



National Resilience Committee

Corrected oral evidence

Thursday 23 April 2026

10.30 am

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Members present: Baroness Coussins (The Chair); Baroness Curran; Lord Farmer; Baroness Helic; Baroness Hunter of Auchenreoch; Lord Marland; Baroness Northover; Lord Oates; Lord Peach; Lord Spellar; Baroness Winterton of Doncaster.

Evidence Session No. 7

Heard in Public

Questions 62 - 70

Witnesses

[I](#): Edward Lucas, Senior Fellow, Centre for European Policy Analysis; Deborah Haynes, journalist, Sky News; Elisabeth Braw, Senior Fellow, Atlantic Council.

Examination of witnesses

Edward Lucas, Deborah Haynes and Elisabeth Braw.

Q62 **The Chair:** Good morning and thank you very much for coming to help us with this important inquiry. I remind you that this is a public session and we are being broadcast live. In a couple of days you will receive a transcript of the session so that you have the opportunity to make any minor corrections of any inaccuracies. Please also feel free to follow up in writing afterwards, if you would like to add anything to what you say today. We have a lot of questions for you. Before you start giving your first answer, perhaps you could each introduce yourselves so that we have that on record.

I will kick off with the first question. Are there any particular criteria or factors that editors take into account when they are deciding whether or how to report on a potential or active threat, crisis or emergency? More broadly, do the media have a particular role or responsibility in building national resilience, scrutinising the Government or identifying risks early, perhaps through investigative journalism? I know that is a big question. Perhaps we could start with Deborah.

Deborah Haynes: Good morning, I am the security and defence editor at Sky News. I have been a journalist for almost 30 years and since 2004, when I first went to report in Iraq, I have had a particular focus on defence, security, conflict, and the evolution, over that time, of the character of war and of the threat, which I try to bring into the work that I do. I used to be the defence editor for the *Times* before I moved to Sky, so I have had a lot of experience of being in a media organisation covering crises and conflict.

On your first question about how editors and news organisations deal with coverage of a crisis or an emergency, sometimes it is very obvious that there has been a critical incident. For example, from the information we were receiving, it was obvious early on that the UK and the US very much believed that Russia was going to launch its full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Speaking from a Sky perspective, we immediately dedicated a lot of resource to ensuring that we could cover that conflict as expansively and with as much depth as possible, which included forward deploying teams on the ground as well as all the architecture that you need back home to be able to deliver daily news 24 hours a day, including breaking news.

However, at other times, it is not always immediately obvious just how critical an emergency is, especially when you are talking about hybrid or cyber attacks. I remember the Skripal poisoning; I was at the *Times* when that happened. Initially, we did not really know what was going on. During the first few hours you begin to understand, just from the response of the emergency services, that this is not an ordinary incident but something far more critical. You rely very heavily on contacts within

government being able to speak to journalists and explain that this is something different—something of national and international significance.

Covering defence and security is the bread and butter of trusted journalists in these news organisations, and we have a good relationship with our bosses. I have had many conversations in which I have spoken to a senior line manager and said, "This is hugely important. This is something that we need to make space for". Because of those relationships and the fact that we have been doing this for a long time, people listen and make space for it. The bottom line is that it is not always obvious, but when it becomes obvious, specialist journalists are in place who are able to ensure that our bosses understand. Senior editors at Sky, and at the *Times*, are very grounded and experienced and understand national emergencies, crisis and war, so it is usually a very easy conversation to get their attention.

On the second part of your question, the media plays a critical role in helping to raise national awareness of the importance of building resilience. Thankfully, the Cold War ended but because of that, this subject has unfortunately become more of an alien idea in the UK. People are not familiar with the idea of the need to be resilient. They talk about resilience to floods, and there are great systems in place to deal with warnings, indicators and individual responsibility if you are living in an area at risk of flooding. There is much greater awareness about cyber threats and the need to make sure that you constantly have anti-virus software on your computers and tablets. But it is different when it comes to NATO's Article 3, preparedness for war and transition to war—all that was contained in the Government War Book, which is something that at Sky News we have done a lot of reporting on. Unfortunately, that has been widely forgotten. That is something that I know that, through lots of our reporting, news organisations now are increasingly focused on doing and trying to help raise awareness about this really important need to relearn the past.

