HOUSE OF COMMONS

Defence Committee

Oral evidence: Reserve Forces Review 2030

Tuesday 15 June 2021

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Watch the meeting

Members present: Mr Tobias Ellwood (Chair); Stuart Anderson; Sarah Atherton; Martin Docherty-Hughes; Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck; Gavin Robinson; John Spellar; Derek Twigg.

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Witnesses

I: Elisabeth Braw, Resident Fellow, American Enterprise Institute, and Dr Patrick Bury, Senior Lecturer in Security, University of Bath.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Elisabeth Braw and Dr Patrick Bury.

Chair: Welcome to this Defence Committee hearing to consider aspects of the Armed Forces and the Reservists. We are delighted to welcome two witnesses: Elizabeth Braw, resident fellow of the American Enterprise Institute, and Dr Patrick Bury, senior lecturer in security at the University of Bath. Welcome to both of you. We are delighted to have you here this afternoon on such an important subject.

The Reservists were created in their current form under Sir Richard Haldane in 1908. They have transformed and moved forward in sizeable chunks, but probably not on the scale that we will see today simply because of what they offer, bringing their civilian skills to the fore as the character of conflict changes. I really look forward to discussing these issues. Stuart Anderson will ask the first question.

Q1 **Stuart Anderson:** Hello to both witnesses. It is nice to see you again, Elizabeth. Can you start by setting the scene and tell us what you think the current state of the Reserves is now?

Elisabeth Braw: Thank you, Stuart, and thanks to the Committee for the invitation. We are on the cusp of a significant change in which the Reserves will, I think, gain a new and more prominent role. Until now, from the beginning that the Chair just mentioned, Reserves in the UK and elsewhere have been almost an afterthought. They have been the resource that the Armed Forces turn to when they need to beef up their numbers in crises. As we all know, they are often dismissively referred to as "weekend warriors". I think that that is about to change, and that is also obvious in Lord Lancaster's excellent report by him and the Committee, because the threats against our society are changing, and with that the needs of the Armed Forces.

The Regular Armed Forces are very good at what they do, but they have a subset of expertise and skills. Until now, the weekend warrior skillset has been a back-up to the regular force. But Lord Lancaster's report makes it clear that the UK can benefit from the additional skills that the Reserves have in their civilian lives, and that makes this report so incredibly important. I hope many steps will be taken as a result of it. It can really transform the skills available to the Armed Forces.

Q2 **Stuart Anderson:** Thank you. Patrick, do you have anything to expand on or to add?

Dr Bury: Thanks for having me; it is a great honour.

Stuart Anderson: It is a pleasure to have you here.

Dr Bury: In terms of the report and where we are so far, this is an "up and out" report, as it recognises itself, so it is big on vision. I completely agree with Elisabeth: it has identified enormous potential for change. This

all ties in with the integrated operating concept and the changing nature of conflict. It is very positive for me. The big thing for me, having studied this quite closely historically, and the last attempt to reform the Reserves very closely, is that we are in a so much better place. If you look at the list of engagement on the back of that report, it is 136 pages. There are some very good forward-leaning ideas there, which we can get into the nitty-gritty on, but crucially it has happened alongside, and with what looks like really quite close liaison with, the other transformative processes that are going on. It isn't a bolt-on or an afterthought, and it hasn't turned into a political football. Those are all really positive and encouraging signs, so that would be my opening remark.

Q3 **Stuart Anderson:** Could you expand on what you think the current state of readiness of our Reserves force is today to meet any surge requirement that we might have, and how that will change the outcome based on this review, in your view?

Dr Bury: I can to a degree. The readiness is based at unit level—initial operating capability and full operating capability. That is a discussion really for internal management within the MoD and yourselves to get to the nitty-gritty of exactly where we are. I was asked by the Army to look at how the biggest part of FR20, which was the outsourcing of formerly regular logistics and electrical mechanical engineering capability to the Reserves, would work. My research showed that the transformation would take longer to reach full operating capability capacity than envisaged. That is what I have seen: for some of these units, it has taken longer for them to get to where they need to be. Whether they will ever get there is another question because we come to issues of retention, training, etc.

I think what will emerge is a different picture granularly across the country, depending on the unit, about where they are and how they can support the room on task—the deployment schedule, which was last refined in Army 2020 Refine. That ability again is a conversation that we can come back to. I think it is mixed, if you look at exactly what units—and I am talking more about the operational Reserve units, in terms of this new thinking about the Reserves.

Another thing that comes out, certainly from the latest data that I saw, is that the number of Reservists in mainly the Army Reserve, which I know about, that have their annual training, which is a very good metric for readiness, was about 15,000 in 2017. It has probably increased a bit, because the numbers are increasing, but from a total trained strength of 27,000. That also gives you a bit of an insight that maybe two-thirds of that force in the Army Reserve are actually ready in the way that we would assess as ready—as close to.

The other thing is, if your question is about the latent surge, what is really encouraging to see in the latest report is that the latent surge capacity and the generation—the mass—lies in the Regular Reserve. Again, my expertise here is to do with the Army Reserve. I don't know so much about maritime and the air force, but in the Regular Reserve—the ex-Regulars who are held on liability—there about 30,000 of them, as far as I

know, who still have liability and could provide that mass. They have training and they have experience. It is really great to see the report finally starting to tap that area. More work needs to be done, but we can come back to that.

Q4 **Stuart Anderson:** Thank you—I am sure that we will later in the Committee. Elisabeth, could you expand on that in any way?

