine how the Ministry of Defence can deliver 'youth engagement' cost-effectively. In December 2011 he delivered his final report,[29] the executive summary of which has a revealing opening:

*The three Services each run or part fund very comprehensive external engagement operations with children and young people in schools and communities. This external engagement should meet two clear Defence outcomes: An awareness of the Armed Forces' role in the world and the quality of its work and people, in order to ensure the continued support of the population; and recruitment of the young men and women that are key to future sustainment and success. However a fair proportion of Defence's current youth engagement activity (principally the cadet forces), whilst contributing to awareness and recruitment ends, also meets much wider personal and social development needs.*

To paraphrase, the armed forces engage with the youth in order to (1) make people think that the armed forces are great, thus ensuring support for the armed forces and (2) recruit to the armed forces. Much of the youth work is also good for (3) personal and social development. Later on the report calls these the three principal outcomes: (1) awareness, (2) recruitment and (3) development.

In the summary of the executive summary, Plastow explains:

*The Review sets out proposals to ensure that Defence's youth engagement effort not only meets Defence needs more precisely, but is ready to increase the valuable part it plays in the personal and social development of young people.*

This acknowledges that personal and social development of young people is not a Defence need. This is said even more explicitly in the body of the report:

*The Review has established that Defence seeks two core outcomes from its youth engagement activity (awareness and recruitment), but*

*much of the activity currently undertaken contributes to a third outcome (personal and social development) which, whilst not a Defence output, should be of significant interest to other Government departments.*

And:

*The development outcome ... only contributes to recruitment and awareness.*

That said, the review repeatedly alludes to how the armed forces need to emphasise the incidental outcome of development if they want to tap into society's wider need for youth programmes to reach more young people:

*There is clearly a demand for youth development activity, but Defence will need to change its approach to how this is tasked and funded, if it is to play an increased part in cross-government youth initiatives.*

The review also notes that:

*The awareness requirement is not being properly championed at a time when it is of increasing importance.[30]*

This is then footnoted with the following comment:

*High operational commitment, but debate on the Armed Forces future and reducing Armed Forces footprint.*

In summary, with forces having been deployed in wars abroad for over a decade, and a government looking to make savings, the armed forces need as much support as they can get in order to minimise the cuts to their numbers and budgets.

# 5. Conclusions

## An overarching strategy

The *National recognition of our armed forces* report is the foundation of the strategy of militarising UK society. The report and the complete adoption of the policies within it are the primary driving force behind the new tide of militarisation in our society.

The report is the overarching strategic statement that seeks to cover all segments of society. Other government strategy around the military follows on from the thinking it has established. That it was created under a Labour government, and yet the current coalition of the other two main parties still supports it indicates how deep rooted the policies in it are.

## One aim

The *National recognition of our armed forces* report, *Future reserves 2020* and the *Defence youth engagement review* all repeatedly refer to the importance to the Ministry of Defence and the armed forces of building public support for the armed forces.

## Two key outcomes

However, public support for the armed forces is not an end in itself. All three reports also identify the two key things the Ministry of Defence and the armed forces have to gain from building public support for the armed forces: **a public willing to fund the military** and **the military's ability for the military to recruit**. These are the two things the MoD and the armed forces want to gain by militarising society. In the view of Quaker Peace & Social Witness, these are the true purpose of the new wave of militarism.

## Supporting members of the armed forces not the primary outcome

In the eyes of the authors of these reports and the establishment that has based its policies upon them, the primary intended outcome of building public support for the armed forces is not to more effectively support members of the armed forces – although this is certainly desirable, it is a secondary outcome.

"Rather, supporting armed forces personnel" is the headline under which the true aims of making the public willing to fund the military and boosting the military's ability to recruit can be achieved, because supporting armed forces personnel is very popular.

## The purpose of armed forces youth work

The armed forces engage in youth work to boost their support and recruitment. In their view, a significant but definitely secondary bonus of much of their youth engagement is that it can develop young people, but this is not its core purpose. Indeed, developing young people is very much the sugar coating on the pill that allows a military presence to be swallowed by schools.

# 6. Implications

A huge cross-party government programme dedicated to ensuring that the military are popular in society has implications other than the popularity of the armed forces and ease of military recruitment. They are briefly explored below.

