HOUSE OF COMMONS

Defence Committee

Oral evidence: The Integrated Security, Defence and Foreign Policy Review, HC 165

Tuesday 10 March 2020

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Watch the meeting

Members present: Mr Tobias Ellwood (Chair); Stuart Anderson; Sarah Atherton; Wayne David; Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi; Martin Docherty-Hughes; Richard Drax; Mr Mark Francois; Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck; Gavin Robinson; John Spellar.

Questions 1 - 53

Witnesses

I: Douglas Barrie, Senior Fellow for Military Aerospace, International Institute for Strategic Studies; Professor Malcolm Chalmers, Deputy Director-General, Royal United Services Institute; and Tom McKane, former Director General for Strategy and Director General for Security Policy, MoD (2008-14).

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Douglas Barrie, Professor Malcolm Chalmers and Tom McKane.

Chair: Welcome, Professor Chalmers. It is great to see you again. We had a bit of a warm-up a couple of weeks ago.

Professor Chalmers: We did indeed.

Q1 **Chair:** Thank you for coming back. I am really delighted to introduce you and your team to the Defence Committee for our first official look at the integrated review. Douglas and Tom, thank you for joining us today.

To give you an overview of how we are approaching this—Malcolm, forgive me for repeating what I said last time—we are splitting the review into two themes. The first question we are asking ourselves is: what does a good review look like? What is the blueprint, and what questions must you ask? What is the theoretical direction of travel that you must take to reach a solid outcome?

It is clear that we have had a number of views in the past, with differing outcomes—some of you may have been involved in them to different extents, and you will have certainly been commenting on them. We really want to create an inquiry that provides a useful study of lessons to be learned from previous reviews, both UK-based and internationally, so that we do not repeat those mistakes again. You might suggest that we are already in the process of repeating those mistakes, and we look forward to hearing what you have to say.

The second part of the review involves looking at the British case. What are we doing to understand the threats around the world, our current defence posture and our position in the world? What should therefore change?

You are familiar with how these things work. We have a series of questions to put to you, but before we do that, Professor, may I invite you and your team to introduce yourselves, so that we have that down for the record?

Professor Chalmers: I am Malcolm Chalmers. I am the deputy director-general at the Royal United Services Institute.

Tom McKane: Tom McKane, formerly of the Ministry of Defence and one or two other Departments, and now associated with the Royal United Services Institute, LSE IDEAS and the European Leadership Network.

Douglas Barrie: Douglas Barrie. I am senior fellow for military airspace at the IISS.

Chair: Thank you.

Q2 **John Spellar:** I have a couple of specifically targeted questions, which I will then expand from. First, Tom, the Government have committed to conducting the most radical reassessment of our place in the world since the end of the Cold War. In your experience of previous defence reviews,

what decision-making structures and timeline are needed to realise that ambition?

Tom McKane: One way of looking at this is to think about how much time was given for previous reviews. The two that I am most closely associated with were the 1997-98 review by the new Labour Government and the 2010 review under Prime Minister Cameron.

The first of those took 15 months from start to end and was an extremely thorough review, starting with a foreign policy baseline and building from that into questions about capabilities, structures and organisations. You could possibly have shaved a bit of time off that review, but one of its features was its wide consultation, and that takes time to organise and manage.

Contrast that with 2010—2015 was a similar length of time—when, because of the economic circumstances, the requirement was to complete the review in four months so that it could be finished in time for the conclusion of the public spending review. That was much shorter than those of us who were engaged in it would have liked.

My overall sense is that if the Government's intention is to conclude this review by the time the spending review is concluded, which I assume will be October or November, they need to get a shift on.

Q3 **Chair:** When did 2010 start to unravel? You said four months. At what point in 2010 did it become clear that four months was too short a time?

Tom McKane: I do not think that the Government at the time would have said that it was too short; I am expressing a personal view, but one that was probably quite widely shared by those involved. The timetable for the review was clear from the outset, pretty much straight after the 2010 election. All of us who were involved in it accepted that the Government's overriding priority in the wake of the financial crisis was to resolve their approach to public expenditure in the round.

Q4 **John Spellar:** I have a question directly for Malcolm, again on timelines. How frequently should defence reviews be conducted? What should be the choreography in taking different aspects, and how should they be sequenced within such a study?

Professor Chalmers: The three major defence reviews that we have had since 1990, as well as the current review, have all taken place when a new Government have come into office—assuming you can say that that is the nature of what happened after this election—on the one hand, and also in parallel with a comprehensive spending review.

One of the reasons it was possible to have that one-year delay in 1997-98 was that the Labour party coming into power at the time had accepted the Conservative spending settlement for the first year of their time in office. They had more time to prepare a comprehensive spending review than would normally be the case with a new Government. In 2010, 2015 and again in 2020, the comprehensive spending review timetable in each case was driving the defence review timetable for reasons that we can explore

further, but essentially it was to ensure that those writing the review were aware of the potential demand implications for defence in their defence decisions, and that people in defence were aware of the fiscal constraints under which they operated.

That has been a consistent pattern. It is the right way to do it, because the defence review is not trying to decide everything about every major procurement decision. Many of them will take place between reviews.

The issue is essentially about making sure that the defence programme is brought back into balance with other bits of Government, with the threat environment, and that it is balanced against available budgets. It is a balance within defence, between major headings within defence, which is why you have to relate it back to a foreign policy baseline.

I would be unhappy if we had a situation in which you tried to make most of the decisions on defence either a long time before or a long time after the outcome of a spending review. Just on the timetable, my understanding is that, at the moment, officials are still working on the basis that both these reviews will be concluded by July. From my perspective, that is too short a timescale. Normally, comprehensive spending reviews report in the autumn—during the October and November period—and I am not clear why such a short timescale is being applied to the CSR this year. Given that, there is clearly a lot of pressure on national security Departments to adhere to that timetable.

Q5 **John Spellar:** But within that framework and that reconciliation, as you are roughly describing it, between budget and requirement, should the starting point of the review be the amount of budget available or should it be that the budget is then determined by the requirement? What should be the driver—particularly in a short process, let alone a long one?

Professor Chalmers: I think the process, as with every Government Department, is that Departments will develop their plans. In this case they will develop them in a national security framework—so, co-ordinated by the Cabinet Office. The Treasury will be involved in that discussion, so the Treasury is having an input into the integrated review in parallel with having an input into the spending rounds, so they are trying to hold those two together.

From a Ministry of Defence point of view, they can use the integrated review as a way of saying to the Treasury, "You do realise the political implications of what you are telling us about money". Perhaps in some circumstances they will get more; that is for the politicians to decide. However, I cannot envisage a situation entirely driven by one or the other, although if you look at the different major reviews, it plays a different role in each review.

But even of those three major reviews so far, putting "Options for Change" to one side, clearly 2010 was driven most of all by budgetary pressure because there was the aftermath of the financial crisis, the Government deficit was 10% of GDP, and so on. Everybody was being asked to make a

contribution. The debate was about who should make the biggest contribution to the savings. On that issue, the contribution that defence had to make—compared with Health, Education or Local Government, for example—was not resolved until the last stages of the review.

