Speech: Baroness Shields' speech: the reality of young life behind screens

Your Eminence (Cardinal Parolin), excellencies, friends and child advocates. We gather here at the Pontifical Gregorian University, this great learning institution, under a burden of tremendous responsibility. We are here at the invitation of Father Hans Zollner, President of the world leading Centre for Child Protection, to examine the state of children, their dignity and safety in the emerging digital world. A world which is only now coming into view.

It is indeed a remarkable time to be alive. Technology empowers and enriches us in ways we never thought imaginable. Yet whilst it offers endless opportunities and possibilities, technology is also transforming childhood beyond recognition.

For more than a quarter of a century, we have been travelling at warp speed into this unknown future; extolling the virtues of the digital revolution that would democratise access to information, connect us all and help us understand each other better. When negative aspects were revealed, when the cracks began to show, we assured ourselves that this was the price to pay for progress but it was worth it. And whilst acknowledging that darkness too inhabited this brave new world, we were blinded by the light.

Years from now, when history writes the chapter entitled "the digital age", will it celebrate the immense benefits that technology has delivered and the great human progress that followed? Or, will it be a requiem of regret for childhood lost?

As it stands today my fear is that history will judge us harshly unless we act now. The next generations will rightly ask why we didn't do more. Why we didn't act decisively. Why we waited so long before coming together to find solutions. But this is not a time to despair. We have within our grasp the opportunity to shape the future and we must act.

What you witnessed in the opening video is a glimpse into the minds of seven young people. What they are thinking, feeling and experiencing. What life is really like for them as it becomes increasingly and predominantly digital. If these examples seem extreme, I assure you that they are not. They represent real life examples with devastating consequences experienced by young people all over the world.

If you've never been a victim of online crime or abuse, or known someone who has been, these stories are hard to relate to. But it becomes real when you meet a mother whose daughter was so distraught from incessant cyberbullying that she committed suicide. It becomes real when you're sitting with parents of a pre-schooler who was abducted and murdered by a paedophile who just hours before was looking at child sexual abuse images accessible freely online. It becomes real when you meet a mother whose teenage son, the same age as your own, fell under the spell of the so called Islamic State online,

travelled to Syria to fight and was killed. It becomes real when you meet with parents whose daughter, after being exposed to online self-harm groups, is in hospital again because she can't stop hurting herself.

I too was once a web utopian believing that connected humanity would create a better society. But whilst we fixated on all the wonderful things that the internet would do, we never thought about the things it would undo. How it would fundamentally transform childhood in just one generation.

When the first generation of digital natives came of age, we were amazed at how quickly they felt at home with the internet. We were surprised at how comfortable they were swiping objects on their tablets and smartphones. We scratched our heads as they shared too much with perfect strangers. But we said to ourselves – no need to be alarmed. After all – each new medium ushers a wave of new behaviors and our parents complained how much time we spent in front of the television. We thought the kids would be alright.

Well, the kids aren't alright. Because the thing they're carrying in their pockets, the thing they sleep with under their pillows, isn't just new kind of medium like TV was. It's a medium that subsumes every other medium. This generation's life experience has been profoundly shaped by the smartphone and the rise of social media. And if you chart this rise with data that's been collected since the 1960s about children's behaviours and attitudes you see something really alarming: this so called "iGeneration" is sleeping less, going out less, dating less and postponing behaviours that for decades marked the transition to adulthood.

Social media gives them illusion of being connected, with "friends" at their fingertips, whereas in reality the true connection they crave, one that resonates deeply enough to nourish and support them, is not accessible within this virtual space. Nevertheless, they try. They are addicted and they go back again and again, sometimes every free minute but with little satisfaction. And when they are alone, they have a fear of missing out.

The shift in how young people spend their time isn't neutral. It's negative. An increase in screen time has been directly correlated with unhappiness. In fact, research shows two hours of screen time increases risk factors for suicide and depression.

There's a common belief in internet circles that the products we love and use everyday are inherently good. And this belief comes from a good place. I know that because I have worked side by side with some of the greatest minds in the industry for over 25 years. And without exception, they are principled and well-meaning. They care about the future and they want to make it a better place for everyone.

But evil has access to all of the same technology tools that we do. And when the scale of these products reaches nearly half of the world's population, you don't just connect with good people you connect with the bad people too.

Smartphones, social media and communications apps are one size fits all. And there is no specific provision for the unique needs of young people who are

not ready to take on the responsibilities of their actions or to understand the realities of the human condition they are exposed to when connected to the internet.

If a child's first lesson in sexual education is a pornographic video, then this will become their reference point. These videos don't simply feature two adults having sex. They depict loveless misogynistic interactions, replete with verbal and physical abuse. When you think about the allure of this material, its addictive power and an unlimited supply online, you can imagine the impact on a young person just discovering his or her sexuality.