Edward Lucas: Thanks very much for the invitation. I have been a journalist now for more than 40 years, working for the BBC, the *Economist*, and other publications. I have been a war correspondent and foreign correspondent. I have also done senior editing jobs. The first thing to say in answering your question is there is never enough time. There is never enough space on the page or airtime, and there is never enough money. You are always trying to compromise work within these constraints. Secondly, it is a competitive environment. It is competitive within whatever news organisation you are working for and between news organisations. It is hard to be unfashionable and you rapidly get a reputation as a crank if you start pushing stuff that may be completely true—in 10 years' time everyone will say you were completely right but that does not help you if you lose your job at the time.

A good example of this is our coverage of Russia, where we were, throughout the 90s, convinced that Russia was a friend and a good emerging market. We were convinced that Putin was a promising

development. As one of the two or three foreign correspondents in Moscow who took a different line, I got the full-on pressure from the British establishment to shut up because I was bad for business. So my final point is that journalists are part of a wider ecosystem. They work in an environment where advertisers have their priorities, where Governments have their priorities, where customers—people who consume the news—have their priorities. You may not like the way in which the media is covering something but usually the blame should not land on the media. The media reflect the society and the Government that they cover.

Elisabeth Braw: Thank you, Chair, and for the invitation. I congratulate all the members on being members of this committee, which is so important. We are all delighted that it has been established. I am a senior fellow with the Atlantic Council. A long time ago I was a journalist but, for the past more than a decade, I have been an academic focusing on new national security threats and societal resilience. In this period, it has been fascinating to watch the interest grow alongside the threats and acts of aggression, which are now growing rapidly. So the committee is desperately needed.

When it comes to news media, what I should add to what Deborah and Edward have said is another side of the reporting. They both addressed the need for more reporting, but there is the other side, which is: how much can you report?

If you look at the Cold War, there were arrangements or agreements between Governments and news media about what was acceptable to report. In some cases, those agreements still exist. That was an arrangement that I do not remember but I know existed called the grey slip, whereby the Government instructed newspaper editors via a grey slip that it would be a good idea not to report about a particular matter. I would like to know to what extent such arrangements still exist in various countries. Obviously, they are classified and it is hard to know from the public domain but that will become more important as the aggression against our countries increases. The temptation exists for news media to report as much as they can, which is their job. But there may be a risk that sensitive information then gets out that that would harm national security. So that will become increasingly important, and I hope the committee will look at it.

Q63 **Baroness Curran:** Thanks very much for attending today. We really value your contribution. The term “fake news” has become fairly ubiquitous and seems to be undermining trust in legitimate journalism and news communication. I was struck by the term “crank” because over the past decades it has been associated with some activism and climate change, and has been undermined. How do you balance? How do you get the facts out there while still maintaining the demand for balance and independence, whereby you can communicate clearly what is happening and you have clear evidence to support that, but you get attacked because it is not balanced or independent?

Edward Lucas: We could all sit down and do a master's degree in this, and we would not be done by the end of the year. It is a huge subject. I do not like the term "fake news". It has become just an epithet used for news we do not like. The key thing that has happened is that technology has removed the media's gatekeeping function. You used to have three buttons on your telly and half a dozen newspapers on the newsstand, and that was pretty much it. Now, from an iPhone on the other side of the world, you can run a global disinformation campaign. There are all sorts of things we can say about that.

I would start with why we privilege anonymity so much. It was a disaster when, for example, the social media platform X removed its blue tick system, which meant you had a rough idea that when you saw that someone was tweeting as Baroness Winterton of Doncaster, that really was Baroness Winterton of Doncaster. As it is, in the time we have been talking, I could have set up an account on X claiming to be this committee and you would be then faced with the wearisome business of trying to show that I was not.

This is the result of technological and social change. We are going to have to live with it. The best thing to do is to make sure that your strong media outlets, such as Sky News, get a fair crack of the whip in that competitive environment and a chance to show that they are real. That starts perhaps, if you are running the Pentagon, with making sure that your reputable defence correspondents have passes. That means they can get into the Pentagon and go to news conferences, which, I am afraid, is not the case at the moment.

The Chair: Deborah and Elisabeth, do either of you have anything to add to that or can we leave it?

Deborah Haynes: Just to say that on the "fake news" label, I totally agree with Edward. It gets thrown against news that you do not like and creates this incredibly hostile environment in which to be a journalist. I wonder whether my young self would have even wanted to be a journalist. I always wanted to be a journalist ever since I was about six years old and have been so privileged to be able to have this profession. But it can be so hostile out there. You get attacked online, you get attacked in the street, and you are just trying to do your job—especially when information gets weaponised. It fits with what Elisabeth was saying about the information is part of the weapon system that hostile states will use. There needs to be a fundamental understanding inside newsrooms about how information can be weaponised and what you can do to counter that.