Q6 **Chair:** Can I ask about the relationship between the spending review and the integrated review? This is quite critical. You are saying that these are going to sort of morph, or certainly be concurrent activity, when I would say that one should feed into and influence the other. The spending review should be the second part, which appreciates the learning from the first part—the integrated review. It sounds as though you are already getting indications that this will all be concluded at roughly the same time. Is that correct?

Tom McKane: Can I chip in here? I think that one of the problems is that the spending review process will be driven by the Treasury and the integrated review process is driven by No. 10 and the Cabinet Office. There are efforts to ensure that they are aligned, but as somebody who experienced being part of them, they do not always feel completely aligned.

Another point that is worth reminding the Committee of is that in 2015, the then Chancellor of the Exchequer announced the budget that would be available to defence in July that year. The Ministry of Defence at that point knew the financial parameters it was operating within, which in some ways is an advantage, because you know what you have got to spend—although as Malcolm has said, in another way, the Ministry might feel that it has lost an opportunity to press for more.

I am not certain that you have to complete the integrated review in advance of the spending review. That is the way we have done it, but in other countries they complete defence reviews and then spend the next year or so doing the programming of the outcome.

Chair: I just make the point that in the press release it says two slightly juxtaposed things. It states: "The Integrated Review will cover all aspects of the UK's place in the world", but you then need to recognise that you might need to spend more money to do that. In the previous paragraph, it states that the UK will continue to "commit 2% of GDP" with no indication that it might go above that. Again, that is slightly concerning from our perspective.

Q7 **Stuart Anderson:** To expand on that point, you said that you are not convinced that you have got to have the integrated review first. If the spending review is 2% of GDP—that is fixed—and the integrated review identifies a further need, we cannot bridge that gap and we are stuck. As long as it comes under that, we are okay, but if we do not get it the right way around, we could be left very short within that.

Tom McKane: That is true, if you take it that the spending review fixes the amount available for every Department for the following three years or whatever it is going to be. In fact, as we have seen in the past couple of years, the Treasury has made additional moneys available for particular

aspects of the defence programme and other programmes outside the confines of the spending review. I am not saying that I am recommending that they should be separated; I am just saying that you could.

Professor Chalmers: On that point, the extra money that defence has had, over and above the 2015 spending review and the past three years, is very important for a discussion that is going on right now about the settlement for defence for the next spending review and, in particular, whether that extra £1.9 billion provided for defence for 2020-21 will or will not be included in the baseline for calculating defence increases over the next four years. That has not yet been agreed by the Treasury.

Q8 **Chair:** Before we move on to national interests, Douglas, do you have comments you would like to make?

Douglas Barrie: On the GDP point, it presupposes that GDP performs as expected. That 2% is actually a variable depending on what GDP is. If GDP falls, which it may well do, then you have an issue, because you have assumed a certain amount that is not actually going to be there, so you have to reshape.

Chair: Are you suggesting that there may be a change in GDP in the next few months? We will find out tomorrow, won't we?

Q9 **Mr Dhesi:** Professor Chalmers, while Lord Rickets was looking at the 2020 review, he noted: "The twin pillars of British strategy as defined in the 1960 study—European and transatlantic—today look shaky. The framers of the 2020 version will not have the luxury…they have the challenge of aligning the vague rhetoric about 'Global Britain' with the country's limited means and diminished influence." Within that context, you have argued that the forthcoming review should be grounded in the UK's national interests. How do you determine which policies are in the UK's national interests?

Professor Chalmers: I think my paper was a comment on the foreign policy baseline. It was arguing that, particularly in a time where alliances are perhaps not 100% as reliable as we perhaps thought they were in the past, it is even more important that we reflect on what is important for us as a country—what our key priorities, our key interests and our values are. I fully expect that still to have our Atlantic and European partners as absolutely central for delivering our national interests, but it may affect how we approach our alliance relationships. It is what I would call a theory of influence. We do not primarily contribute to alliances because we want to contribute to the global good; we contribute to global alliances because it is in the UK's national interest to work with others, rather than by ourselves. That is how others also approach it.

The decision about exactly what our national interests and priorities are is inherently a political process. My paper makes some arguments about how to relate it to some of the domestic political priorities that the Government have put forward. I certainly would argue quite strongly that we should not see foreign policy as something that is separate from, and bearing rather little relationship to, the interests in the security and prosperity of

the British people. It should start with the security and prosperity of the British people and try to work out how best to use this variety of instruments to pursue them.

Q10 **Mr Dhesi:** You touched upon those international alliances, and we can see that our friends in the US have taken an "America first" approach, which in itself has weakened the transatlantic alliance in terms of the attitude of our European neighbours. Does the evolving nature of that alliance—we have an American election coming up this year, so there could be another direction taken—make it more or less challenging to identify the UK's national interests?

Professor Chalmers: I think it makes it more important to identify the UK's national interests. Actually, this is not primarily about what is or is not going to happen in November in the American election. It is more about ensuring, in the sort of timeframe over which you have to construct defence capabilities, which is a decade or longer, that we are hedging against a range of possibilities in that time period. It is not new to have a debate about the circumstances in which the United States might want to shift its defence resources to Asia or might not want to be fully committed to limited conflicts on Europe's periphery, that by their nature are more important to Europeans than to the United States. That is not a prediction of any particular path, but it is a matter of trying to ensure that whatever happens—this is at the heart of security policy—within a plausible range of possibilities, we are as well prepared as we can be, given the limited resources we inevitably have as a country.

Q11 **Chair:** You have battle scars from a few reviews. Is the difference between this review and those we have had in the past the fact that the international rules that were supposed to apply and that support UK interests are not really working? We have a UN Security Council that gets vetoed all the time. Turkey made a request under Article 4 a couple of weeks ago and was completely ignored. You have a bunfight between the EU and NATO as to what the responsibilities should be. We have become slightly hesitant because, as Tan says, the United States has retreated. Should that also be part of any integrated review appreciation—the fact that the world is very different from five years ago?

Professor Chalmers: It absolutely should be. I have argued in things that I have written that the idea that there has ever been a single rules-based international system is really not right. There are a number of different systems, some of which are more or less universal in encompassing countries who we see as competitors as well as allies and some are much more exclusive and are essentially western rules-based international systems. But whatever rules-based international system you look at right now, many of those systems are weakening under the pressure of increased nationalism, and you can't be a multilateralist, or you can't be an effective one, if the United States and Russia and China and India and Turkey and Saudi Arabia—the list goes on—have all moved in a direction that puts more emphasis on their national interests and are more sceptical in relation to multilateralism.

The biggest change over the last three years is in relation to the United States. In a range of areas, it is clear that this President and many of the people close to him are more sceptical about the value of multilateralism than previous Presidents.

Q12 **Mr Dhesi:** Let us extend that a little further. You will no doubt have noted that, in contrast to previous reviews, the Government statement does not include any commitment to support the rules-based international order. In your opinion, what are the policies that were grounded in that international rules-based order and what are the policies for a national interest approach? What are the differences and how do you think that will play out?