Pornographers aren't the only ones who have tools to create lasting impressions on children. The accessibility and reach of dangerous fringe views online are manipulating the minds of young people. These attitudes are facilitated and reinforced algorithmically. Young people, like all of us, naturally self-select what they want to read and engage with and in so doing, get trapped in filter bubbles that reinforce bias, prejudice and misinformation in a dangerous cycle.

Young people are open and susceptible to influences online where they are not monitored or supervised. Today children are groomed for sexual abuse online by people they have never met and would never have come in contact with if it weren't for the internet. They are coerced into producing sexually explicit images of themselves. Offenders connect with other offenders online. They share their disgusting tactics, strategies and their devastating acts of abuse. They pay to watch the live-streaming of children being sexually abused all over the world using anonymous access and cryptocurrency mechanisms to obfuscate their identities and crimes.

Society cannot turn a blind eye. This must stop. We must understand that what is happening right now is beyond anything we've ever witnessed. Some of our esteemed colleagues have called the internet the "greatest social experiment in history" and they are not wrong. But when the experiment unfolds in front of our eyes, and when its subjects are our children, we cannot be simple spectators.

My own realisation began just over a decade ago. The year was 2006 and I was the President of Bebo, one of the earliest social networks. With tens of millions of young users on the platform, we started seeing an epidemic of cases of child grooming. Paedophiles under the cover of anonymity interacting with unsuspecting young people en masse. And I myself began to see things in a different light. I had no idea the potential harms to our children that would be facilitated by the products we created. And once I saw it, I couldn't un-see it.

We began working diligently with the UK Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre, the FBI, Interpol and the US National Center for Missing and Exploited Children to address incidents one by one. But over time, the stream became a torrent and we realised that this problem was not confined to one network – it was a global problem; a problem with no boundaries, no clear lines of responsibility for solving it.

Governments and law enforcement struggled too as the perpetrators were located beyond their borders and crime-fighting infrastructures were deeply rooted in a local and physical response. Industry became increasingly challenged, reverting to a crisis management construct and addressing incidents as they happened vs being proactive.

In 2013, then Prime Minister David Cameron asked me to lead a US-UK technology task force that would focus on taking immediate and long-lasting steps to curtail online child sexual exploitation. Working together with the best and brightest minds in the tech industry to tackle the "unsolvable" problems we face in partnership – a radically different approach. An approach that would see government, law enforcement and private sector experts working together to eliminate the practices that were eroding the very foundations of what every child deserves – to be safe.

Within months we saw the art of the possible take shape. We were able to achieve a number of breakthrough results. Microsoft's PhotoDNA technology was adopted industry wide and completely transformed our ability to find and remove images of child sexual abuse wherever they appear on the web. The Internet Watch Foundation took on the challenge of being the intermediary and clearinghouse of digital hashes performing a vital service it continues to provide today to industry, government and law enforcement. Google began the process of altering its search algorithms to prevent child sexual abuse images and video from appearing in results, to remove them at scale and to break links to peer to peer networks hosting this illegal material. Visa, Mastercard and others financial service providers worked to eradicate the purchase of child abuse imagery through mainstream payment systems. And an innovative new NGO, Thorn was founded and launched in California to develop a comprehensive technology response to the heinous crimes of child sexual exploitation and trafficking.

These initiatives and many others have made great progress in the fight to stop online abuse but the tools and tactics of these criminals are not static. They are constantly morphing and changing and thus any technology solution, no matter how sophisticated must continue to evolve in response to the threats.

This fight has become a life mission for me. In 2014, inspired by the results achieved by the task force, I founded an organisation called WePROTECT. What underpins the strategy of WePROTECT is that it takes us all to fight this kind of evil online. To eradicate online child sexual exploitation requires a multi-stakeholder approach. We leverage the power of technology to rescue victims, thwart criminals and bring perpetrators to justice.

With the support of Prime Minister Theresa May and the leaders of over 70 governments, law enforcement, tech companies and NGOs, we are making progress and we will never stop until every child can use the internet without fear, intimidation, abuse or exploitation.

In 2016, WePROTECT merged with the Global Alliance against Child Sexual Abuse Online, led by the US Justice Deptartment and the EU Commission. Today, the combined entity, the WePROTECT Global Alliance represents a unified movement

with a mission to empower everyone with a responsibility to protect children online. And supported by a commitment of 50M from the government of the United Kingdom, WePROTECT launched the Fund to End Violence Against Children in partnership with UNICEF and in support of 16.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals ratified by all member states with a target to end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children.

WePROTECT demonstrates the vital importance of a 'coalition of the willing' to work together to protect children in the digital world but another vital aspect of protection is to ensure their rights are protected as they grow up digital citizens.

