

maintain military freedom of action and to deny that freedom to an enemy. The size of the military footprint, the intensity and scale of the conflict, and the scope of the theatre of operations determine the extent to which civilian populations are exposed to the consequences of combat operations. Those planning major combat operations must consider and coordinate multinational support from allies, international opinion and the relative strength of the other instruments of national power in sustaining both fighting power and national resilience.

3.37. Major combat operations demand significant financial and organisational commitment, with rehabilitation and recuperation implications that extend beyond the military and the immediate conflict. They are likely to be highly resource-intensive with often protracted and unrestrained violence. An asymmetric advantage in weight of effort or technological superiority can mitigate human and material losses. Although some routine and standing commitments will be maintained, such as protecting our overseas territories, fighting power should be concentrated on those aspects that contribute directly to the end-state.

3.38. UK forces in combat are always subject to a distinctive legal framework, including international conventions and the Law of International Armed Conflict.

Key points

- By integrating the national instruments of power (diplomatic, economic and military – all underpinned by information) the government seeks influence, through a range of activities, to prevent conflict, protect its legitimate interests and shape a stable world.
- Defence contributes to both deterrence and coercion strategies within an integrated approach.
- The UK's International Defence Engagement Strategy (2019) aims to inform Defence engagement (out to a 20-year horizon) to achieve influence in a dynamic global context.

Defence engagement is the means by which the UK employs Defence assets and activities to achieve influence without the use or threat of force.

- The UK's response to global instability and conflict is to apply all of the instruments of national power to shape the global environment and tackle potential risks at source.
- Early Defence engagement can reduce the likelihood of prolonged instability and reduce military intervention.
- The aim of military intervention is to contribute to peace enforcement or prevent a crisis from escalating and spreading.
- Major combat operations involve diplomatic, military and economic actions, unified by an overall strategy and, ultimately, the full resources of the state.