Obviously, at the moment, we are in this period where it is not peace but it is not war. It is the grey zone in between. God forbid, but if it was going to escalate to the UK being in a war, you would, I imagine, see the same kind of media restrictions that are in place in Ukraine, for example, where there is tight control over the release of information that would give the enemy, Russia, an advantage—which is understandable in a war. But in the UK at the moment, that is not in place, of course. We are an

open liberal democracy. In that space, that freedom can be weaponised against us to undermine our democracy, which is a really difficult area because you want to retain that freedom. But at the same time, you do not want to be exploited. So it is difficult.

Elisabeth Braw: This is an opportunity to give people agency. How are consumers of news from traditional news outlets and social media supposed to be able to verify what the facts are? They have not been equipped with it. That is why I think that the people who probably have the most potential to be able to withstand so-called fake news or inaccurate information are young children, because they are likely to be taught information literacy. I hope that becomes part of the curriculum in England and Wales, and indeed across the UK. With that, you do not have to rely on others to report the correct facts; you can have the certainty that you will be able to ascertain for yourself whether or not what you are consuming is accurate. By the way, I would love to see something like an annual competition for 17 year-olds to spot the falsehoods in selected social media posts. I think we would discover that teenagers are a lot better equipped to spot falsehoods than we thought. But it starts with information literacy.

Baroness Hunter of Auchenreoch: You mentioned the grey slip. Is that like a D notice?

Elisabeth Braw: Yes. In Sweden it was called a grey slip.

Q64 **Lord Spellar:** We have focused a bit on disinformation but one of the problems for the Government in all these situations is that they have to make decisions with inadequate time and insufficient information. By definition, they will get a number of those wrong, and then the media piles in on the person who has made the decision, talking about U-turns and gaffes, demanding resignations and all the rest of it. If that leads to people being reticent about making decisions, the system seizes up and your enemy has an advantage. How can we get beyond that?

Edward Lucas: The media always operates on the basis of where an event fits into a pattern. If you see that someone is basically highly competent, trustworthy and likeable, but they have done something wrong, you report that differently from how you would if it is the latest in a catalogue of disasters. In Finland, national security reporting starts on the basis that the Finnish state is there to protect everyone and that the people making decisions are doing so with the national interest at heart. I would not say that it is slavishly supportive, but when you talk to Finnish journalists you are left in no doubt that they care about national security. That is the result of 70 years of hard work to make people feel that defence is everyone's priority. I do not think we have done that, and the very sceptical, mistrustful media we have is partly the result of fragmentation in other parts of our public life.

The Chair: We must move on now to Baroness Helic, because we have a lot of questions to get through and I am aware we have you only for one hour, max.

Q65 Baroness Helic: Thank you for your answers so far. My question is very broad, so you can say almost anything—but if you do not say the right thing, I will come back to you. How can resilience be defined, and how might this shape or inform discussions across the country about tackling national and global risks and challenges?

Deborah Haynes: That is a really good question because, if you make it too broad, you risk losing people. From my point of view, it is about rebuilding resilience around the Article 3 ability to defend and deter an attack on the home front, which is part of the national security strategy. This is a government document that says in black and white that the UK needs to be prepared for the “possibility of” a “direct threat”. It uses the word “threat” rather than “attack” on the home front, as part of a “wartime scenario”. That is the Government’s national security strategy.

The Chief of the Defence Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Richard Knighton, whom I interviewed a couple of weeks ago, confirmed to me that the Government, led by the Cabinet Office in this case, are producing a modern version of the War Book. That is a huge shift in understanding and in what is being done behind the scenes in government. It signals an awareness that we do not have the resilience as a nation to be able to withstand in the worst of crises. We are talking about a direct attack on the home front.

We ran a war-game for a podcast series where we simulated a Russian armed attack on the UK and how the UK would respond. The scenario had ballistic and cruise missiles landing at key strategic sites across the country and on Oxford Street in London. It exposed a lack not just of military resilience in terms of air defences and the capacity of the Armed Forces to fight a high-intensity war for any meaningful length of time but of societal resilience.

