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Osborne for deputy PM

SIR – If Britain is to survive and thrive in the global race we need a radical restructuring at the top level of government. Whitehall must be leaner, and very much more focused on delivery. This comes down to real responsibility covering needs, inputs and outputs.

So, the Chancellor should formally be given deputy prime ministerial clout. Appoint one further deputy prime minister, a new foreign and domestic security “supremo” – one person with overall responsibility for foreign, defence and domestic security. In other words: make one person responsible to the PM and the nation for hard and soft power security. There should be no more bad connections between foreign and domestic goals and approaches. No more passing the parcel of culpability between departments. No more excuses for a woeful lack of agility because some parts of the team are sticking to out-dated scripts and prejudices.

One person truly in charge across the key departments could refresh Whitehall’s “Comprehensive Approach” – which has lost steam. Such a person could produce a much-needed top-level national strategy, and get the National Security Council to advance beyond being a talking shop.

We should not underestimate the obstacles that must be overcome of “my turf”, “my space”, and “my career”. Yet massive improvements and efficiencies are there to be grasped.

In the Sixties we had separate single military service ministries (the Admiralty, War Office and Air Ministry), between them employing more people and taking a larger share of public expenditure than today’s Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Ministry of Defence and Department for International Development. The radicals – the proponents of a unified Ministry of Defence – won, in the face of immense Luddite opposition. And the radicals can do so again.

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