



The United Kingdom Defence Programme: The Way Forward

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1. The first duty of any British Government is to safeguard our people in peace and freedom. In today's world that cannot be done without a major defence effort. The international scene is in several areas unsettled and even turbulent. Soviet military power, already massive, continues to grow in size, quality and reach, and the Soviet leaders continue to demonstrate their readiness to use it brutally. The North Atlantic Alliance remains vital to us, and neither its strength nor its cohesion can be maintained without our crucial contribution. This is at the top of the Government's priorities.

2. Our policy is translated into practice initially through decisions on resources. Britain already spends 5.2% of its gross domestic product on defence—one of the highest figures anywhere in the Alliance, even though we are not among the wealthiest members and continue to face sharp economic difficulties. The Government attaches such importance to its security responsibilities within the Alliance that defence expenditure is already 8% higher in real terms than three years ago. It was announced in March, and has recently been reaffirmed, that the defence budget for the next two years (1982/83 and 1983/84) will reflect further annual growth at 3%, in full implementation of the NATO aim. The Government has now firmly decided to plan to implement the aim in full for a further two years—1984/85 and 1985/86—and the programme will be shaped accordingly. This may well mean that defence will absorb a still higher share of our gross domestic product. Defence, like other programmes, will now be managed in cash terms: the intention will be provision for 1985/86 21% higher, in real terms, than actual expenditure in 1978/79. In a setting of economic difficulty, and given the Government's determination to hold down total public expenditure, there could be no clearer or more concrete demonstration of resolve to maintain our vital priorities and our Alliance contribution.

The Need for Change

3. The Government's appraisal of the defence programme therefore in no way rests on a desire to cut our defence effort. On the contrary, it reflects a firm resolve to establish how best to exploit a substantial increase, which will enable us to enhance our front-line capability in very many areas. Defence spending on the scale we have decided is a heavy burden on the British people, but one which in our judgement they are prepared to bear. It is then however all the more incumbent upon the

Government to ensure that resources are spent to the very best effect in terms of security. It has become clear that meeting this responsibility in the future calls for change in the defence programme. There are two main reasons for this.

4. First, even the increased resources we plan to allocate cannot adequately fund all the force structures and all the plans for their improvement we now have. One reason (not peculiar to Britain) is cost growth, especially in equipment. Our forces need to be equipped, operated, trained and sustained to the standards imposed by the mounting Soviet effort and the increasing sophistication of weapons. Our current force structure is however too large for us to meet this need within any resource allocation which our people can reasonably be asked to afford. The effects—at a time moreover when economic recession led to intensified activity in industry on defence work and so caused extra difficulties in managing the defence programme—were seen in 1980/81, when harsh measures to cut back activity and stop placing orders on industry still could not prevent a substantial overspend; and similar problems, which will call for urgent corrective action, are already emerging for 1981/82.

5. The second reason for change, partly related to the first, concerns balance within the programme. Technological advance is sharply changing the defence environment. The fast-growing power of modern weapons to find targets accurately and hit them hard at long ranges is increasing the vulnerability of major platforms such as aircraft and surface ships. To meet this, and indeed to exploit it, the balance of our investment between platforms and weapons needs to be altered so as to maximise real combat capability. We need to set, for the long term, a new force structure which will reflect in up-to-date terms the most cost-effective ways of serving the key purposes of our defence effort. The best way of enhancing the deterrent effect of our armed forces, for example in raising the nuclear threshold, is to give more resources to their hitting power and staying power in combat. This means that the structure we set must be one which we can afford to sustain with modern weapons and equipment, and with proper war stocks. This is less glamorous than maximising the number of large and costly platforms in our armoury, but it is far the better way of spending money for real security value. Moving in this direction will mean substantial and uncomfortable change in some fields. But the alternative, of keeping rigidly to past patterns, would be a recipe for overstretch, inadequacy and waste—it would leave us the certainty of attempting too much and achieving too little.

6. We cannot go on as we are. The Government has therefore taken a fresh and radical look at the defence programme. We have done this in terms of real defence output—the roles our forces undertake and how they should in future be carried out—and not in terms of organisation. It is increasingly essential that we tackle the business of defence this way, and manage it in terms of total capability rather than Service shares.