From the day a child is born they begin leaving a digital footprint – their medical history, their school records, their friendships, interests and moods are collected, analysed and even monetised. As adults, we are aware of the trade-offs when it comes to our personal information. When we click accept on online terms and conditions, we may not read the text but we know we are giving up a lot. But children do not. The unique needs of children must be paramount in the development of online products and services. This cannot be an afterthought.

That is why I am a firm believer, supporter and defender of the 5 Rights Framework which takes the existing rights of young people guaranteed by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and updates them for the digital age. These rights which include the Right to Remove, the Right to Know, the Right to Safety and Support, the Right to Informed and Conscious Choice and the Right to Digital Literacy are non-negotiable and they must be ensured and protected.

Internet platforms today have unprecedented insights into our thoughts, opinions, beliefs, emotions and intentions. In many cases the algorithms that power the suggestions we see seem to know more about us than we know ourselves.

For instance, if a young person is depressed or suicidal, then chances are the social network or communications app they are using will have tools to recognise this. Using natural language processing and machine learning to detect patterns in speech and usage might signal the state of mind or intentions of a child might or indicate that they need help. Facebook, Instagram and Google have all stated publicly that they have these capabilities to recognise depression and suicidal tendencies and many other potentially dangerous conditions. That being true, then the question for all of us is if such powers exist to measure the moods and emotional state of children; to predict those at risk, shouldn't we be more proactive with this knowledge?

Extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures and in this case, we need a new era of cooperation and shared responsibility that puts the needs of children first. We need to scale our response not incrementally but exponentially because change is the only constant and the future will deliver orders of magnitude more complexity.

As challenging as this wave of digital technological change has been, it is only the beginning. In Yuval Noah Harari's best seller "Homo Deus", he talks about a post-human world where technology enhances human capabilities beyond natural limits to create a new form of "Human". Today we already have wearable devices, altered virtual and augmented reality, biomedical implantables, robots and soon, neural lace.

All these developments come together to help us design a better, faster, stronger, healthier and more malleable version of ourselves. It all sounds like science fiction but is is closer than you think.

But humans aren't the only malleable component in the future. Technology too is morphing and changing in response to whatever stimuli or data it is presented.

Specifically, Artificial Intelligence has in the past few years begun to evolve in ways we cannot always anticipate. So much so that a few weeks ago, over 100 global experts wrote to the UN, urging it to protect us from the development of autonomous weapons. "We do not have long to act," their open letter reads. "Once this Pandora's box is opened, it will be hard to close." Some experts considered this intervention scaremongering but there is no denying the legitimacy of calling the world's attention to these potential risks.

So you take a step-change in the evolution of engineering and science and you couple it with our increasing symbiosis with technology and you get a very uncertain future. A future in which the essence of humanity, our moral compass and ethics, could be undermined. Note that I say "could be undermined"; the future is not fixed and that is why we have come together for this Congress.

The cultural critic Neil Postman said in the late 90's that "once a technology is admitted (in society), it plays out its hand; it does what it is designed to do, that "when we admit a new technology to the culture, we must do so with our eyes wide open." As we embrace this brave new world, the dignity, safety and health of our children cannot be an afterthought. It has to be our first thought.

Pope Francis in his recent TED talk stated that the only future worth building includes everyone. I agree wholeheartedly, and I would add that the only future worth building is one that protects everyone. There are times in life when how we act as a global community defines us. This is one of those times. Every young life damaged as a result of the digital revolution is a tragedy. And when these lives are taken together, it's our collective failure.

Though these problems are immense, I believe we can make progress. But doing so requires a new kind of thinking, a new kind of approach. Because what we are experiencing has not happened before in history. There are no true parallels. We must unite in our resolve. The progress we make together will determine the future of over 1 billion children who suffer abuse and violence in their everyday lives.

The Child Dignity in the Digital World Congress offers us an unprecedented opportunity to work together to gain new wisdom and to transform this newly found knowledge into tangible action. Let's embrace this opportunity wholeheartedly, because there's one question that we all have to answer, and that question is: "when our time is up, have we done enough? " Our answer must be yes! We owe it to ourselves, but especially, we owe it to our children.

Thank you.

Speech: Gallipoli Memorial Lecture 2017

It is a privilege to be here at RUSI, and to have the opportunity to deliver this prestigious annual lecture, particularly at this moment in time, as we prepare to enter the fifth and final year of commemorations for the centenary of the First World War, and as the government considers the role our armed forces must play in a world which, sadly, seems to be growing more competitive once again.

As First Sea Lord, I have had the honour of representing the Royal Navy at a number of Centenary events.

Last summer, I was in Orkney as the whole country paused to remember the Battle of Jutland, perhaps the most consequential 36 hours of the whole war…although that's a debate for another time!