Professor Chalmers: Despite the fact that the phrase, "the rules-based international system" was used more than 20 times in the 2015 SDSR, I have always felt, and this is one of the reasons I developed this argument, that when you ask officials, "What does it mean?", they find it difficult to describe what it means.

My argument is certainly not that rules-based international systems, in the plural, are unimportant—they are important—but when we make an argument, we should make an argument in relation to specific rules-based systems.

Clearly, we have decided for understandable political reasons as a country to leave the most developed rules-based system in Europe because we want to have more control over our own affairs—

Chair: We won't venture down that road too far.

Professor Chalmers: But in a way, I think it is illustrative of a broader trend. Whether you are talking about the role of a trading organisation or the role of the United Nations Security Council in authorising military action, or whatever it might be, we are not unique in that regard—a sovereign state being pretty cautious about allowing our sovereignty to be shared.

Q13 **Mr Dhesi:** As you have noted in your own study with regards to the international rules-based order, that will have issues in terms of ethics and so on. In terms of the national interest approach, you mentioned foreign policy earlier. How will that impact on the defence of our nation?

Professor Chalmers: One of the things I think I would say—this is a defence and security answer writ large, but it very much applies to defence—is that, compared with the late 1990s and the SDR at the time, which was based on a doctrine of the international community and was focusing on expeditionary capabilities, and which was largely a period in which great power threats were greatly recessed, great power competition with Russia, and China in different ways, is more significant today. I think the threats to the homeland are also much more significant.

If you look at it from a national security perspective—UK looking out, rather than the world looking in, as your frame of reference—that does

mean that we should probably be devoting more resource across the security space to securing the homeland than we have in the past. It doesn't mean that is the only thing we do—the homeland and its neighbourhood. Because if we don't get that right, then we are flawed, back in our backyard.

Q14 **Martin Docherty-Hughes:** Gentlemen, forgive me if I venture down what is known in Scotland as a "daft laddie" question. What do you think the UK national interest is? Given that the Government of the day is allowed to set the full parameters of the review, and, some would say, not consider the opinions of any of the Opposition parties, how can we be assured that the review pays attention to the plethora of views, not just those reflected around the Committee but across the state?

Tom McKane: An obvious way to capture the views of Opposition parties is to have some process of consultation so that you can gather their views. In the end, obviously, the Government of the day will decide what it believes the UK national interest consists of. It ought to be possible to identify the national interest in a way that would command widespread support. Even if consultation is limited, it should be possible to come up with a set of interests that would be agreed by most people.

Q15 **Martin Docherty-Hughes:** Let me take it a wee bit further. As a Scottish constituency MP, I am cognisant that what is taken to be the UK national interest is perceived differently in different parts of the state. I apologise to colleagues, who should prepare themselves for me being very boring about the lack of attention that has been paid to the maritime in the north Atlantic. Scotland has a unique position of interest in the north Atlantic and the high north. How can we make sure that those two specific issues, in terms of the maritime in the north Atlantic and the high north, are fully reflected in the review?

Tom McKane: I would be very surprised if they were not reflected in some way, not least because of Russian submarine and aviation activity in that part of Europe.

Q16 **Martin Docherty-Hughes:** My main concern is that in one of the last SDSRs, the Secretary of State, when they wrote it, did not even mention that the UK was an island state.

Tom McKane: Well, obviously you cannot guarantee what will be in the document, but it is only by putting forward the view that you have put forward that you can at least ensure that it is taken into account.

Q17 **Chair:** Can I explore that a bit further? In your experience, are you invited to give your tuppence-worth to the integrated review?

Professor Chalmers: Yes.

Q18 **Chair:** Okay. Was there any occasion where, on Privy Council terms or as Leaders of the Opposition or in an advisory capacity, anybody outside Government was invited to give their share in any form? Has that ever happened?

Tom McKane: It happened extensively, for example in 1997-98.

Chair: So there is a precedent.

Tom McKane: In that review, there was a range of uses of outsiders. There was an almost-permanent panel of outsiders that was used as a sounding board—people from a range of different backgrounds. There were subject matter experts, for example. One I can remember was an expert in the logistics field in the commercial sector and was brought in to advise on that. Former Defence Ministers were consulted. The Chair of the House of Commons Defence Committee was consulted. It was pretty widespread.

Q19 **Chair:** I am struggling to even find out what the team looks like at the moment, let alone be allowed, with the Committee, to give our view.

Tom McKane: I should not be implying that there was no such consultation in 2010 or 2015, because there was, but it was much more limited—partly because of the time constraints and partly, I think, because of the preferences of the political leaders at the time.

Douglas Barrie: To give you a "daft laddie" answer, it seems to me that there needs to be much wider public engagement in the whole process, partly to get public buy-in and partly to address your question about whether there are going to be different regional views. In terms of the north Atlantic, I think that 10 MoD work strands were set out—I would imagine that was in the fourth quarter of 2019—and at least two or three of those would have looked at that specifically, in one way or another. One of them was modern deterrence, and the other was nuclear in particular. Again, I would be very surprised if that area had not been considered, or is not being considered.

Q20 **Chair:** Taking the public with us is such an important point. I believe there is a massive myth out there among the general public about what our true capabilities are—a disparity between what they believe we can do and what we can actually do. If we are going to be honest, we need a sober discussion with the public to educate them so that they are then aware. In their shock, I think they will be more helpful when we are making the case that we need to advance our defence posture and stand up in the way we have done. It is in our DNA to step forward.

We have talked about the changing world. We had a statement this morning on Turkey and Syria. An awful lot of aid is going in there, but no determination or resilience to stand up to aggressive nation states that are just doing their own thing, and I think there is a gap in the market with America stepping back. I believe the integrated view makes it possible that that will happen, so our role is to advance and publicise the case. Are you able to share the contributions that you give, or is that done in a private capacity?

Professor Chalmers: I have published some stuff on the integrated review which I imagine people in Government are reading, but beyond that, I do not think I can say very much.

Chair: Well, if you fancy sharing what you passed across to Government, we would be delighted to take a look at it. Martin, was there anything else?

Q21 **Martin Docherty-Hughes:** Not on that one. I think I will go on to the next question; I am just looking up at the annunciator and thinking there might be a vote very soon, so I will move on to how the security, defence and foreign policy review challenges assumptions and prevents vested interests from setting the terms of the debate. How wide should external consultations be, and what are the advantages and disadvantages of taking views from outside of Whitehall?

Professor Chalmers: In my experience of these processes, so much depends on how you structure consultation. There can be what is sometimes called the illusion of inclusion: 20 experts are brought together in a grand committee room, and they have 50 minutes. They all have the time to make their one point without anybody really framing what the essay question is in any great detail. Everybody feels they have had a lovely cup of coffee, but really it makes no difference to the outcome. What makes much more difference is when those being consulted have more of an idea about what the live issues and choices are, and what issues—whatever is being said—are not really on the table, so that the advice is timely and informed.