Britain's Defence Roles

7. We have now four main roles: an independent element of strategic and theatre nuclear forces committed to the Alliance; the direct defence of the United Kingdom homeland; a major land and air contribution on the European mainland; and a major maritime effort in the Eastern Atlantic and Channel. We also commit home-based forces to the Alliance for specialist reinforcement contingencies, particularly on NATO's European flanks. Finally, we exploit the flexibility of our forces beyond the NATO area so far as our resources permit, to meet both specific British responsibilities and the growing importance to the West of supporting our friends and contributing to world stability more widely.

8. There can be no question of abandoning our contribution in any of these roles, especially in face of a growing threat. The issue is not whether to undertake them in the future, but how best to do so from our growing resource allocation. Within this key objective, the review has taken nothing as exempt or sacrosanct. The rest of this White Paper sets out the Government's broad conclusions.

Nuclear Forces

9. We intend to maintain and modernise our present nuclear role in the Alliance. No other member could in practice replace us in this distinctive contribution. NATO collectively, and our main allies individually, have made clear that they place high value upon it.

10. We intend accordingly to proceed with our plans for Trident. Certain aspects of the programme are still being studied, but however these are resolved expenditure over the next few years will remain comparatively modest. Review of all the options confirms that Trident remains by far the best way—indeed the only cost-effective way—of modernising the crucial strategic element of our capability. In the Government's firm judgement, no alternative application of defence resources could approach this in real deterrent insurance. The operation of the strategic force will remain the Royal Navy's first and most vital task for Britain's security.

Defence of the Home Base

11. We cannot reduce our effort in direct defence of the United Kingdom homeland. Planned capability is in several respects already less than we should like. The crucial role this country plays in Alliance support, as a key forward base in emergency for land and air forces from across the Atlantic and as the main base for our own effort in Continental reinforcement and in maritime tasks, means that we must expect that the increasing reach and quality of Soviet conventional forces capable of direct attack on Britain would be exploited in war. We need to do more, not less, in this field.

12. In air defence, we will maintain all the major improvement plans already announced. In the mid-1980s the air defence version of Tornado (F2) will enter service and our airborne early warning capability will be transformed with the advent of the Nimrod in this role. Air defence ground radar and communications systems are being extensively modernised. Stocks of modern air-to-air missiles are to be more than doubled and surface-to-air missile cover improved.

13. It is however essential to provide more United Kingdom-based fighters. Two Phantom squadrons will be retained instead of being phased out as Tornado F2 comes in. For local air defence a further 36 (making 72 in all) of our Hawk advanced trainer aircraft will be equipped with Sidewinder air-to-air missiles. We are also considering whether to switch to the air defence configuration the last 20 Tornados planned in the strike version. A VC10 squadron is already planned to enhance our tanker force, which effectively multiplies our fighter force by prolonging patrol time and range, and we plan to modify additional VC10s for use as either transports or tankers, replacing the Victors if fatigue repairs become uneconomical. By 1986 the total force will have increased by a third.

14. We will continue to build up a balanced mine counter-measures force, and we will proceed with new minehunters. We will continue work on defensive mining, to establish and exploit the best ways (including methods of laying) to use this capability for the defence of our own shipping lanes and ports, and further afield.

15. The Government is determined to make more use of reserve forces. We now plan a further substantial expansion of the Territorial Army for use both at home and in Germany, where last year's Exercise CRUSADER vividly demonstrated its readiness and efficiency. We plan to increase strength progressively from 70,000 today to 86,000, and provision for training days will be increased from the present average of 38 a year to 42. We plan to acquire new minesweepers for the Royal Naval Reserve, though it will not be financially possible to place orders this year. The use of Royal Auxiliary Air Force Regiment squadrons for ground defence of airfields in the United Kingdom will be expanded.

The British Contribution on the Continent of Europe

16. The Government has considered with especial care the future of the large proportion of our land and air forces we maintain permanently in the Federal Republic of Germany, backed by a very extensive commitment for rapid reinforcement from the United Kingdom in emergency. Despite all the financial pressures on our defence effort, the Government has decided that this contribution is so important to the Alliance's military posture and its political cohesion that it must be maintained. The Central Region is the Alliance's heartland in Europe; the forward defence of the Federal Republic is the forward defence of Britain itself;

and the full fighting strength of First British Corps is needed to guard the vital 65-kilometre sector assigned to it. We will therefore stand by our Brussels Treaty commitment of land and air forces, and the figure of 55,000 troops which we have upheld under it for over 20 years now.