In response to your question, in this context, the Ministry of Defence understands resilience. It is relearning it and producing its own national defence plan, obviously in co-ordination with NATO. But what is missing is the societal resilience piece, which requires a huge shift in mindset. It means individual families having sensible conversations about being ready to survive without electricity, running water or easy access to the internet for a period of 72 hours—three days. It is about that kind of communication and understanding.

That is the bottom level, and then up from that is a greater force. We used to have a civil defence force. There have been conversations about training civilians to have a role in the civil defence side of things—be that protecting critical infrastructure or enabling extra capacity for the emergency services and the Armed Forces. There have been words but, so far, no action, so we need a conversation on that side of things. At the moment, there is an awareness that this needs to happen, and conversations are taking place behind closed doors, but there is no resource to turn that action into meaningful change. So far, although there have been attempts at it, there has been no national dialogue or conversation on defence and resilience. Your committee is part of the

conversation and Lord Robertson made an incredible intervention last week, but it is happening in a piecemeal way and in a vacuum where, unfortunately, the Cabinet Office seems to be fairly silent at the moment.

Edward Lucas: Resilience is partly about redundancy. Your system of committee room bookings is resilient because if there was a water leak here, you would be able to find another room. Bad stuff will happen, whether it is accidents, hostile states, terrorists or whatever, and the first question is: does life go on? The second question is: can you control the damage? If there was a mass casualty event, would the NHS be overwhelmed? Will people die in agony on stretchers in the street? The result of resilience is that it builds confidence and cohesion. If people think the system is going to work, they can carry on and do their job and help other people do theirs, and you do not end up in a "serve key purpose" sort of world.

Resilience also acts as a deterrent. I refer to Finland again, which has such fantastic resilience in everything from its critical national infrastructure to its society. It is a very hard target to attack; you could spend a lot of money attacking Finland and you would not get anywhere. In fact, last year, the Russians spent an entire year conducting an extensive information operation against Finland, which had absolutely no effect at all. In fact, I suspect that nobody on the committee even noticed it; it was barely reported inside Finland.

Resilience acts as a deterrent, but it does not come free: it costs money, time and convenience. We will all have to make big changes if we want to do this, and I am afraid that it is too late. We are already experiencing not just threats but attacks. Even if we started today, right now, to rebuild the sort of resilience that we had in this country decades ago, or that we have in regard to some other threats, such as terrorism and cyber, there would still be an alarming gap. Russia and China have already planted stuff on our networks. They have proxies roaming our streets, they have sabotage devices already planted and they can attack us when they want. There is not much we can do to defend ourselves, so we put a huge emphasis on our deterrent, which unfortunately is also lacking.

Elisabeth Braw: You asked about the definition of resilience. That is the ability to withstand and recover from damage. It is the same for an individual as it is for a company, an organisation or a nation. That really matters. It is what you have to do when harm occurs, but it is better to have that ability before the damage occurs, so that you can communicate and signal to those wishing to cause that harm that you have the abilities, so that they do not try it in the first place. That is why Finland has been doing what Edward has described.

For the UK, as a free and open society, it is resilience building that is required, in lots of different areas. With healthcare, how would we treat a situation in which the NHS perhaps did not get its medical supplies from China? We know what happened during Covid, when those supplies were curtailed. What if it did not get its generic drugs from India? What if

countries whose citizens serve in the NHS decided to call those citizens home? What if the Armed Forces had to compete with the NHS for medical supplies, drugs and so forth?

That is regarding a crisis situation but, before the crisis situation occurs, you should ideally be able to communicate that and can say, "We have thought about it and have a plan, so do not even try it because the benefit is not going to be worth your cost". That is where there is enormous opportunity because then it is not just the NHS that knows about it but lots of companies in the UK. They want to be part of the solution because they do not want to appear so vulnerable that somebody might try to attack them or harm them in other ways.

Q66 **Baroness Hunter of Auchenreoch:** I thank all you journalists and you, Deborah, with the podcast, for keeping this issue in front of us all. The threat and risk to this country is great but it is not noticed.

Deborah, you raised the 2026 survey conducted by Public First which said that 40% of the public think that we are going to be at war within five years' time, but also that 42% of us feel no compulsion to do anything about it. Edward thinks that we should be much more co-operative, that the media should be more co-operative with each other and that Government and the media should liaise more. How do we galvanise everyone on preparedness and resilience without causing alarm?