I am talking about people like ourselves who are essentially experts rather than vested interests, although like anybody, we have our vested interests. However, if you are talking about the politics of it and all the different groups in society that are impacted by the conclusion of the integrated review, they also have a genuine view, but that feeds more into the political process. As with the integrated review, the Government know that there will be winners from the spending review, but also losers. Managing that process is what politicians are paid for, so it is very important that that is out there at an early stage so people can respond to the political pressures as they see fit.

Q22 **Martin Docherty-Hughes:** I will come to Parliament's role in just a second. To what extent should allies and multinational alliances be involved? Looking at our European history—forgive me for going back a wee bit—if you go back as far as the Peloponnesian war, the essential question in European affairs has been the tension between state rights and sovereignty, and the mechanisms to bring about lasting peace through either coercion or co-operation. For several hundred years at least—certainly since the second world war—the movement has been towards closer European integration in defence and security policy. I am sure that everyone, whatever way they voted in terms of Brexit, would accept that that has fundamentally changed for the first time in a long time, so how do we avoid the nightmare scenario of the UK becoming, as some would see it, a revisionist power on the periphery of Europe along with the likes of Russia and Turkey, one of which also happens to be a NATO ally?

Tom McKane: I don't myself see it like that. Most of the member states of the EU are also NATO allies. It is the same armed forces whether you

are looking at this through an EU pair of eyes or a NATO set of eyes. I have seen nothing to suggest that the Government intends to weaken its engagement with NATO and its NATO allies.

Professor Chalmers: I would add that NATO has been fundamental to European security since its foundation in 1949, and remains so, but we should not be complacent. It is not God-given that NATO will continue for another 50 years; it has to be something that member states see as very much in their interests. It is very dependent on the US security umbrella, and US leadership in the alliance. There are question marks about that going forward.

That trend towards what I call denationalisation of defence in most European countries, which is a massive strategic gain for the whole of Europe—

Q23 **Martin Docherty-Hughes:** Sorry to interrupt, but that integration has been pushed by the European Union, not specifically NATO.

Professor Chalmers: I think it is both. If you look at armed forces across Europe, the UK is probably at the more nationalist end of the spectrum with France, because of our history, but if you look at the way the German armed forces think, or most NATO members—the Dutch and so on—they do not think much in national terms; they think about training as part of NATO, as their political classes see it. Sometimes in this country we are a bit critical of the Germans because they do not think about national security enough, and they put too much emphasis on doing nothing except in a multilateral context, but as a general principle there is that denationalisation of security.

Before 1939, for centuries each country planned the structure of its forces around the possibility of war with one another. We don't, by and large, in NATO. Greece and Turkey might be an exception, but by and large we do not plan on that basis. That is a big strategic gain, but we cannot take that for granted. As Europe on the world stage becomes less strong in relative terms compared with Asia in particular, there will be others who would quite like Europeans to be less united on security. I am absolutely not arguing for the European Union to have a central station, but from a UK point of view our security relationships with our closest neighbours, particularly in northern Europe—France, Germany and the low countries—are absolutely central to our security. We need to maintain that really close relationship with them.

Q24 **Martin Docherty-Hughes:** Finally, what role do you think Parliament should play in the review, not just the Committee?

Tom McKane: I think that the review is an opportunity for the Government to set out how it will play a part in continuing to strengthen the European allies' capabilities. I would hope that Parliament would support that direction of travel, because if you are looking at the UK's national interest it is not just a question of what the United Kingdom can do; it is a question of what its allies are able to do, in the context of a world in which there are concerns about continuing US commitment to the

defence of Europe. By assisting European allies to do more for their own defence, it will have the effect of making it less likely that the US would disengage.

Q25 **Wayne David:** It is a fundamentally important review, but in a relatively short timescale. At the centre of the review is Government Departments working together and effectively. Some would say that is not the normal mode of operation for Whitehall. In practical terms, how do you get Government Departments to work together effectively in a relatively short timescale?

Professor Chalmers: Do you want to try first, Tom?

Tom McKane: I will start. It's a good question. Although successive Governments have talked about the need for an all-of-Government approach to security—using different language, but pointing in the same direction—it is never perfect. When you get into a review of this sort, it is not unnatural that different Departments and agencies should want to make sure that they are protecting their own turf. I don't know exactly how the Government are organising this review, but it is possible to think of ways in which you could divide the subject matter and then give the leadership of different—

Q26 **Chair:** Sorry to interrupt, but for the benefit of our study, it is really helpful to hear you say that you don't know. We would encourage you to say how you would like to see it done, because that is what we are trying to learn here. We are trying to put together what should be the DS solution, so please take this opportunity to spell out how it should be. That would be very helpful to us.

Tom McKane: There are some aspects of this review that will inevitably be handled by the Department or the agency responsible for a particular bit of policy or capability, because the subject matter is specialised. For example, if you were going to review some aspect of defence logistics, you might bring in outside experts. That is one way, potentially, to make sure that everybody stays honest.

The other way that it could be done is by looking at topics that affect a number of different Departments.

Q27 **Chair:** So thematic, going across the piece.

Tom McKane: Yes, and then selecting to take the lead on a particular theme someone who has an interest in it, but for whom it is perhaps not their predominant interest. You then need to have a very strong hand from the centre of Government—the national security staff.

Q28 **Wayne David:** Can I ask about the so-called Fusion Doctrine? Could that be important?

Tom McKane: Yes, that was one of the phrases that I referred to, but I was trying to respond the Chairman's question about whether there are particular mechanisms that would help to ensure that this review looks as objectively as possible at the different priorities. The use of the national

security risk assessment in 2010 and 2015 was intended to make it possible to prioritise across a range of risks, and then to make sure that you had the capabilities to meet the top tier of them, but it is not an exact science by any stretch of the imagination.

Professor Chalmers: I think over the past 10 years or perhaps a bit longer, there has been significant progress in Government Departments in the security space joining up with one another more than in the past. The trailblazer was the CONTEST counter-terrorism strategy. There are still lots of flaws; nevertheless, it was an early attempt in a topic area that did not fall neatly in Department—a number of people were working together. The establishment of the National Security Council was very helpful.

Recently, the National Security Capability Review set up senior responsible owners for a series of thematic issues, such as Atlantic security, with heads in one Department but nevertheless with a number of cross-Governmental teams with people from two, three or four Departments sitting together. Ultimately, they are reporting back to their Department.

There is a lot of organisational stuff. We could do more in terms of creating a national security cadre of officials, so that if you are a national security official, you would not spend your whole career in the Ministry of Defence or the Foreign Office; you would move around to DFID as well. There is lots of that incremental organisational stuff that is not very glamorous or political but does improve the quality of decision making.

Douglas Barrie: Can I add, calling something "integrated" does not magically make it so? There is a kind of magical realism here. One of the things that strikes me as potentially problematic, which speaks to the timelines and the structure of how this may be being done, is if you have—as you should—input from multiple departments, you have the risk that this is running parallel rather than in a sequential fashion. Things could get horribly out of kilter. *[Interruption.]*

Chair: I will have to ask you to hold that thought while we do a quick runner. We will be back in about 15 minutes. I hope you can hang tight, and we will resume shortly.

Sitting suspended for Divisions in the House.