17. BAOR's manpower, which had been planned to continue to increase beyond the 55,000 level, will be held at that level. We propose to reorganise the main regular structure of the Corps from the present four armoured divisions each of two brigades to three armoured divisions each of three brigades; the overheads of the fourth stationed division will thus be saved. The total number of brigades in the Federal Republic will be sustained at eight; one of the nine regular brigades will be held normally in the United Kingdom, as will a new reserve division formed primarily from the Territorial Army and committed to the reinforcement of 1(BR) Corps. Our ability to reinforce BAOR rapidly will be substantially increased when the new Individual Reinforcement Plan comes into effect on 1 July 1981.

18. We will maintain the wide-ranging set of major projects we have in hand for progressive re-equipment of BAOR, including the Challenger tank, the new mechanised combat vehicle, the SP 70 self-propelled howitzer, the multiple-launch rocket system, the TOW helicopter-borne anti-tank missile, the new one-man Light Anti-Tank Weapon (LAW), improved night sights for missiles and tanks, and the Wavell system for rapid automated handling of tactical intelligence and other data. The scale or timing of some of the new equipment projects will need to be modified, partly to restrain total cost but also to provide room, in accordance with paragraph 5 above, for further enhancement of war stocks and ammunition to improve the combat endurance of 1(BR) Corps; in particular we plan to increase the buy of Milan anti-tank missiles. The planned buy of Challenger will be enough to equip four armoured regiments. There will be a programme of qualitative improvements both to the present Chieftain and in due course to Challenger. The key elements of the improvement programme for the Blowpipe air defence missile system will continue, but we will not proceed with the towed version of the quadruple launcher. We will however greatly strengthen battlegroup air defences by equipping three batteries with the tracked version of the Rapier missile system. The introduction of the big Chinook helicopter for rapid logistic support and troop movement will continue.

19. We intend to provide new and better aircraft with the unique vertical and short take-off and landing (V/STOL) capability which gives exceptional survivability and responsiveness in the support of forward troops. On the final conclusion of satisfactory terms of collaboration with the United States the new aircraft will be the AV8B development of the Harrier, produced jointly by McDonnell Douglas and British Aerospace, with Rolls-Royce engines. Operationally, the new aircraft will bring a big advance in manoeuvrability, range, endurance, and weapon-carrying ability; industrially, there will be a great deal

of work—worth perhaps a billion pounds at current rates—for British industry in orders for the United Kingdom and even larger orders for the United States. We envisage buying 60 AV8Bs.

20. Deployment of the Tornado strike aircraft in Germany will proceed as planned, and the JP 233 project for air-delivered weapons to neutralise enemy airfields by cratering has been confirmed. We shall seek subsequently to acquire further advanced weapons for attacking enemy armoured forces and suppressing air defences, to exploit Tornado's capability more fully. It is clear that we shall not be able to afford any direct and early replacement for the Jaguar force in Germany and at home. We are however continuing work and discussion with potential partners on future combat aircraft. Possibilities will include both advanced V/STOL and Tornado-related developments. We shall pay particular regard to collaborative opportunities and to export markets, as well as to the long-term capability of the British aircraft industry.

Maritime Tasks

21. As the Government's review work proceeded it became clear that the most complex and difficult issues concerned the future shape of Britain's maritime contribution. That such a contribution must continue, and on a major scale, is not in question. The importance of maritime tasks to Alliance security, our special skills and immense experience, and our existing assets all ensure this; so does our position as NATO's major European maritime power, situated crucially close to the Soviet Navy's long exit route to the open Atlantic. But we have to think hard about how we can most cost-effectively shape our contribution for the future, with account taken both of resource constraints and of technological change.

22. All the major weapons platforms of maritime warfare—aircraft, surface ships and submarines—have a continuing part to play, complementing one another. Their capabilities, and their costs, are however not changing symmetrically. The Government believes that a shift in emphasis is inescapable for a country like Britain which simply cannot afford to maintain large numbers of every type of platform at the highest standards which the adversary's developing capability requires. The power of maritime air systems and submarines in tactical offensive operations is especially apt and telling in our forward geographical situation. But if we are to maintain and improve these capabilities, we cannot at the same time sustain a surface fleet of the full present size, with its heavy overheads, and continue to equip it with ships of the costly sophistication needed for protection in independent operations against the most modern Soviet air-launched and sea-launched missiles and submarines. Nevertheless, there will remain a wide range of tasks in peace and war for which surface ships are uniquely suited; and we must therefore retain a large and versatile ocean-going surface fleet.