Also last summer, at Thiepval, and earlier this year at the Menin Gate in Ypres, I joined my fellow service chiefs to commemorate the battles of the Somme and Passchendaele, and also to represent the somewhat overlooked contribution of the Royal Naval Division, the Royal Naval Air Service and the Royal Marine Artillery among the trenches and barbed wire of the Western Front.

Yet the Gallipoli Campaign has a special interest for me, both professionally and personally.

As a former commander of the Royal Navy's Amphibious Task Group, and as someone whose own formative naval experiences were in San Carlos Water 35 years ago, I have always been conscious that the Gallipoli landings sowed the seeds for what we now term amphibious and littoral operations.

Although bitter, the lessons would prove central to the success of the allied landings in Sicily and Normandy in the Second World War, and they continue to resonate today, albeit in an ever-evolving form.

To that end, I intend to dedicate a good proportion of my remarks today to exploring what the future holds for the Royal Navy and Royal Marines in this area.

But I want to start by reflecting on the Anglo-French naval action to open the Dardanelles which proceeded the landings.

The reason I choose this aspect is that it challenges today's naval and military leaders to consider how we will operate and fight together in a contested battlespace.

Dardanelles Campaign

As many of you will know, the Dardanelles is a 40 mile strait separating Asia and Europe.

Visiting there as Fleet Commander in the destroyer HMS Duncan in 2015 for the Centenary, I was struck by just how exposed any military force attempting to force passage through the Strait must have been.

The opening is guarded by the rocky peaks of the Gallipoli Peninsula and at its narrowest point the channel is only a mile wide. The water flows in both directions, which produces difficult opposing currents on and below the surface. Even for experienced navigators, it is an extremely testing stretch of water.

Nevertheless, the First Lord of the Admiralty at the time, an irrepressible fellow by the name of Churchill, had devised an audacious plan for the Royal Navy to punch its way through the Dardanelles in order to attack Istanbul and knock the Ottoman Empire out of the war.

With fighting on the Western Front bogged down in a slow and costly war of attrition, he wanted to reboot the allied war effort with a quick and easy win.

And yet there was a fatal flaw in this plan. Both he and the allied commanders had massively underestimated the ingenuity, and tenacity, of their enemy.

Hundreds of mines had been spread across the channel and, with German assistance, the Ottomans had strengthened the defences around the narrows and introduced new mobile artillery along the clifftops.

Today we would term these disruptive technologies; the Ottoman forces were much faster to grasp their potential and were able to apply them to a theatre they knew well with devastating success.

The principal day of naval action saw 3 allied battleships sunk, and a further 3 crippled.

The conduct of the subsequent landings was better but still hampered by a chronic lack of skilled coordination between the British Army and the Royal Navy, and the 'trenchlock' realities of the period prevented them from

developing much beyond the beachhead.

To borrow a phrase from Napoleon:

> one service was an elephant, the other was a whale, and neither really understood how to flourish in the other’s environment.

Contested waters

So why is this relevant today?

Just as commanders at Gallipoli faced new and unfamiliar multi-dimensional threats, notably the combination of artillery from above and mines from below, today the armed forces must work in an increasingly complex battlespace.

We feel this acutely in the Royal Navy, operating as we do above and below the waves, over the land, in the air and in cyberspace.

Since the end of the Cold War, Western navies have, by and large, enjoyed a degree of superiority at sea which enabled us to work across all these domains unimpeded.

And yet today, the space in which we operate is becoming more congested and contested.

Part of this is technological. Conventional weapons which deny navies freedom of navigation are proliferating.

The most obvious examples are underwater.

Today there are almost 500 submarines operated by 40 navies.

Nuclear boats remain in a league of their own, but the latest conventionally powered submarines are quieter, more reliable and better operated than their diesel equivalents of yesteryear.

The same is true for sea mines, which remain cheap, easy-to-use and plentiful.

Stockpiles held by North Korea and Iran are estimated to be in the thousands, globally the figure could run into the hundreds of thousands.

Thanks in part to the internet, knowledge of how to use them is spreading too, as we’ve seen from devices deployed off Yemen recently which, incidentally, is the 22nd global mining event since the Second World War.

Those of you who heard me speak at DSEI in September will know the Royal Navy plans to accelerate the introduction of autonomous mine hunting systems, and this is one reason why.

But as well as being more contested from a technological perspective, the

maritime domain is also becoming more congested as a result of broader geo-strategic trends.

You don’t need to look very far to see rising and resurgent powers flex their muscles.

It’s now clear that the peaks of Russian submarine activity that we’ve seen in the North Atlantic in recent years are the new norm.

The same is true of the steady stream of vessels passing the UK on their way to join the Baltic, Mediterranean and Black Sea Fleets.