On resuming—

Q29 **Chair:** On to the wider threats, can we roll back a bit? Please give your thoughts on how Britain assesses the threats as part of a strategic review. What is the protocol that you would then follow? Not wanting to do the threats we face today but, in general terms, how does any nation go through the process of recognising the threats that we face? Where do you start?

Professor Chalmers: For the purposes of this exercise, this is not a detailed analysis of the tactical advantages and disadvantages of the Russians or al-Qaeda or particular areas. It is a higher-level assessment than that. In the current environment, that involves having a sense of the

key technological risks over the period of the review that may come about, and the areas in which it is most important to make sure that we are in the right place as a country. A threat assessment is partly about which threats matter most to the UK and which matter less. It is about the potential capability associated with potentially hostile actors, but it is also about which matter most.

Clearly, one of the themes in successive major reviews over time is that the primary focus of reviews has changed. In the 1998 review, the focus was on expeditionary warfare and it was focused more on non-state actors or weak states. 2015 moved it back to more of a focus on deterrence of major state actors. That has quite a big impact on your long-term capability planning. You want to be able to deal with both, but the relative priority and the amount of risk you are prepared to take in relation to those broad categories is really important.

Broad categories are what we should focus on. I have seen in commentary about reviews a year after a review has taken place, that people say they didn't predict X—"They didn't predict the conflict in Syria in 2011" or "They didn't predict what Russia did in Syria" and so on. And all those are, of course, updating the threat assessments.

A decent threat assessment in relation to a review will make some broadbrush assessments of where to go. If you are in a situation, as I think we were in 2014, when there was a radical change in our assessment of how important Russia was as a threat, then clearly you do need to have major change, but a lot of the other changes don't perhaps really fundamentally change the relative threat assessment.

I think the last point I would make is that alliances are an absolutely critical intermediate variable. You cannot read easily from threats to UK capabilities, because in relation to many of the threats that we are talking about, we would operate with alliances, or we would at least have to interrogate the assumptions about which of the threats we would want the capability to counter without allies. The Falklands is a classic example, where it is maybe less likely allies would help, even though we would like them to—they did a little bit in 1982—so we would have to have a more national capability for that. But if you are talking about Russian action against the Baltic republics, then I would suggest that the UK is not going to be involved in that action if it didn't have support from at least a significant number of powerful NATO allies.

It ties in with the foreign policy baseline and how that then feeds into the alliance assumptions you are making and how you respond to threats.

Tom McKane: I have heard it said that in this review they will take a threat-based approach rather than a risk-based approach, though quite how different that will be is quite hard to discern.

The advantage, I think, of talking about risks, as we did in 2010 and 2015, was that it meant that you could look not simply at threats of the type

that your diplomats and your armed forces and other agencies might have to confront, but also at health, energy, migration and so on.

The other point to make is that you have to look at both the probability that a risk or a threat will arise and also at the significance of it, if it did. That is always going to end up in quite tricky calculations as to whether you focus more on what is more likely, or what is much less likely, but if it came to pass would be more damaging.

Q30 **Richard Drax:** If you costed up the threats that we face as the United Kingdom, and now that we have left the EU in addition to all that, and took in all the various parameters—you have already mentioned health and all the other aspects to defending our country and our people—then, if we were being honest, we would say that, with the GDP we have, it would probably be unaffordable and we have got to pay for everything else. That means that NATO should take a far more influential lead and we should work far more closely. We should have the same planes, same ships, same guns, same radios—same everything. We should all act as one. In fact, the significance of NATO should be even greater. Now is the time for it to stand up and say, "All of us cannot afford masses of planes and ships. They are just too expensive." What we can do is combat the threat. That could be China or Russia, which is a really serious threat. Nationally, obviously we guard our home as much as we can afford to. Is there not a need for the Governments and NATO to sit down and say, "It is time to stand up and be counted"?

Tom McKane: In past reviews, we have looked at our defence through a NATO lens. I think that it is probably true to say that during the period from '97, '98—because there was no major state threat to the UK, or even to the alliance, and because the UK was focused, as Malcolm said, on expeditionary operations—there was less attention given to the alliance. I would agree with you: in the current circumstances, one would hope that more attention would be given to the alliance and the alliance's planning processes. The point that you bring out about the many different types of tank, ship and airplane and how inefficient that is, is well made. If the Government could find ways in which necessary defence capabilities could be provided more collectively without damaging national sovereignty, that would be a good thing to do, but it is a problem that Ministers and officials have struggled with for a long time.

Q31 **Chair:** I was sort of hoping that we might move up a level in looking at threats and look at how the character of conflict is changing. The introduction of the longbow at Agincourt was a game changer. The Gatling gun in the civil war in the United States was game changing. The battle of Cambrai, where the tank was introduced, was game changing. We are now talking more about this hybrid warfare. You talked about the political competition and all this happening beneath the threshold of war. Should we not be doing an assessment, rather than saying "China" or "ships from a certain place", of the kinds of capabilities that are now growing and are likely to come over the next 10 years? They bleed us into a new dimension of warfare on the digital space, as well. Is that not the conversation that needs to be included in this integrated review?

Douglas Barrie: The difficulty that the west faces in general, and the UK faces in particular, is that sometimes we look at that as an either/or. The threat is changing, that is correct, but the problem is that some of the peer competitors, or the Heads of State of the states that present a challenge—whichever language you want to use—do not quite see it like that. At one end of the spectrum is what we call hybrid or grey zone. At the other end of the spectrum is kinetic. They are investing in a lot of interesting areas, but they are not disinvesting in the traditional heavy metal, so it is both. In fact, the picture is even more demanding. You cannot say, "Actually, we can leap a generation and think about all of these new threats and forget the old ones," because, unfortunately, the old threats have not gone away. In some cases, they have just got more capable. You also have a new spectrum of threats that you have to consider as well, so the picture is just more complicated.

Professor Chalmers: I think that is right. If you look at the balance of investment in the MoD's current programme, it is pretty traditional. It is a lot of one-for-one replacement of submarines, surface ships, tanks or combat aircraft. I am not saying that that is wrong, but sometimes—certainly at RUSI conferences—you could be forgiven for thinking that we have already moved into a new era in which information matters more than kinetic activity, for example, or in which cyber matters more.

All those new dimensions are important. They may become more important, although it is always very difficult to predict the importance of new military technologies without factoring in the extent to which your adversaries are also moving forward in that space, and therefore having a sense of the extent to which they cancel each other out or not. Countermeasures, and counter-countermeasures, all have to be factored in. Basically, it is entirely unpredictable.

What is clear is that we want to avoid, as far as possible, a situation where we get caught out by others—adversaries—doing things that we are not in a position to counter relatively rapidly. We have to hedge our bets in lots of ways. As Doug quite rightly said, with traditional platforms developing as they are, being enabled to carry drones, future surface ships will have lots of drones on board and so on. Nevertheless, all the major powers, including Russia, China and India, as well as the western powers, have a procurement programme that puts heavy emphasis on developing new platforms.