23. Our basic judgement accordingly is that for the future the most cost-effective maritime mix—the best-balanced operational contribution for our situation—will be one which continues to enhance our maritime-air and submarine effort, but accepts a reduction below current plans in the size of our surface fleet and the scale and sophistication of new ship-building, and breaks away from the practice of costly mid-life modernisation.

24. We have already in hand in British shipyards a major programme of ship orders worth, with their weapons, over two billion pounds and due to bring into service some 20 new surface warships over the next five years. All these orders will go ahead. But sustaining the fleet at its present size under our present practice requires in addition a massive and costly continuing programme of refit and modernisation, backed by a very extensive infra-structure. (Typically, modernising a Leander frigate can cost £70 million, which is more than our target cost for the new Type 23 design noted in paragraph 30 below.) A rather smaller but modern fleet with less heavy overheads will give better value for defence resources.

25. It is clear that the maritime patrol aircraft remains a highly effective instrument; that in the Nimrod, particularly with the extensive Mark II conversion, we have an exceptionally capable aircraft for the role; and that the very advanced Sting Ray light-weight torpedo will give it great striking power against submarines. We plan to increase the Nimrod fleet by completing and bringing into operation, with the full Mark II equipment, the three remaining Mark I airframes, making a total of 34 Mark II Nimrods. For attack on surface ships we shall provide a new air-launched guided missile of substantial range. Subject to the satisfactory completion of contract negotiations, we intend to order British Aerospace's Sea Eagle system. We intend to retain the Buccaneer as the carrier of this missile; the missile's own capability for location and attack will make it unnecessary to rely on the more advanced penetration capability of Tornado, which can thus be used in maximum numbers for other roles (though we do not exclude the possibility of its maritime use with Sea Eagle). The enhancements in the United Kingdom-based interceptor and tanker forces noted in paragraphs 12 and 13 above will be available also for maritime application. All this will mean a considerable enhancement of our offensive and defensive air-launched missile capability for protection of ships against surface or air attack.

26. Our most powerful vessels for maritime war are our nuclear-propelled attack submarines (SSNs), soon to be equipped with the anti-surface-ship guided missile Sub-Harpoon. There are 12 at present in service, and the fleet will build up further to 17. An order worth £177 million is now being placed for the next Trafalgar-class boat to be built by Vickers (Barrow). We intend also to proceed with the new class of diesel-powered submarines (SSKs)—which may have considerable export potential—and will if possible introduce these at the rate of one per year. Both

SSNs and SSKs will be equipped later in the 1980s with a new heavyweight torpedo of high performance; we are considering the choice of design.

27. The new carrier *Ark Royal* will be completed as planned, but we intend to keep in service in the long term only two of the three ships of this class. The older carrier *Hermes* will be phased out as soon as the second of the new ships is operational.

28. Final decisions have yet to be taken on whether to procure a new large anti-submarine helicopter to replace the *Sea King*. It is not clear whether such a project will in the end find a place in our defence programme, but meanwhile a programme of work continues at Westlands to explore both collaborative possibilities with Italy and potential civil application, which industry believes to have attractive commercial prospects.

29. We have at present 59 destroyers and frigates declared to NATO. We shall now seek to sustain a figure of about 50. The change will be made mainly by disposing early of older and more manpower-intensive ships, for example from among the *Rothsay* and *Leander* classes, and timing their withdrawal so far as possible to avoid refit or major modernisation. We will place some ships, without further modernisation, in the standby squadron, where they will still be available as part of our force declaration to NATO. There will be a reduction of four operational Royal Fleet Auxiliaries by 1985, in step with the contraction of the combat fleet.