It’s not all about our old friends in the North.

China’s navy now sustains routine deployments to the Middle East, Somali Basin and Gulf of Guinea.

Earlier this year we saw a joint Russian-Chinese naval exercise in the Baltic. Suddenly, our own European backyard is a little more crowded.

To quote my friend the US Chief of Naval Operations,

> the era of uncontested maritime superiority is fading.

Our response cannot simply be to avoid operating in these environments; we don’t have that luxury.

Areas of enclosed water, like the Baltic and the Persian Gulf, are essential to global security today, and will remain so.

Over the coming decades, more and more of the world’s population will be concentrated in coastal regions; and with growing population comes the opportunity for greater economic, political and military power.

This is where the conflicts of the future will happen, and if governments wish to influence events then they must be prepared to act in this space.

The inherent mobility, flexibility and capability of maritime forces provides military and political choice, which is why it remains the favoured means of power projection for western governments, and for aspiring military powers.

I certainly sense no appetite in the West to commit forces ashore in large numbers; whatever the dangers found at sea, the risks of enduring land operations are greater still.

But in any case, the distinction between all these domains is becoming more blurred

We have no choice but to operate across all these domains and to meet conventional and unconventional threats in equal measure.

Reshaping the Royal Navy

So what does this mean for the UK?

Two weeks from today, in the presence of Her Majesty the Queen, we will hoist the White Ensign from the largest ship ever built for the Royal Navy.

Of course, aircraft carriers, like nuclear submarines, are strategic instruments, indicative of an ocean-going navy and a global maritime power.

They may be operated by the Royal Navy, but these ships will sit at the heart of joint and coalition operations.

In particular, I have every expectation that the pairing of the Queen Elizabeth class carriers with their fifth generation F35B Joint Strike Fighters will quickly become a valued asset, in constant national and coalition demand.

Inevitably, the carriers will operate in areas of heightened tension, and in proximity to the threat.

The Royal Navy feels a particular sense of responsibility in this enterprise.

Much of our organisation is being reshaped in order to generate and sustain a Carrier Strike Group with all the resilience needed to ensure that we, the navy, can match the expectation that this phenomenal capability represents for the UK armed forces as a whole.

We've done a lot of work to consider what a comprehensive, sovereign UK Carrier Strike group should look like.

It will vary according to the circumstances of each deployment, but in a high threat environment we would expect a carrier to be accompanied by 2 destroyers for air defence, 2 frigates for anti-submarine protection, a tanker and a solid support ship, together with an attack submarine held on a reasonably tight rein.

Of course, with a force of 19 frigates and destroyers, this will necessitate a change to how the navy delivers some of its other commitments.

The new Offshore Patrol Vessels and subsequently the Type 31e frigates will pick up many of our fixed tasks, freeing up the more complex Type 26 frigates and Type 45 destroyers for their core roles in support of Carrier Strike and the Nuclear Deterrent.

This represents a return to the concept of balance fleet which has been the historical norm for the Royal Navy.

To this core we can add other specialist vessels as required, and we expect to integrate ships and aircraft from partner navies too.

Nor should we forget the Royal Air Force's P8 Maritime Patrol Aircraft, or the Fleet Air Arm's Crowsnest Airborne Surveillance and Control System, both

of which sit at the outmost layer of defence.

But, at the heart of it all, is the F35B.

The Joint Strike Fighter represents a quantum leap over anything we've operated at sea before, combining the traditional qualities of speed and manoeuvrability with the 21st century advantages of stealth, electronic attack and sensor fusion.

The vast majority of enemy fighters will likely never know they are targeted by the F35B until the weapon impacts.

The Royal Navy is proud to boast genuinely world beating capabilities that will sit within the Carrier Strike Group, and we use them with skill.

This is an important point because sometimes, we take the claims of other nations at face value, without being even handed in our critical analysis.

I hear quite a lot of ill-informed commentary about so called "carrier killer" hypersonic missiles.

These are still in the development stage. At some point, they may pose a threat, but this would apply on land as it does at sea.

However, the great advantage of a Carrier Strike Group remains the fact that you can move it out of harm's way covertly and you can keep doing so as circumstances demand.

But the crucial point here is that while our adversaries may be pursuing new technologies, so are we.

In the coming years we will test the UK's first directed energy weapon from a Royal Navy ship.

This kind of system will be able to provide close-in protection for naval vessels operating near to shore, while high powered microwave systems, also under development, will disrupt sensors and communications.

Last month, I visited the US Navy's surface warfare laboratory in Virginia to learn about their electromagnetic rail gun.

This can project a tungsten warhead at a target 110 nautical miles away. It arrives at Mach 9, and can pass through 9 inches of steel.