Lastly, as soon as we start talking about grey areas, we are talking about things like subversion, espionage and cyber-attack. Compared with what the MoD has traditionally talked about, these are areas where Defence is a smaller player relative to other players than it would be in conventional warfare. Therefore, the cross-Government approach is even more important, so that when somebody like Russia, for example, tries to interfere in northern Macedonia or Montenegro, or whatever it is, which would be a real threat to European security if they succeeded, we need capabilities. However, they are often more associated with our intelligence services or our diplomatic effort than our military.

Q32 **Chair:** A final question on this. What are your views on our ability on thought leadership, and the UK appreciating better than others—being able to whisper in the President's ear—what the threats are? The Camel Corps in the Middle East is an example of our capabilities through intelligence services to predict and understand what is actually going on. Have we lost that skillset a little bit? Does that need to be part of this review?

Tom McKane: I think our diplomatic service and our intelligence agencies are still top rate, but the size of the diplomatic service has been allowed to reduce over the last 10, 20 years. That inevitably impacts its ability to provide the information and advice that it might otherwise have been able to, so I think that is an issue.

Q33 **Sarah Atherton:** You have probably answered this question in a number of other answers, but we will go again. It is assumed that the review will balance the need to invest in new technologies—as the Chair mentioned, hybrid and digital—as well as traditional military capabilities. To what extent can this review achieve that balance? In your opinion, what should that balance look like?

Professor Chalmers: As I started to say, we need to make sure that we are investing enough that we are across as many of the areas of new technology as we can be. Not all of them will be developed into full capabilities, but we need to shorten the decision-making time to develop that while continuing with the priority—old capabilities, if you like. A Tempest aircraft or an Astute replacement is not old technology—a lot of new technology is involved—but, nevertheless, it will look quite similar. We need to have that balance.

We can all dream about what our defence forces would be like if we had another 30% or 40% on top of the budget, but, in a realistic budget scenario compatible with the Conservative manifesto, with 0.5% real increases over a baseline that has already been established, you will have to make some hard choices. The latest buzzwords that people are using are sunset and sunrise capabilities. Sunrise is looking to the future, with new things that are not currently in the programme—so you would have to add to that programme, and they are currently not funded—and, on the other hand, sunset capabilities are deemed to be lower priority, whatever criteria you use. Basically, on that budgetary assumption, if you want to pay for things that are not currently in the programme, you will have to take something out of equivalent value.

Q34 **Sarah Atherton:** You mentioned before the time spent on previous reviews and where they have faltered. With that in mind—you mentioned taking stuff out—what do you suggest needs to be taken out?

Professor Chalmers: That is a hard question, which I should probably give to my colleagues.

The purpose of having that foreign policy discussion is to get more of a sense of what your priorities are. When, in the past, the Government have talked about slogans such as "No strategic shrinkage", if you are not

careful, that can lead to an assumption that we must not do less of anything, and then we end up doing a lot of things, but maybe quite a lot of what we are doing is really not all that credible to others, because it is too thin. There has to be a bit more focus.

In my view, the capabilities that are most important are those that are key to the defence of the UK and its neighbourhood—the neighbourhood can be defined with a concentric-circle approach, if you like. The nature of military capabilities is that they can be moved around geographically, so you do not have to fix yourself geographically, but nevertheless there are some differences if you want to operate at scale at long distance, which you would not need, to the same extent, operating in the European neighbourhood. There are some choices to be made.

There are also important issues in relation to the division of labour between major European powers. Given the UK's own comparative advantages in its armed forces, in the Army, the Royal Marines and, to some extent, others—Joint Forces Command and so on—a real comparative advantage is in providing forces, maybe up to brigade level, that can deploy very rapidly to new crises. When we talk about the grey areas and limited conflicts in the European neighbourhood, which is one of the big challenges for the period ahead, what is absolutely key in responding effectively is speed.

With a capability that can only be deployed after six months, or even longer, some scenarios are relevant, such as the build-up to Desert Storm, back in the day. The scenarios that I think should matter most from a UK foreign policy point of view are likely to be much shorter notice, so I would give priority to agility and speed against a peer opponent—not simply a non-state actor but a peer opponent in a limited conflict—rather than a requirement for mass.

Others in Europe have different national priorities, Germany being an obvious example. Germany is increasing its defence budget quite sharply at the moment. A lot of that is currently being used to repair the shallow force, the hollow force, that the Germans have had for some time. Over time, however, there is a possibility of Germany making a really important contribution to the larger-scale armoured brigades, which NATO also needs, but on a longer timescale.

Q35 **Sarah Atherton:** With that in mind, looking at alliance relationships, which we mentioned before, how much weighting should this review have with our allies' defence capabilities, compared with our own? How much should we incorporate what you are talking about in this review?

Tom McKane: As I said earlier, we should think about the UK contribution to an alliance-wide capability very carefully. In the last 20, 30, 40 or 50 years, we have, as Malcolm said, tended simply to trim back across the board. For some Ministers and Prime Ministers, being able to say that we maintained a full-spectrum capability is important. But that means that you end up with relatively thin capabilities across the board. I would hope that is an issue that the review would grapple with. As we said earlier, that

raises extremely difficult questions about whether you can share capabilities across the alliance. There may be some; the threat from long-range missiles is growing. I would argue that the alliance as a whole certainly needs to do more in the space of air and missile defence. That seems to be the sort of thing that you might try to do collectively, rather than as 28, 29 or 30 individual contributions.

Professor Chalmers: Can I add a short footnote to that? We need to challenge the way in which NATO force goals are set. Too often, for all the rhetoric from Allied Command Transformation about the importance of new technologies, agility and so on, NATO's core force goals are still set almost in a cold war context—counting up brigades, divisions and so on, even if they cannot actually get to the battlefield within the first couple of years. There should be a vigorous debate as an important part of this review. One of the reasons it will take a bit longer, should it be longer, is that we need to talk to our key allies.

Q36 **John Spellar:** Could you do us a short note on the question of ballistic missile defence against proliferated missiles in line with your co-operation, and whether that defence line should be in Spain or even France in order to protect the UK from the location of missiles in north Africa?

Douglas Barrie: Can I just interject? We do that. I suggest that it also includes Cruise missile defence, because in some ways, that is the nastier and uglier question.

Q37 **Chair:** We will have to make some progress, but I wanted to ask whether we should look at the construct. You talk about NATO still in cold war mode, and Sarah mentioned the alliances and what they can and cannot do.

A hundred years ago, the RAF split away from the Army to create a new capability. France and the United States are now looking at space as a military domain. Russia and China are integrating space as part of their military doctrine. Are we Johnny-come-lately to this scene? Are we even asking the right questions, given the vulnerabilities? You take out a couple of GPS satellites, and our world would really come to a halt. You couldn't even buy a coffee at Costa Coffee—I don't know how we would cope with that.