## Stifling criticism of war

In Britain there is a huge cross-party government programme dedicated to ensuring that the military are popular in society. It is inevitably hard to criticise a war if in the minds of many this is conflated with criticism of the armed forces. It is made more difficult if politicians deliberately nurture this conflation.[31] In a democracy this is particularly worrying as a risk associated with this would be that the UK ends up deploying personnel in wars where it otherwise would not.

During the run-up to the Iraq war of 2003, the then Prime Minister Tony Blair tried to explain the reasons for the war, and ended up with a public that was deeply opposed. Many people don't know the reasons why Britain is at war in Afghanistan, and the rationale has not been subject to the scrutiny that the reasons for the Iraq war had. The deliberate conflation by politicians between the armed forces and war is an effective device that is used to avoid debate around the reasons for British involvement in the Afghan war. It may be that politicians do not question the wars that have begun, as their opponents will use the conflation between armed forces and war to paint them as critical of the armed forces. This possibility is supported by the way opposition to the invasion of Iraq in 2003 from politicians was largely silenced as soon as British troops were on the ground there.

The conflation of armed forces personnel with the wars they are fighting means that it is hard to have a rational discussion on the legitimacy of war. Indeed, in writing this briefing we are concerned that the frequent conflations in this area will be used to stifle conversation about militarisation in the same way they are used to stifle criticism of war.

Such conflation also affects the choices made by those who oppose the Afghan war. This is firstly because it makes those who oppose the war more likely to direct their anger against armed service personnel; and secondly because it makes it hard for them to express their opinions publicly, which may force them away from the channel of debate and direct them to extremism.

There are also potentially unforeseen consequences of this conflation. With foiled attacks on armed forces personnel in the UK in summer 2013 and the tragic murder of Lee Rigby in Woolwich, London, perhaps this conflation has already claimed its first victims.

## Glossing over negative aspects of the military

One aspect of a coordinated strategy to boost the popularity of the military is that it tends to gloss over the negative aspects of the military. Whatever the recruitment brochures say, there are other sides to army life apart from kayaking, muddy faces and camaraderie. There are massive problems of bullying, classism, sexism, homophobia and racism in the armed forces.[32] This is something which bodies external to the armed forces need to scrutinise and resolve, not gloss over and ignore. It is also a problem if wider society forgets this and considers a person's experience with the armed forces as evidence that they will behave in an exemplary manner, particularly in the programmes that put ex-armed forces personnel in contact with vulnerable children.

Armed forces personnel are often mentally and physically damaged as a result of their work. Those leaving the armed forces have elevated risks of violent offending, mental health problems and alcohol abuse,[33] and they need the support of wider society. The Ministry of Defence is not expected to fully support and rehabilitate them in the way that other parts of government would be expected to do for people similarly damaged in their employ. Society needs to be aware of these potential needs if it is to address them.

## The wrong motivations for youth work

The armed forces engage in youth work primarily to boost their own support and to recruit. Youth development is secondary to these primary

goals, and is seen mainly as something that helps achieve them. The Defence *Youth engagement review* is clear that there is significant potential to do more youth engagement, and be more effective at awareness and recruitment, *if the armed forces can emphasise the development outcome.*

It is worth noting that this is significantly different to what the Ministry of Defence says publicly, where youth development is very much to the fore.[34]

If the armed forces' first priority in delivering youth work is not the welfare and development of the young people involved, surely it is reasonable to question whether they can deliver youth work with outcomes comparable to those for whom development is the main motivation. If we want youth work to be done, surely we would be better served by placing our children and spending government money with those for whom our children's best interests are the first priority.

If the priorities of the Ministry of Defence for doing youth work are to boost support for the military and recruit, Ministry of Defence youth work will surely seek to bias young people's ability to think critically about the military and their views on joining the armed forces. This is a cause for concern. Despite what Michael Gove says, many people in Britain would still prefer their children to be educated primarily by teachers, rather than by soldiers.

## The danger of becoming an overly militarised society

There are states that have a significantly more militarised society than Britain. Probably the most relevant two are Israel and the USA. Both these countries are highly commercially developed, have significant domestic arms industries and are regular military allies of Britain. The US military in particular has a big influence on British military thinking, which is part of the "special relationship" between the two nations.

In Israel and the USA the military are often present in everyday life throughout society.[35] Authoritarian military values are respected, and the public is more generally inclined to take a militaristic approach to resolving fears about its security.