Deborah Haynes: From a personal perspective, as that is what drives me at the moment, it is quite emotional. I have three children, I am a middle-aged mum and a civilian but, at a younger age, I lived in Iraq and covered the Iraq war. I saw a population of civilians under fire living with the aftermath of the US-led invasion, which triggered that horrific sectarian carnage, the terrorist attacks, the daily car bombs. Mums would be sending their children to school not even knowing whether their children would come home again. I would come back to the UK for two or three weeks after several weeks over in Iraq. People of my age—I will be 50 this year—are now in positions of seniority across Government, across industry, across society, yet as adults we do not remember this in any meaningful way. It is through no fault of our own, but this struck me. We do not remember the Cold War. We were not adults during the Cold War. We have memories of our grandparents speaking about fighting in the Second World War, but we have no living memory of what it is like not to take our security for granted.

Having been exposed to a country such as Iraq and having spent time in Afghanistan, Libya and, more recently, a lot of time in Ukraine, I have had the unfortunate experience of understanding how, if you do not have security as a society, there is no point in having conversations about education, policy, hospitals or even the economy—because nothing matters if you do not have security. We have lost that in the UK. It was covering the full-scale invasion of Ukraine that brought it home to me in a much more powerful way, because it is in Europe—it is on our doorstep. I can remember being in Kyiv on 23 February 2022, the eve of the full-

scale war. I was reporting in the street and standing outside this coffee shop. It was a beautiful coffee shop with balloons outside, with middle-aged mums like me having coffee inside. The very next day, their country was in a full-scale war and their lives were completely upturned.

People left, many people went and fought, others totally transformed their lives, working in supermarkets under fire, working in power stations under fire, all part of this front line. It meant for me in the UK that if we do not wake up to the reality, as Edward and Elisabeth have said so eloquently, that resilience is about spare capacity and deterrence, then it will be too late. A general once said to me that he fears that the only time that the UK will understand the importance of national defence and wider national resilience is when the attack happens, which will then be too late.

That was the driving motivation behind the podcast—to bring to life the reality of the threat so that we can change. Yet we are not changing. It is so frustrating. The danger now is that the rhetoric that you are hearing from Government Ministers is strong but not backed up by meaningful action. The public would be understandably right to think that things are happening, but they are not, so it is even more dangerous. The threat is growing, the rhetoric is getting more convincing, yet the reality is still woefully inadequate.

Edward Lucas: I was born in 1962 and remember the start of the IRA bombing campaign and the absolute shock that, for the first time since the blitz and the V2s, bombs were going off on the British mainland. We did change. Our state took on new powers and our behaviour changed. Nobody now leaves a bag unattended in a public place, because it is a very irresponsible thing to do. We had this mixture of governmental and societal change on that.

We have also seen it a bit on cyber. People used to think that cyber security was something frightfully complicated; now “think before you click” ideas have begun to penetrate and we have the outward-facing bit of GCHQ, the National Cyber Security Centre. GCHQ was so secret 30 years ago that you could barely mention its name. Now we know that they are keeping us safe. We can do this.

However, the most important thing to galvanise the public is that the Government have to tell the truth, which they do not. They do not talk about the attacks that are going on all the time in this country because, if they did, they would be faced with two questions—how did you let this happen, and what are you going to do about it? The answers to those are extremely embarrassing.

Elisabeth Braw: The answer is for the UK Government to appoint a junior Minister in charge of non-kinetic national security threats. That would allow the Government to have one person who communicates the threats facing this country on a daily basis and who is as transparent as possible about it. Baroness Hunter said that people do not know about it. They do not know about it because it is not communicated. It is

communicated when a news organisation decides to mention it or when Ken McCallum holds his annual speech, but otherwise people do not understand what is happening on a daily basis. How could they?

If this Government, or any Government in the UK, had a junior Minister in charge of non-kinetic national security threats—that person should be the best communicator on the Labour Benches we would have somebody who could communicate on a daily basis: “This is what is happening, don’t be alarmed, we are aware of what is unfolding, what could unfold and we are doing something about it”.

Ideally, something should be done about it as well, so that that person had something to communicate. But, as things stand, and this comes to Lord Spellar’s question, people are cynical because they see bits and pieces, fragments of news in various places. They conclude that the Government are doing nothing. I am convinced that this is a career opportunity for a talented communicator—perhaps not for a member of this committee, since you have already paid your dues in government and similar organisations, but for a member of the new intake.

The Chair: If we are going to get through everybody’s questions, both members and witnesses must be brief, please.