Douglas Barrie: I will start, Tom can finish. There is a recognition that, although space was always important, it is becoming more important. To use a horrible term, it has become a contested domain. The UK is in a privileged position through its relationship with the US in this area, with access to the US national technical means. For a number of reasons, every so often it will come up whether we can continue to rely on that, and whether we should have our own capability. I think there is now a recognition that, actually, being able to bring something to the table in terms of satellite reconnaissance is valuable and money should be being spent in this area. I think you see with the creation of a number of roles—Harv Smyth has just taken up the space role in the UK—that that is being pursued. Getting into space properly is not an inexpensive exercise, even

with the emerging technologies. That said, it is certainly something that the UK needs to focus on, and I would assume it is part of the current integrated review.

Q38 **Mrs Lewell-Buck:** Good afternoon. What can be learned from the Government's previous reviews? It is clear just from listening this afternoon that for this review to be done properly and responsibly, it is going to have to be very involved and involve a lot of different people. Does anyone on the panel share my view that the timetable for the review at the moment is a bit unrealistic and too rushed?

Professor Chalmers: Yes, I think the timetable is too short. It is important for it to run roughly in line with the spending review—I get that, and I agree with the Government on that—but I do not understand why you have to have a comprehensive spending review completed in July rather than October. My humble suggestion would be that it would be better if both those reviews concluded by October.

Q39 **Chair:** Have you let the Government know that? Was that in your private secret submission?

Professor Chalmers: With another colleague, I am writing something—I am hoping it will be out next week—that will make that point, but I can make it here in a public hearing. I think that would be better; it would buy you quite a bit of space for precisely the sort of thing you are talking about. You do not have to tie every single loose end on the defence side when you get to that review—you can leave some bits for later—but you need to get the bulk of it. You need the main headings and you need, as far as possible, to resolve the main questions of priority, and then some of the details can be left for later. I think that does give you enough time.

There is sometimes a risk in having a review that is too long that it does not create enough of an incentive for Ministers to take the decisions. Sometimes, with lots of uncertainty—you will never have 100% accurate answers to any questions—you just have to bite the bullet and make the call. Of course, we have had these mini reviews. We had SDSR 2015, then the national security capability review and then the modernising defence programme. Scarcely was that over when the Government were pitched into the preparations for the integrated review. There have to be spaces in which the Ministry of Defence is not doing a review, because it takes up significant resources.

Q40 **Chair:** It is almost as if there is a team out there that is paid just to do reviews and we just have to keep them busy.

Professor Chalmers: Actually, they mostly have other jobs to do as well.

Douglas Barrie: There is a sense of review fatigue out there. People are just exhausted. That said, it seems to me that if I wanted to get to there, I wouldn't start from here. There was an opportunity at the outset to split the whole thing into two separate things, one of which was near term: "We have some funding issues. We can address these in the run-up to the CSR. Let's make sure that's all aligned." We could then have taken the

bigger question of the UK's role in the world, moved it aside and taken a deep breath. We should not have taken too long—as Malcolm pointed out, sometimes you just give yourself time to prevaricate—but we should have separated the two and said, "Here is an immediate issue. We need to sort these things now. Let's get that done. Oh, and by the way, what's our role in the world? That's a really big question. Let's take a deep breath, give ourselves 12 months, get a number of other things out of the way that are coming on to the radar, and then do a full-blown, 12-month review starting in 2021." That is obviously not where we are, but that would seem to me to have been a better approach.

Tom McKane: In the circumstances we are in, less will be more. In other words, if the review focuses on the big issues and the big questions and does not, as Malcolm said, try to resolve every last intricacy of the defence programme, that will produce a more effective result.

Q41 **Mrs Lewell-Buck:** As a follow-up to that, when the Government were recently criticised in the Lords about the rushed pace of the entire review, they said that a lot of the information was already available and ready to be presented to the review. Do you have any idea or indication what that information might be? The response was very vague.

Professor Chalmers: What is true is that the Modernising Defence Programme, which was one of the longer reviews that we have had in our recent history—it went on for quite a long time—produced a lot of studies. They were confidential studies, so I am told that they produced them, but I have not seen them. We are not starting from scratch with a number of issues, although of course new issues will be put on the table and papers will have to be updated.

It is also the case that, looking at the party manifestos, civil servants were well aware that there was going to be a review this year, and work was started on it, even if it was not formally called, "We've started the integrated review." The idea that it was only when the Prime Minister announced it a couple of weeks ago that work started is not quite right. A lot of preparation has been going on already, but at the same time, having it formally launched with a deadline focuses people's minds.

Q42 **Mrs Lewell-Buck:** When you were last before us, Professor, I think we touched briefly on defence procurement issues. This week, for the third year running, the NAO has found that the MoD equipment plan is unaffordable. How would the review best approach the challenges facing the issues in defence procurement?

Professor Chalmers: A central issue for each SDSR—all the ones that we have talked about—is making sure your forward programme is affordable, not only on the equipment side, which is almost half the total, but on the personnel side. The number of personnel and your assumption about how much they are going to get paid and whether their real wages are going to increase is a critical planning assumption, about which there is not always enough transparency. There is also what the Armed Forces Pay Review

Body decides and so on. Getting that balance right is one of the main functions of a review.

On the specific NAO study, as the NAO report said, and as the Government's equipment plan itself said, the figures in that were produced before the addition—they were based on the assumption that the extra £1.9 billion that the Government allocated to the MoD for 2021 in the 2019 spending round would not be carried over as a baseline into subsequent years. That is why it is so critical, going forward, that the MoD wins what I assume is its battle to incorporate that in the baseline. If it is incorporated in the baseline, basically, you get another £20 billion over 10 years to play with, not only for equipment but more generally. The current programme, therefore, in my estimate—I wrote something about this last year—would be affordable.

The problem is, of course, that there are new demands and new things that are not currently in that programme, which we mentioned earlier, such as space, missile defence and a range of other things where there is a demand for new investment. If you want new investment, therefore, you have to take things out. The NAO report is a bit out of date in relation to that £1.9 billion.

Q43 **Mrs Lewell-Buck:** One final question from me. You referred to review fatigue. Most of us in this place get that as well and get quite frustrated that reviews often do not yield the results that we are told they are going to yield. How can the Government ensure that any conclusions from the review are actually implemented—or is that up to them?

Tom McKane: Previous reviews have had mechanisms in place to report to the National Security Council the progress being made by individual Departments or groups of Departments on the individual measures that were adopted in the review. There are well-tried processes for doing that. I think that they suffer quite often from including too long a list of things that have to be followed up, which can encourage a bit of a tick-box culture in dealing with it. Maybe there should be a much shorter list of chunky, big conclusions that had been reached, and the actions to be taken could then be scrutinised more effectively by the National Security Council, this Committee and other Committees.

Professor Chalmers: Tom is absolutely right. I would add that we should try, if possible, to avoid the experience of the last reviews, which ended up needing supplementary reviews thereafter, because the reviewers themselves were not prepared to take hard decisions. The 2010 review was followed by the three-month exercise in 2011, because the sums did not add up in the 2010 review. The 2015 review was followed by the NSCR and the Modernising Defence Programme—again, the 2015 NSCR made entirely unrealistic assumptions about efficiency savings, which subsequently proved to be unviable. As the sums did not add up, the Treasury and the MoD agreed to put in a wedge of efficiency savings that many people felt were unrealistic, and so it proved. Maybe that is not possible, but if you are not able to grasp the issues in the way that, in the end, the last two reviews were able to, you will end up with a

supplementary review in 2021 and 2022, in which case you really will have review fatigue.