There are dangers associated with normalising the presence of soldiers. One of the things that soldiers ultimately represent is the use of mass extreme violence in war. Murder is a crime in national and international law. Organised killing in the form of war is only undertaken as an extreme last resort. The Quaker position is that if you resort to killing, you have failed in your human duty. The image presented of the armed forces when they appear publicly deliberately draws attention away from the fundamental requirement which demands that young people kill other people, focusing instead on discipline. There is a danger that this means that people forget the violence associated with the military; this reduces the opposition to violence and facilitates its use.

Quakers visiting from other countries ask us why so much of the British public appears to be unaware of militarisation. They, and others with direct experience of authoritarian or military government, recent internal conflict in their country or a military coup, are wary or even fearful of a military presence on the streets or as part of a domestic security force and tend to view it as a malaise. If society is unconditionally supportive of the armed forces, it may be unable to weigh up the behaviour of the armed forces effectively if they behave in a way that is detrimental to society.

Do we want to live in a militarised society? Or at the very least, will we get to choose?

## Failure to support members of the armed forces properly

Recognising and supporting the armed forces is used as the cover that will make militarism popularly acceptable. If the general public realise that their desire to support members of the armed forces is being used to aid recruitment and boost military spending, they may feel exploited, and that will affect the recognition and support available to the armed forces.

Supporting members of the armed forces whose mental and/or physical health has been damaged by war is costly. It is apparent from the reports and from the military covenant papers that the government has published that the government is not willing to spend the billions of pounds a year that it would cost to care properly for members of the armed forces whose lives are severely damaged by war.

## Undemocratic use of funds

The programme of militarisation has been masterminded by the Ministry of Defence. *Future reserves 2020* and the Defence *Youth engagement review* both illustrate areas of Ministry of Defence expenditure which have explicit aims of making the public willing to spend money on the Ministry of Defence. There would be an outcry if the Department of Transport or any other branch of government ran a scheme to make the public more willing to fund it, especially in the current climate of extreme public sector cuts. So why is there no concern when the Ministry of Defence does?

## How far will the military establishment go to ensure public support?

At the core of the *National recognition of our armed forces* report, *Future reserves 2020* and the Defence *Youth engagement review* is the desire to ensure public support for the military. All of these documents are public yet they openly discuss manipulating public opinion to support the military.

*Future reserves 2020* is the report most focused on the operational ability of the military. It repeatedly refers to the ability of reserves to maintain "Society's understanding of the reasons for continuing to invest in Defence." It is conceivable  that it is prioritising influencing public opinion over the military effectiveness of reserves, given its belief in the effectiveness of reserves on influencing public opinion, and its principal recommendation of dramatically increasing the numbers of reserves.

*Future reserves 2020* also states that a "greater perceived existential threat to a nation raises tolerance for the use of Reserves" and that "in the absence of an existential threat, some nations have successfully synthesised this narrative."

This is the most blatant expression of the need to ensure a constant fear of an imagined enemy to establish permanent public support for the military. If the military establishment were to have the full support of all major political parties to manipulate public opinion, could and would it influence or create a narrative around a perceived existential threat to the UK solely to ensure military support? This strategy was clearly engaged during the run-up to the Iraq war,[36] and recent signs indicate the military have few qualms about doing so.[37]

# 7. Closing remarks

Many people are not aware that militarisation is happening in Britain, and even fewer know that there is a government strategy behind it. Even fewer people are aware of the problems that it poses.

Quaker Peace & Social Witness hope that everyone who reads this briefing – whatever their political or religious position – will be able to see at least some of the causes for concern around militarisation. We hope that the briefing can start a wider conversation about militarisation, and that it can lead to appropriate awareness and scrutiny, as is appropriate in a democracy.

Sam Walton, February 2014

Secretary to Peace, Education, Campaigning and Networking subcommittee of Quaker Peace & Social Witness.