30. We shall accelerate to the maximum possible extent the entry into service of anti-submarine frigates to a new design, the Type 23. This will be simpler and cheaper than the Type 22, and its characteristics will be framed with an eye to the export market as well as Royal Navy needs. Once the design is settled we will decide the scale and pace of follow-on orders in the light of resources available. Meanwhile another Type 22, the seventh, is being ordered from Yarrows on the Clyde at a cost of £125 million; further study is needed to determine whether there should be subsequent orders, and if so how many. There will be no more orders for Type 42 air defence destroyers after the seven now being built, and plans for major mid-life modernisation of those already acquired and for a successor type will be abandoned. The *Sting Ray* torpedo programme will provide powerful new anti-submarine weapons for our surface ships and their helicopters, as well as for the *Nimrods*.

31. Three Royal Marine Commandos will be maintained, as at present. The Government regards their special experience and versatility as of high value for tasks both in and beyond the NATO area. It had already been decided that likely needs did not warrant replacement of the specialist amphibious ships *Intrepid* and *Fearless*; and these ships will now be phased out earlier, in 1982 and 1984 respectively.

Beyond the NATO Area

32. As the Alliance collectively has acknowledged, changes in many areas of the world, together with growing Soviet military reach and readiness to exploit it directly or indirectly, make it increasingly necessary for NATO members to look to Western security concerns over a wider field than before, and not to assume that these concerns can be limited by the boundaries of the Treaty area. Britain's own needs, outlook and interests give her a special role and a special duty in efforts of this kind.

33. Military effort cannot be the sole instrument, but it has inevitably a part to play. The Government intends to sustain and where appropriate expand our activities by way of military assistance, advice, training, loan of personnel and provision of equipment to friendly countries whose security benefits from our help. But help in these ways needs increasingly to be backed by the ability of our own forces to act directly if our friends need us. Many elements of our Services have basic characteristics of flexibility and mobility which make them well suited for this without need for much extra expense or expansion. The Government intends to exploit them more fully, and to make plans and provision accordingly.

34. The Royal Navy has a particularly valuable role. For example, since the conflict broke out last year between Iran and Iraq a maritime presence has been maintained continuously in the Indian Ocean, with warships on rotation supported by fleet auxiliaries. We intend to resume from 1982 onwards the practice of sending a substantial naval task group on long detachment for visits and exercises in the South Atlantic, Caribbean, Indian Ocean or further east. We intend to make particular use of the new carriers, with *Sea Harriers* and helicopters, in out-of-area deployment. We will coordinate all these deployments and exercises as fruitfully as possible with the United States and other allies, as well as with local countries with whom we have close defence relations.

35. Measures will also be taken to enhance the out-of-area flexibility of our ground forces. We will implement plans for a modest extra stockpile of basic Army equipment held ready to support contingency deployments and exercises, and for the designation of Headquarters Eighth Field Force to plan and command any operations of this kind. Measures to increase the airlift capability of our *Hercules* force by fuselage-lengthening are already far advanced, and we have decided to increase its flexibility by fitting station-keeping radar equipment which will enable the aircraft to carry out the coordinated drop of a parachute assault force, even in poor weather. We now maintain two battalions fully trained for this role.

36. Our forces will also continue as necessary to sustain specific British responsibilities overseas, for example in Gibraltar, Cyprus, Belize and the Falkland Islands. The Hong Kong garrison will be expanded by one infantry battalion in accordance with our agreement with the Hong Kong Government.

Service Manpower

37. The men and women in the Services are themselves a defence resource of central importance; without them, everything else is wasted. We must recruit and retain the volunteers we need. This requires continuing commitment on the Government's part, and our decisions on Service pay have demonstrated that commitment in the most practical way. It also requires clear evidence of important and satisfying work properly supported; and the new directions of the defence programme are designed to ensure this.

38. If these objectives are to be achieved some reduction is necessary in manpower targets, reflecting changes in the front line. Royal Navy numbers required will be reduced by between about 8,000 to 10,000 by 1986, partly through the surface fleet contraction and partly through cutting out posts and establishments ashore and undertaking more training afloat. Over the same period Army numbers will be reduced by up to about 7,000 and Royal Air Force numbers by about 2,500. All these reductions will be made so far as possible through natural wastage and careful control of recruitment rates.

Support and Employment

39. It is essential, if we are to get the best value from the resources we spend on defence, that overheads of all kinds should be rigorously constrained. The new Ministerial structure in the Ministry of Defence will give added impetus to the drive to ensure this, with special responsibilities for ensuring that our procurement of materiel is efficient and economical and for re-shaping the general infrastructure and support elements for the Services (including military and civilian staffs in headquarters) as tautly as possible to release maximum resources for front-line combat capability.