Q67 **Baroness Northover:** Part of this has been answered. Without a direct military threat to the UK, how can the public be encouraged to develop the same level of preparedness and resilience as we see in the Nordic countries? Edward, you mentioned the Nordic countries in particular. Can you perhaps expand a little on what we might learn and do, therefore, that learns from what the Nordic countries have managed to do.

Edward Lucas: I hesitate to answer that, given that I have the most distinguished Nordic presence in this country sitting next to me in Elisabeth from Sweden.

Baroness Northover: She can sweep up everything after you.

Edward Lucas: I should say it is not just Nordic, but Baltic. In some respects, the Baltics are ahead of the Nordics; and some of the Nordics are severely lagging and having to catch up, and not doing a good job catching up. Finland is an exemplar. Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia also have important things to contribute. There are a couple of things that we could do at little cost, starting today. One is to introduce Finnish-style national defence courses. Those are three to four-week off-site courses for senior decision-makers across the whole of society—Government, business, the lot. They get together and work through a difficult scenario whereby they have to work together and are briefed on the threats facing this country.

I have suggested trying to do it here. The immediate problem we run into is classification. The sort of things that they are briefed on are the sort of things you cannot be briefed on without a security clearance. I am not talking about the ambassador to Washington security clearance. We would have to reshape our system a bit. It comes at a cost in time. These

are senior people with busy schedules. They take time out. But the Finns have been doing this for decades. The result is that they have thousands of people who each know people outside their own silo and have a good idea of what sort of threats they could face. We are quite good at training people. We have the Royal College of Defence Studies and other things. We could start doing that quite quickly. It will not come in time for the shock heading towards us, but better late than never.

I should also say one other thing on soft target protection. If you are a think tank, a journalist or a campaigner doing something in Finland or in one of these other countries where you get on to the list of the Russians or Chinese and they do not like you, you get looked after in a way that you do not get looked after in this country.

Elisabeth Braw: One measure that could easily be adopted and adapted by the UK is something like the Swedish list of companies that are critical in a crisis situation. They are called K companies, but it could be any label. However, the point is that they are critical. That list is constantly maintained, more so during the Cold War, but now once again. That means that they have special provisions. For example, if a key manufacturing company, a key bank or whatever would need to be able to operate without disruption in a crisis situation, they should be set up accordingly in peace time. If that costs more, it is subsidised by the Government. But you have to have that list and to figure out beforehand what the companies are—specific sectors and specific companies within each sector.

It is an incredibly powerful thing to communicate to the world that you have figured that out and that your economy will keep going no matter what because, if even if the worst were to come, you have underground manufacturing sites for your key manufacturing companies. It all starts with having that list. With the list comes constant communication with executives. Some 10 years ago, it would have been a difficult task to go to CEOs and chairmen of privately-owned companies or listed companies, especially in this country and say, “Well, you have to be a part of the national effort.” Now, I do not think it is such a difficult task because they are all aware that they are the new front line and that they cannot fully defend themselves on their own, and that the best defence they have is as part of the national defence.

Baroness Northover: It would be like it is in Japan, where every crane is registered as to where it is, just in case there is an earthquake?

Elisabeth Braw: Exactly. On that note, I will not be long, since you mentioned timekeeping, but there is so much that that we can learn in the national security space from earthquake zones. I got my start in resilience by living in San Francisco, which is an earthquake zone.

Deborah Haynes: I found that really interesting because we always rightly focus on the Nordics, the Baltic states and their incredible resilient population and philosophy. They are really close to the threat, so it is understandable why they would be so much more mindful in their

society, and be so much more willing to adopt these different measures. But it is interesting that in the last two years the Netherlands and Canada are two countries that you could say have let their guard down since the end of the Cold War and reaped the benefits of the peace dividend, and are far away enough from Russia not to feel the threat breathing down their necks in terms of being next door, and both those countries have reinstituted national resilience programmes. The Netherlands has a very ambitious programme. It is just starting to build up basic training for civilians; the same in Canada. In the Netherlands, there is even a freedom tax, I think it is called, that they are using to fund this increase in defence and resilience. Is it not interesting that those two countries have taken that next step, which I hope would help motivate our Government to do the same?

The Chair: That is really interesting. Thank you.