In time, all these weapons will have a role to play in countering a swathe of emerging threats across land, sea and air, including hypersonic and ballistic missiles, drones and fast intercept craft, and our new Type 26 frigate is designed with the power and space requirements to integrate these systems as they reach maturity.

The future of Royal Marines

So what is the place of amphibious warfare in this new carrier centric era of maritime power protection?

The truth of the matter is there are few elements of our armed forces more feared by our enemies, or more respected by our allies, than the Royal Marines.

Only last week, the Royal Navy and the Turkish Navy participated in NATO amphibious training in the Eastern Mediterranean.

As Turkey develops its own amphibious capability, centred on introducing 2 new LHDs into service, they naturally look to the UK and the Royal Marines for assistance.

As I mentioned earlier, my own formative experience in the Royal Navy was serving in the assault ship HMS Fearless during the Falklands War.

I have subsequently had the privilege to serve alongside, or to lead, Royal Marines at every stage of my career, including commanding the Amphibious Task Group 10 years ago.

The Royal Marines are an inseparable part of our naval family, and as Head of Service I will fight for them every step of the way.

And yet I recognise that, together, the Royal Navy and Royal Marines must adapt to meet the challenges of the maritime century.

Let me explore this in a little more detail.

In the course of my career, I have seen assumptions about the nature of amphibious warfare change time-and-again.

Throughout the Cold War, with most of the British Army committed to Germany, the primary wartime purpose of the Royal Marines was to bolster NATO's northern flank in Norway, to slow the advance of Soviet forces long enough for reinforcements to arrive.

Then, in the 1990s, it was all change. The Royal Marines were now the vanguard of the Royal Navy's transformation into an expeditionary tool. This reflected the Blair government's ambition for the UK armed forces to be a "force for good" in the world and was perhaps best exemplified by our intervention in the Sierra Leone civil war in 2000.

Finally, in the last decade, as the UK's involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan deepened, increasingly the Royal Marines found themselves serving, with distinction, in an infantry role ashore alongside the army.

In each of these cases, the Royal Marines were the 'first to adapt, the first to overcome' and now, as the Royal Navy looks forward to a new carrier centric future, they must do so again.

However, I want to be clear that this does not mean our investment in Carrier Strike comes at the expense of the Royal Marines.

The different core capabilities within the naval service undergo the cycle of renewal at different times.

Fifteen years ago, much of our naval investment was directed toward the Royal Marines, as we conducted operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, recapitalised our amphibious shipping, and introduced new Offshore Raiding Craft and Viking Protected all-terrain vehicles.

So while Carrier Strike and the Deterrent now take their turn in the cycle of renewal, this in no way lessens the continuing importance of the Royal Marines.

Indeed, the responsibilities, and opportunities, of this new era for the naval service are shared across our 5 fighting arms.

For the Royal Marines, these responsibilities begin at home.

43 Commando continue to protect the Nuclear Deterrent and the Corps is making a growing contribution to domestic counter-terrorism, which has sadly seen them activated twice this year for Operation Temperer.

The Lead Commando Group continues to serve as the UK's 'go-to' high readiness force. They were at the forefront of our disaster relief efforts in the Caribbean in September; and next year they will head to the Gulf and to India with the Joint Expeditionary Force for large scale exercises.

Meanwhile, SDSR 15 confirmed investment in the amphibious capabilities of our Queen Elizabeth class carriers and the modernisation of the Commando Helicopter Force is underway.

Beyond these core roles, the work of ship's protection and boarding teams, the fleet standby rifle troop, and of international training teams around the world, continues.

As I speak a Royal Marine training team is in Taranto working with the Libyan Coastguard to help develop the skills they will need to better police their troubled coastline.

So the Royal Marines are today every bit as vital to the work of the Royal Navy, and of defence more broadly, as they have been throughout the last 350 years.

Nevertheless, the concepts and capabilities that shape how we operate in the littoral will continue to change, and by the 2030s they will look different to how they appear today.

Work to understand and develop this requirement began long before the National Security Capability Review, and is being led from within the Corps.

Through the development of Special Purpose Task Groups, 3 Commando Brigade is

now able to offer something new to defence, in the form of scalable teams of Royal Marines with tailored skills and capabilities that can be deployed in theatre, or held at high readiness, to provide military choice.

Meanwhile, 42 Commando has transformed into a dedicated maritime operations commando to work alongside our sailors in a variety of roles; a move that reflects the historical roots of the Corps.

As for specialist shipping, in the longer term we may opt for multi-role platforms which can provide amphibious capabilities, but can also serve as an afloat forward base for a range of enduring maritime security tasks.

The Type 31e General Purpose Frigate will also provide an ideal platform to host an embarked military force, forward deployed to British Overseas Territories, and to regions of concern to the UK.

While all this points to a more agile approach, we should not discount the future requirement to provide amphibious forces at scale to deliver theatre entry from the sea.