Q44 **Stuart Anderson:** I suppose it probably comes in just before Emma's question. We have had the underlying themes of time pressures, fatigue and different concerns about producing the review before we even get to the conclusions. I know Douglas made a good point about maybe doing something in 2021. What are your individual views on the possibility of this becoming a worthwhile review? If it is not worth while, and if you do not think it is possible within the timeframe, what would be your suggestion?

Tom McKane: I think that even with time constraints—but particularly if, as Malcolm was saying, it could be extended into the autumn—it should still be possible to produce a worthwhile review. The circumstances in which the country finds itself are quite different in many ways from those of 2015. If the review sets out clearly the landscape within which we are living, sets out the national interests clearly and focuses on how to work to increase the capacity of European allies, it could be a useful review. I sincerely hope that it will be.

Professor Chalmers: I think that the Prime Minister's promise to have a deep review—a radical review—is realisable. It is more important than ever that our country has a clear and realistic message in the foreign security and defence space. It shows that we are prepared to make hard decisions and that it is clearly tied to our national security interests. We are not in an easy period of our national history. At the time, periods never seem that easy. But if you go back to the '98 review, which was the last time there was a significant change not driven primarily by money—it was driven more by a shift in foreign policy—a lot of things were easier than they are now in relation to our alliance relationships, our adversaries and, not least, our economic strength. In all those variables, we are in a worse situation as a country than we were then, so it is very important that we get this right.

Q45 **Chair:** What do you think Dominic Cummings's role is in all this?

Professor Chalmers: I have no idea.

Q46 **Chair:** You have not been informed? You have not been told at all about the machine of who is doing what?

Professor Chalmers: Like others, I read what Dominic Cummings says in his blog, and he obviously has a lot of interest in defence procurement in particular. On defence procurement, he is asking a lot of the right questions actually—questions that many people have asked before. I remember Bernard Gray, a previous special adviser, had a lot of engagement with the issue.

Q47 **Chair:** It sounds like you are recommending that we should invite Dominic Cummings to appear in front of the Committee.

Professor Chalmers: I think that would be an excellent idea.

Q48 **Chair:** We will pursue that recommendation.

Tom McKane: A question that is worth exploring is the relationship between the national security staff team and the No. 10 team. They could be mutually reinforcing, but it is possible to see how it could be a less comfortable ride. Given that the Prime Minister will not have the time to personally focus on this, day in, day out, as the review progresses, who in the Cabinet is going to perform that function?

Chair: Thank you. Wayne, to deal with the hard and soft means, for our final question.

Q49 **Wayne David:** One of the things that our armed forces are renowned for being particularly good at is exerting influence and developing alliances through soft means. Quite often, in my experience, there is an underestimation of that. Is that going to be an essential part of the review? Will you consider that soft influence alongside traditional harder influences?

Professor Chalmers: It is hard to distinguish which is which. I think very often when we identify a case where the UK armed forces have had an influence, it is because they have shown that they have the capability for exerting hard power, even if they are not actually using it. Other armed forces will take our military seriously in areas where we have demonstrated excellence in what we do, so we can be advising in training and capacity building, and so on and so forth. It is not because they are more articulate or better educated. It is because we have got those national capabilities and, absolutely, it can be a force multiplier for influence.

Tom McKane: A lot of emphasis was placed on this in the 2015 review and in 2010, to a slighter lesser extent. Going back to my point about less being more, I think this is one area that we don't need to see the Government writing a lot more about.

Douglas Barrie: I suggest that soft power should be viewed as an adjunct, not a substitute. There is sometimes a risk that it is viewed as a substitute.

Q50 **Wayne David:** Nevertheless, it has an importance, which is sometimes underestimated.

Douglas Barrie: It does, but for the armed forces, it shouldn't be the focus.

Q51 **Richard Drax:** It is the iron fist in the velvet glove, isn't it? Without the iron fist, the velvet glove is absolutely pointless.

Douglas Barrie: Yes, absolutely.

Professor Chalmers: The velvet glove is not always against an opponent. It can work with an ally. You can be reaching out to help others to build their capacity, but you are much more likely to do that if you are bringing your actual capabilities into practice. Putting a couple of advisers into a

country with whom you otherwise don't have a very strong defence relationship—we should be very wary of thinking that that is going to transform that country, especially in today's multi-polar world, where most countries are developing strong relationships with a range of major powers, not all of whom are our allies.

Q52 **Chair:** Thank you very much. I have one final question. We are facing multiple complex threats over the next decade or so. If there was one single threat that we should start to focus on, what might that be? Or is it impossible to say?

Douglas Barrie: It is impossible to say, so I would say Russia.

Chair: You would say Russia.

Douglas Barrie: Yes.

Q53 **Chair:** Okay. Because Jim Mattis and Nick Carter both stipulated that the acute threat was Russia and that the longer-term threat is China.

Douglas Barrie: That is partly because in their thinking, over the next decade, Russian modernisation—it is not rearmament, because they never disarmed—is coming through. The question is what happens beyond 2030 and what happens to the Russian economy. In the near term, Russia presents a considerable challenge, certainly in the European sphere. Beyond that, in US terms, the focus is then the Pacific.

Professor Chalmers: With all these more nationalist powers like Russia, China and, indeed, some of our allies, we are learning how to cope with their current incarnation. With Russia since 2014, we as NATO have closed a lot of the most obvious gaps; we will continue to do that, and therefore at a conventional level they are less of a problem than they were, or at least we know what we want to do.

With China, we are behind in the learning curve. It is a very different sort of threat from Russia, and therefore we cannot apply the lessons from what NATO has done in relation to Russia, not least when it comes to economic penetration—there are lots of issues about that which we need to be focusing on in our industrial policy. We need to be thinking more about a range of issues. The balance between prosperity and security is obviously acute in relation to China, so we are behind the curve there.

If I were going to say one generic thing that I am most worried about in the decade to come, it would not be an extrapolation; it is not other major powers continuing on the trajectory they are on now, even if that is a worsening one. It is that radical discontinuities in the policies of other powers, for reasons that are probably more likely to be domestic than international, would suddenly create a new challenge for us that we have not been able to think through.

Tom McKane: One of the things we do know from looking at past reviews is that they are not always terribly good at predicting the future. The future, in the end, is unknowable. As Malcolm said earlier, I would focus

on the threats to the security of the UK homeland. I would be asking questions by thinking of scenarios that might emerge—horizon-scanning scenarios—and then asking whether the UK currently has the capacity to cope with them.

Chair: Whatever the integrated review says, the next 10 years are probably going to be bumpy, but rest assured that the Defence Select Committee will be scrutinising whatever happens.

Douglas, Malcolm and Tom, thank you so much for coming today and feeding in your thoughts. We will be in touch further as we progress with this, if there are any other thoughts or questions, but thank you very much indeed. Thank you to our audience for coming, as well.