*Soldiers from 676 Squadron, Army Air Corps stand at ease during a Remembrance Day Ceremony in Andover, Hampshire. Photo: Crown Copyright*

# Notes

1. *National recognition of our armed forces* report. See https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/governments-response-to-national-recognition-of-our-armed-forces

2. Cynthia Enloe. Cited at www.forceswatch.net/blog/militarisation-everyday-life-uk-conference-report

3. See New Oxford American Dictionary (2007)

4. Future Reserves 2020: The Independent Commission to Review the United Kingdom's Reserve Forces – July 2011, pp10

5. It is worth adding that this pyramid model is limited in its accuracy and functionality. War is not the only way in which militarism has adverse affects, nor is it the only goal of the military establishment. Ultimately war is also a means to an end. However, we feel it serves better than the Clausewitzian model for the purposes of this report

6. Partly due to public support being a problem in going to war, wars are increasingly fought at arm's length by drones, mercenaries, special forces and whatever it is that fights wars in what is called 'cyberspace'. A new project called 'Remote Control' has begun to look at these issues: http://www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/publications/news/new_org_hosted_project_remote_control_examining_changes_military_engagement

7. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_the_British_Army

8. Barnaby Pace's analysis of the National Security Strategy http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gXNdpwmVok4

9. See www.gov.uk/the-cadet-forces-and-mods-youth-work.

10. www.gov.uk/government/news/ex-military-personnel-to-drive-up-standards-among-disengaged-pupils

11. www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/youngpeople/militaryethos

12. http://forceswatch.net/blog/why-are-education-projects-run-ex-services-being-prioritised

13. Victoria Basham, Senior Lecturer at the University of Exeter, 'Militarisation in Everyday Life' Conference, Friends House, London 19 October, 2013.

14. Armed Forces Day (originally Veterans' Day) is an annual event celebrated to commemorate the service of people in the British Armed Forces. Veterans' Day was first observed in 2006 and the name was changed to Armed Forces Day in 2009, shortly after the National Recognition of our Armed Forces Report. The five Armed Forces Days so far have been held on the last Saturday of June.

15. www.theguardian.com/uk/2010/nov/05/poppies-and-heroes-remembrance-day

16. www.poppyshop.org.uk/charity-jewellery.html

17. www.britishlegion.org.uk/get-involved/corporate-partnerships

18. www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/nov/08/poppy-last-time-remembrance-harry-leslie-smith

19. David Cameron beginning an answer about when troops will leave Afghanistan: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-18887937

20. www.forceswatch.net/blog/recently-militainment

21. www.gov.uk/armed-forces-community-covenant & https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-community-covenant-e-newsletter

22. www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/a-soldier-speaks-the-covenant-doesnt-help-anyone-its-just-words-8505845.html

23. www.ppu.org.uk/ref/recognition_of_our_armed_forces.pdf

24. www.gov.uk/government/publications/governments-response-to-national-recognition-of-our-armed-forces

25. www.gov.uk/government/publications/future-reserves-2020-study-fr20-final-report--2

26. Future Reserves 2020: The Independent Commission to Review the United Kingdom's Reserve Forces – July 2011, pp10

27. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Army

28. www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/210470/Cm8655-web_FINAL.pdf

29. www.gov.uk/government/publications/youth-engagement-review

30. www.gov.uk/government/publications/youth-engagement-review

31. Perhaps a useful parallel is to be drawn in the way that those that criticise Israeli government policy are often accused of anti-Semitism, as Jews are closely associated with Israel. Criticism of policy is clearly quite different from racism levelled against a whole people but despite this, the fear of being accused of anti-Semitism can sometimes stifle legitimate criticism of the Israeli government, in much the same way the fear of being accused of not supporting the armed forces could stifle legitimate criticism of a war.

32. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bullying_in_the_military, http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2416134/Teenage-Army-recruit-bound-stripped-bullied-comrades-desperate-quit.html, http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/letter-selfsustaining-army-snobbery-1244959.html, http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-1026352/My-war-Army-sexists-WORSE-held-hostage-nearly-executed-Iraq.html, http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/prince-harry-saved-gay-soldier-from-homophobic-abuse-in-the-army-claims-new-book-8652801.html and http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-443551/UK-armed-forces-institutionally-racist.html

33. www.forceswatch.net/sites/default/files/The_Last_Ambush_web_summary.pdf

34. www.gov.uk/government/news/more-cadets-for-our-communities--2

35. New Profile do great work trying to "civilianise Israeli society": www.newprofile.org/english/militarismen. For the USA see: www.forceswatch.net/news/permanent-militarization-america.

36. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/September_Dossier

37. www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2013/sep/26/mod-study-sell-wars-public & http://www.rusi.org/analysis/commentary/ref:C52839776C401E/#.UrMxSfRdX9n