Q68 Baroness Winterton of Doncaster: Can I take you to the issue of democratic resilience? We have heard a lot about misinformation during elections, particularly in countries like Moldova. There is some evidence of this occurring and there is a debate, obviously, particularly about social media, between what we can do to counter misinformation and whether there is a tension between that and freedom of speech. There is not a lot of reporting about this issue. To what extent do you feel there should be greater emphasis on interference in elections and the potential for it, and how it might be countered through the media, particularly social media? What role do you think journalism might have to play in that?

Edward Lucas: The reason you do not read a lot about this is that there are rich, powerful people who put money into our political system for their own purposes and are very litigious. We have things called SLAPPs, which stands for strategic lawsuit against public participation. You can have a story that is completely copper-bottomed. You will win if it comes to court, but the cost of going to court will bankrupt you or your news organisation. Therefore, you either do not publish it or you retract it. This happens again and again. There is an admirable organisation called the Anti-SLAPP Coalition which deals with that—or fails to deal with it because the Government have not found parliamentary time for it. That is a major problem.

Behind that is the broader question of dirty money. We need legislation to keep dirty money, anonymous money and crypto money out of our political system. At the moment, it is wide open for people who want to buy influence or even, dare I say, a place in the House of Lords. I was the first witness to the Intelligence and Security Committee Russia inquiry, and I was able to tell it things that I cannot tell you here about things that Russia gets up to. One of the things that came out of its belated Russia report is that the Security Service, MI5, is very hesitant about doing this. It has not really looked at Russian and Chinese influence in our politics because it is very nervous about running operations that come close to live politics. We are wide open to this and it is far more than just a bit of disinformation on social media.

Deborah Haynes: What Edward says, on steroids—I completely agree. It is a very difficult area to counter. There is reporting on it, so I would push back on that sense that we are not reporting on it at all. There is greater awareness of it, which is slowly growing, but it is incredibly difficult to navigate the potential legalities around certain things that you know to be true, but which are very difficult to prove.

It is about educating. I am not plugging Sky News, but I did a podcast series a few years ago, “Into the Grey Zone”, which was an attempt to make people understand how countries can attack you. It will not be just through bombs and bullets but through information campaigns—“hack and leak” is a big one to think about. The FSB hacked an organisation, the Integrity Initiative, which was run by a very esteemed expert, and leaked the information. This was directly designed to discredit and destroy an effective counter-disinformation campaign that was doing good work for the Foreign Office. It is a dangerous, corrosive weapon.

Five years ago, there was a huge hole in the government side of things regarding who was responsible for dealing with it. Is it MI5? Is it GCHQ? Is it the NCSC? Is it the NCA? Now MI5 does seem to be stepping up more into this space and is willing to do more to counter hostile-state information campaigns. However, it is a huge effort and MI5 lacks the resource to deal with it at the scale that it is being done to us. It is a massive vulnerability that there needs to be greater awareness of.

Elisabeth Braw: I have two quick points. First, as in some other countries, there should be a government entity that monitors disinformation and calls it out. It could be that junior Minister whom I would like to see appointed who calls it out, so that people are aware of it.

Baroness Winterton of Doncaster: The Electoral Commission does do a bit of that.

Elisabeth Braw: Yes, but what if we had an organisation or even a part of an organisation that does that comprehensively? It would have to be only regarding disinformation emanating from abroad—otherwise you would get into complicated conversations about stifling public debate at home. There is enough disinformation emanating from abroad for that entity to be very busy. We should call it out.

I would also love to see leading influencers invited to see how established news organisations work. If you do not know how they work, you are likely to suspect them of not covering the things that you are interested in for nefarious reasons. If you were invited to see how a news conference works you would realise that they go through a lot of topics and choose the ones that are most likely to get attention, and that there is nothing nefarious about it. News organisations need to become more open to the public and say, “This is how we work. You don’t have to worry that we are burying news, it is just a competitive environment”.

Q69 **Lord Peach:** Hello everybody, it is nice to see you again. We are an open

economy as well as being open politically. To speculate slightly on the current situation in the Middle East, maybe we are seeing the consequences of a “just in time” economic system and the lack of resilience in our global economy. What lessons are you drawing from your experience and knowledge about that, and do you have any thoughts for us regarding the military? We all know what was in the SDR, but the world has now revealed itself in an even darker way. Joining us in our deliberations, is it time to energise the thought of civil defence in the UK?