40. The measures summarised in earlier paragraphs will be directly reflected in altered demands in supporting areas. The full details need further working out; but the sharpest changes will inevitably be felt in support for the surface fleet. It will be impossible to sustain or justify a dockyard organisation of the present size, in view of the great reduction in refits and mid-life modernisations. The Government has concluded that the naval base and the Royal Dockyard at Chatham will have to close in 1984; and consideration will be given to alternative ways of fulfilling the Government's obligation to support the economy of Gibraltar if it is decided that the dockyard work there cannot be kept up indefinitely. This consideration will be undertaken in closest consultation with the Gibraltar Government. In addition, there will be a very sharp reduction in the scope and volume of dockyard work at Portsmouth. Within the reduced dockyard organisation as a whole the Government will take up the thrust of last year's Consultative Document in tauter and more accountable management and improvements in efficiency. We shall have to close a substantial number of naval stores and fuel depots, including those at Deptford, Invergordon, Llangennech, Pembroke Dock and Woolston.

41. There will also be overhead reductions and some closures in the Army and Royal Air Force support areas, though details have still to be settled. Plans for new communications aircraft have been deferred until the late 1980s. We shall seek economies in the organisation for training, including staff training, and some establishments will close.

42. At the same time the Government will seek to carry further our partnership with the private sector in the support area, especially where there are export opportunities. In particular, we plan to do as much as possible in this direction in respect of the Royal Ordnance Factories and certain of the research and development establishments. Fuller details of our intentions for the ROFs are being announced separately.

43. On 1 April 1979 the Ministry of Defence directly employed some 248,000 United Kingdom-based civilians. Cuts in functions and increased efficiency have already reduced the figure to some 228,000 by 1 June 1981. The measures outlined in paragraphs 40-41 above will result in a reduction of 15,000-20,000 United Kingdom-based civilian jobs, and together with other reductions envisaged in the support infrastructure should make it possible eventually to reduce numbers significantly below 200,000. Redundancies will be unavoidable, but the changes will be made in close consultation with the trade unions and wherever possible by natural wastage. Our defence effort in the long term will continue to depend crucially upon the commitment and skill of our civilian workforce in a wide and complex range of tasks.

44. The programme changes will also have a substantial effect upon employment in British industry. The precise impact must be for the firms themselves to assess and plan. More work will be generated in some fields; but job opportunities in a number of others, particularly surface warship building, will inevitably decline as compared with current levels. The total amount spent on procurement with British industry will continue to rise, but with a shift of emphasis towards the more advanced technologies rather than the older labour-intensive areas.

45. The key to jobs in the defence industries lies increasingly with exports. Though we have had much success, we have often been hampered by the sophistication and consequent cost of much of our equipment; for example, it is a decade since we last sold overseas a major new warship of Royal Navy design. Our own need for less expensive equipment to sustain our defence programme should now march alongside industry's desire for equipment more widely marketable. We intend to improve our arrangements for defence sales and to work for closer partnership with industry, by such measures as the re-shaping of the ROF organisation noted in paragraph 42 above and, more generally, by seeking the involvement of industry's own funds earlier in the research and development process to engage their full interest and responsibility.

The Way Forward

46. This White Paper has set out the Government's basic conclusions on tasks, force levels, equipment, personnel and support. A great deal of work however lies ahead in shaping the details and planning the methods and timing of implementing change; and modifications or further adjustments may prove necessary. We intend to consult fully and flexibly about all this, both with our allies and domestically. We shall explain and discuss the specific aspects of our plans through the processes of NATO's annual Force Planning Review system. We shall seek similarly to take careful account of the views of our employees, our suppliers and others affected by the new measures on how best within our central concept we can meet particular concerns.

47. In its review work the Government has confronted complex choices, with no easy or painless solutions available. To go on simply as before, or with all plans and aspirations unabated, is not an option; change is necessary. The Government has taken hard decisions. These reflect our resolve to give defence the resources Britain's security demands; but equal resolve to see that these resources, which the nation cannot spare without much penalty elsewhere, are put to work in accordance with realistic, unsentimental and up-to-date judgement of what will be most relevant and effective in future years.

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