Our experience of the Snatch Land Rover in Iraq and Afghanistan highlighted the vulnerability of lightly armoured vehicles. As a result our newer, better armoured, equipment is progressively heavier, but in some cases too heavy to be lifted by air.

Of course, no one envisages sending landing craft full of Marines to storm an enemy beach under a hail of fire.

That model is, we hope, consigned to the history books; but in instances where aviation lift is unavailable or insufficient it may still be necessary to offload large numbers of personnel and heavy equipment from the sea, ideally at a port but if necessary over a beach, however that might be achieved.

Fighting in the information age

Finally, when considering the role of the Royal Marines, we mustn’t overlook the most important element of all, and the only capability in defence which is truly ‘exquisite’, I am, of course, referring to people.

The future operational environment will demand more than just blunt force, it will require nuance and sophistication.

In Afghanistan, 3 Commando Brigade learnt a huge amount about civil-military cooperation, cultural awareness, and the importance of understanding the pattern of life among scattered tribal villages.

We need to retain and develop this insight, because it will be just as relevant to rapidly growing urban populations in failed and failing coastal states, or among mariners and fishermen working in the vital maritime choke points which govern the flow of maritime trade.

Within this, there is a huge role for information superiority. 30 Commando

are world leaders in information exploitation and the Royal Marines were front and centre of last year’s Exercise Information Warrior.

The Royal Marines have always been the thinking man’s solider.

Today 17% of marines have degrees and 40% have the educational qualifications for officer selection.

They remain experts in urban, mountain and arctic skills.

These are the men, and in future the women, who can build understanding, exploit technology and, when required, strike with precision.

And they have rarely been more relevant to the threats we face.

So be in no doubt: even as the Royal Navy enters a new era of carrier operations, the Royal Marines are bound into the future our service, and of our national defence, in every way.

Conclusion

We have drifted a long way from the Gallipoli Peninsula.

But, in sum, with global populations becoming even more concentrated in the world’s coastal regions, the UK armed forces must be ready to operate seamlessly from the sea to the land, and across all domains.

Let me draw this to a close by reflecting on the words of General Hamilton, commander of the British Mediterranean Expeditionary Force, to Lord Kitchener, the Secretary of State for War, in May 1915.

> The Royal Navy has been father and mother to the Army. Not one of us but realises how much he owed to Vice Admiral de Roebeck; to the warships, French and British; to the destroyers, minesweepers, picket boats and their dauntless crews; who took no thought of themselves but risked everything to give their soldier comrades a fair run at the enemy.

Amidst the somewhat dispassionate analysis, we must never forget that the men and boys of the Royal Navy and of all the allied forces, showed immense fortitude and bravery, and they paid a terrible price, as did the Ottoman forces.

The best way we can keep alive the memory of all those who fought and died in the Gallipoli Campaign is by learning the hard won lessons of their experience, so that we may prosper by them.

Government response: End of session statement for UNGA 3rd Committee

Lord Ahmad welcomes progress on human rights at the UN General Assembly's Third Committee, which concluded on Tuesday with important resolutions on Syria, Crimea, Iran, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and Burma adopted.

The United Nations General Assembly's Third Committee is a crucial tool for the international community to address human rights concerns, passing resolutions on countries where violations and abuses of human rights are widespread, and on a range of thematic issues, including sexual and reproductive health rights. The UK is firmly committed to ensuring that these words are turned into action.

Burma

The UK continues to raise the desperate plight and human suffering of the Rohingya in Burma. We are committed to working with international partners to resolve the situation in Rakhine. I welcome the OIC-led Resolution in the Third Committee, which the UK co-sponsored. I am delighted that this passed overwhelmingly on 16 November, with 135 States voting in favour, demonstrating the strength of feeling across the international community. I also welcome the UN Security Council's adoption of a Presidential Statement on 6 November; the first UNSC product on Burma for ten years. This is a significant step and has delivered a clear message to the Burmese authorities – international pressure will continue until those forced to flee can return in safety free from fear of persecution and attack.

Syria

I welcome the adoption of a resolution on Syria, where the conflict has now lasted longer than the Second World War, and an estimated over 400,000 people killed. This resolution sends a clear message from the international community to the Assad regime and its backers, and strongly condemns all human rights abuses or violations of international humanitarian law in Syria. The UN Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) has concluded that the Assad regime has used chemical weapons in four incidents, with tragic consequences. Those responsible must be held to account.