Elisabeth Braw: As you were speaking, I thought back to the earthquake in Japan in 2011 and the Fukushima incident. I remember it vividly. It caused lots of damage, but one aspect which was fascinating was that the Japanese factory that makes the glittery stuff that goes into the paint on cars was damaged and had to close because of the earthquake and the tsunami. This meant that cars requiring that glittery paint could not be delivered as the glittery paint was missing. It was missing because there was only one company and one factory making this glittery component for car paint.

At the time, it seemed to be, “An earthquake doesn’t happen that often, so we don’t have to worry about single sourcing”. Now we do have to worry about single sourcing. The upside is that companies have discovered that they must worry about single sourcing. They are largely not single sourcing any more. It is more expensive to have dual sources—a back-up source and two contracts—but it is a lot better than the alternative, which is disruptions.

The upside that companies are discovering to using dual sources, essentially multiplying their contracts, is that you can then show your potential clients and customers, and your shareholders, that you can keep operating in the face of disruption. That is an incredible competitive advantage which more and more companies are realising that they can capitalise on.

Obviously, there is nothing positive in talking about disruption, especially disruption caused by war, but if you are a company, you must be able to show that you are competitive under any circumstances. That is the advantage of building resilience into your plans. Even though it is more expensive for your customers at any given moment, if you build resilience into your strategy your clients and customers can be reasonably certain that you will deliver what they are paying for, regardless of circumstances.

Edward Lucas: The model that all businesspeople understand is insurance. You insure against risks which would be crippling if the event happened. Moving from a “just in time” model to a “just in case” model is expensive, but it is a kind of insurance. We could do a bit more to highlight fragility and to ensure that companies that wilfully go for low-cost fragility are exposed a bit. You can imagine a ratings system for resilience that you could bring in.

We already do this with modern slavery. If you are any kind of supplier, you must fill in a modern slavery thing. There is plenty that we can do. It needs leadership from the top. When the Government visibly do not take resilience seriously in their own doings, it will be very hard to persuade businesses to take on the cost and inconvenience of doing so.

Deborah Haynes: On the military front, it was interesting watching this all play out, albeit horrific. Seeing the Navy struggling to get a single warship out of Portsmouth was the illustration of hollowed-out Armed Forces being played out in the middle of a war. Thankfully, it was not a war on our shores but one that we were having to respond to. That cut through into the public consciousness. Unfortunately, it cut through to Donald Trump's consciousness too. The public were being made to understand what it means to have a hollow force and understand the risk that we as a country are holding. A lot of the public do not have to think about defence. They would understand if they could not get a hospital appointment, but they do not understand what the risk is if their Army does not have enough bullets to last a single day in battle.

Therefore, the sight of HMS "Dragon" struggling to leave port cut through in a way that should be capitalised on by defence. Unfortunately, you are still having those meaningless soundbites from the Ministers when they talk about moving at pace to get their defence investment plan rather than gripping it and saying, "Yes, this is urgent. We need to fundamentally shift out mindset, fundamentally accelerate the plan around the defence review". It is still business as usual, which is just not good enough.

Edward Lucas: A defence readiness Bill would be the first step towards this.

Lord Spellar: Can we recommend that saying "at pace" should be a disciplinary matter for any Minister?

Q70 **Lord Oates:** Thank you for a fascinating evidence session. If you had only one recommendation to give the Government on preparedness and resilience, what would be your absolute priority?

Deborah Haynes: Elisabeth talked about having a junior Minister to talk about hybrid, but because this is an all-of-nation effort, you need a National Resilience Minister, a Secretary of State for National Resilience, who has the authority to ensure that all government departments are part of this. The Cabinet Office is leading on this and there is no visible heft behind it. Having a Secretary of State whose job was resilience would give it elevated importance and a whole-of-government understanding of it—and maybe then we would get somewhere.

Elisabeth Braw: I will come back to my junior Minister, but it needs a Minister at any level: one who owns the portfolio.

Edward Lucas: I would do some snap exercises and imagine that we had had a massive hostile-state cyber attack or some other really bad, disruptive event. It would show how woefully ill-prepared we are. That

would be the only point of doing it; as Lord Peach will know, the point of military exercises is not to show off but to test yourself. We should start testing ourselves. We would find out how bad things are, and then we might do something about it. At the moment, we are living in la-la land, pretending that what we are doing is brilliant.

The Chair: We have made it, at pace or otherwise. Thank you all very much indeed, it has been very helpful, and we are very grateful for your time.

Edward Lucas: We wish you success in your efforts.

The Chair: Thank you.