Crimea

I welcome the Committee's re-adoption of the Crimea Human Rights Resolution which draws attention to threats to human rights on the peninsula. Earlier this year the OHCHR released a thematic report on Crimea and Sevastopol, which laid bare the degradation of human rights standards in the peninsula since the Russian Federation illegally annexed it in 2014. Concerns include the forced imposition of Russian citizenship; retrospective application of

laws to the period prior to 2014; arbitrary arrests and detentions; forced psychiatric confinement and illegal transfers to Russia of prisoners and pre-trial detainees. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' Human Rights Monitoring Mission for Ukraine has been operating in Ukraine for two years, yet has been systematically refused access to Crimea. Restoring access to the Crimean peninsula for international human rights monitoring bodies remains key.

Democratic People's Republic of Korea

I also welcome the resolution on the human rights situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), again adopted by consensus. The international community is resolute in our condemnation of the North Korean regime's human rights abuses and its pursuit of its illegal nuclear and ballistic missile programmes. We continue to urge the DPRK to respect the rights of its citizens, end its widespread human rights violations and engage in good faith with the international community.

Iran

I am encouraged by the adoption of the resolution on human rights in Iran, which again passed with a high number of votes in favour, and which for the first time contains a reference to the detention of dual and foreign nationals. Iran's human rights record remains deeply concerning, but there have been some welcome improvements over recent months. In particular, the new law on drug related crime should dramatically reduce the numbers of those facing the death penalty. This is a small step in the right direction and I hope that Iran can build on this to eradicate the use of the death penalty completely.

I was particularly heartened to see positive language on comprehensive education on human rights, gender equality and sexual and reproductive health included in this year's Youth resolution, which was adopted by consensus. All individuals must have the right to make their own decisions about their sexual and reproductive health and well-being, and the provision of Comprehensive Sexuality Education to all throughout their life cycle is therefore essential. I was however saddened to see that we could not make similar progress on advancing the same language in the Girl Child resolution this year.

The UK will continue to speak out for those without a voice and to stand up for the universality of human rights, so that the resolutions agreed here can make a real difference.

Press release: Invitation to Open Management Committee meeting

The Parole Board is holding its annual open Management Committee meeting on 14 December 2017, where you can have the opportunity to see the work that goes on behind the scenes to ensure effective running of the parole system. The Parole Board independently risk assesses prisoners to decide whether they can be released and safely managed in the community. This meeting will look at current issues facing the Parole Board and the organisation's strategic objectives for the upcoming year.

Here are some of the items the meeting will focus on:

- A report of the progress made so far on the 2016-2020 strategy and a forward look for the future of the Parole Board and how it can improve the parole experience for prisoners, victims, and the public.

- The Board's equality strategy, which will look at: parole processes that are fair, accessible and responsive; achieving a more representative Parole Board; and promoting an inclusive culture in the workforce

- Introduction of a new system that is fairer for listing all prisoners' parole reviews

Parole Board Chief Executive Martin Jones said: "The Parole Board is committed to increasing the transparency of its processes and decision making.

"Following on from the success of last year's inaugural open board meeting, we hope that even more people will be interested to come along and see first-hand how the Parole Board's Management Committee oversees the work of the Board; to ensure we maintain a fair, efficient and effective system that protects the public."

There will be an open Q&A session at the end of the meeting. You are also able to submit questions in advance when registering for the event, using the link provided below. Please note, we will not be able to answer any questions about individual cases.

How to Attend: If you would like to come to this open meeting, please follow this link and provide your details.

There are a limited amount of seats and places will be given on a first come, first served basis.

When: 14 December 2017

Time: Arrival at 10.15 for a 10.30 start; Meeting ends at 12.30 pm

Where: Van Dyke Suite, The Rubens at the Palace, 39-43 Buckingham Palace Road, London SW1W 0PS

Press release: David Davis concludes visit to Estonia

David Davis has pledged that the UK will remain the greatest ally of our European partners in matters of security and defence after Brexit.

The Brexit Secretary made the remarks following a visit to Estonia, where 800 British troops are stationed as part of NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence (eFP). eFP comprises of four multinational NATO battalions in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland designed to protect Europe's eastern flank.

David Davis held political meetings with Estonian Europe Minister Maati Maasikas and Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee Marko Mihkelson. Reaffirming the UK's commitment to European security, the Brexit Secretary said the UK will offer to continue to contribute expertise and assets to EU operations, cooperate on sanctions and agree joint positions on foreign policy as part of a deep security partnership with the EU after Brexit.

He also highlighted the UK and Estonia's shared values, including around the importance of free trade, and reiterated the UK's pledge that no country will be financially worse off over the current budget plan because of the UK's decision to leave the EU.

Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, David Davis said:

"In exiting the EU the UK is not pulling up the drawbridge or turning away from our friends across the Continent.

"We will remain our European neighbours' greatest ally in security and defence, cooperating fully in order to tackle the global threats we jointly face.

"And we will ensure that no Members will need to pay more or receive less money over the remainder of the current budget plan as a result of our decision to leave."