Elisabeth Braw: Patrick has gone through it in enviable detail. I would just say that maybe the forgotten element, or an element that was not expanded on enough in the previous report for the decade that has just passed—that we are in at the moment—is the relationship with employers. That is what makes this report so important. What the armed forces do with the Reserves depends so much on the employers, and at the moment there is unhappiness, or a little bit of grinding of teeth, among employers. If we talk about readiness among the different kinds of Reserves that exist today, yes, it is a matter for those Reserves themselves, but what about the employers? What about the companies that miss that manpower? Yes, sometimes it is a weekend so it does not really matter to the employers, but often it is not just a weekend, and that is something that this report addresses. We will need to see change, but the previous report started a process that is well under way now, and should be saluted.

Q5 **Stuart Anderson:** I am glad you have mentioned previous reforms, and it is always good when you bring something in and are looking forward, but we need to learn from the past. Do you think the post-2010 reforms have had the desired effect and achieved the right results?

Elisabeth Braw: It has started a process, but we should remember that since that report was written, the global security environment has changed. That report was written very much in the spirit of lessons learned from Iraq and Afghanistan, and today we are in a situation where threats are looking very different, not just threats to the global community but to the UK specifically.

Q6 **Stuart Anderson:** May I come in on that point? I know we are looking forward now, and you said that the last reviews were specifically more around Iraq and Afghanistan. Did they have the desired effect, to make sure that we had the Reserves capable of achieving what they needed to for that period?

Elisabeth Braw: I don't think they had the full desired effect, mostly—from my perspective—because the report did not completely address the relationship with employers, and if you don't have them on board wholeheartedly, you cannot have the full commitment of the Reserves. That has nothing to do with an individual lack of commitment; it is just that whenever a member of the Reserves is used by the armed forces, that has an effect on the employers. I think that might have been the part that was not properly addressed in the previous report.

Q7 **Stuart Anderson:** Patrick, what would be your views on the post-2010 reforms? Did they have the desired result?

Dr Bury: I think it is a mixed bag. The EST report says, "There was more money and more political will. We achieved the core aims: there was a revitalisation and an arrest of the decline of the Reserves." I would definitely agree with that. That was to do with money and political will. At the unit level and sub-unit level, which matters a lot, specifically in the Army Reserves—unfortunately, that is where my area of expertise is—there is more personal kit. There is more of the kit needed to train at the individual and section level, and that really helps. It is a big improvement on where they were. They have the same kind of kit as the Regulars, which is impressive too.

To talk about the broader cultural shift, I have seen and written about the fact that there is a professionalisation happening as the Reserves come closer towards the Regulars. FR20 was big about this: we can come on to the commitment thing that FR20 did, but it was like, "We are going to try and change this population shift between the Regulars and the Reserves." On the one hand, you have to be careful about dismissing the previous TA as unprofessional or whatever, but what I see is increasing professionalism generally. This is just the nature of a professional force as it becomes closer. That is good, and there is also growing acceptance among the Regulars of the Reserves' value. There is still work to be done there, absolutely—they are not completely integrated, nor should they be in some aspects.

There are way more opportunities for training, and we have seen pairing of units. Again, the evidence is a bit mixed about how useful this has been: yes, it is good organisationally and relationship-wise, but how much collective training has actually gone on? Those are some of the positives, with a few question marks still.

Negatively, the numbers have not grown at the scale and rate that was needed. That is an interesting comment on the whole process and operation. Numbers was the main thing; it became a numbers game. It was meant to offset the reduction in the size of the Regular Army. That didn't happen on time and is still behind. Although the direction of travel is good, a lot of that number is made up of shifting metrics around, so it has to be taken with a pinch of salt. Nevertheless, I agree that there are more people coming in. If you look at the number of people in the chain and the interest, it is really quite high. The problem is that some of it is not getting through.

The bigger issue, from talking to Reservists, is retention. If you are talking about fully capable sub-units, for example, you need to retain those people. They need to stay in. We need them, and they are the ones with the expertise. If we are losing them and are just churning through, that's not where we want to be. We want to be focusing on retaining the people we recruit, and hopefully getting on there. I mentioned the timeline, in terms of decent things taking longer.

Finally—this is quite important for the operational Reserve vision, laid out in the latest report—FR20 tried that and said, "We want more all the way through." The initial speeches said, "This Reserve is going to be more

operationally deployable." You went from the independent review to the White Paper to the actual release of the documents to the Defence Secretary at the time, Philip Hammond, standing up and saying, "This will be a more operationally sub-unit deployed Reserve," and that hasn't happened—not at the scale that was originally envisaged. It was watered down through all those documents, and the big question is why. If we are going to do that again, we need to be aware of what was tried before and why it hasn't worked, and be sensitive to that.

That is my overall view of it. It is quite a mixed bag, with some good successes and some organisational things that haven't fallen into place.

Q8 **Stuart Anderson:** My colleagues are going to pick through those other points. Elizabeth, you had something that you wanted to come in with before I hand back to the Chair. Is that correct?

Elisabeth Braw: Yes. A fundamental point that is difficult to answer is how important numbers really are. We all look at numbers, especially in the Army, because that is the easiest quantification that we can make, but do numbers really mean quality? If numbers alone don't represent quality, how else do we measure manpower in the Army, especially with the Army Reserves?

Stuart Anderson: Thank you.

Q9 **Mrs Lewell-Buck:** Good afternoon, Elisabeth and Patrick. On that numbers point, as you know, the Government plan to cut the size of our forces. Do you envisage that that may mean more reliance on Reservists? Bearing in mind that targets for Reservists remain unmet, do you think these cuts should be on hold until this report is implemented? I am trying to get a feeling of the potential risks if we suddenly need more boots on the ground, so to speak, or more people in our forces.

Elisabeth Braw: There is always a risk of saying, "Well, we can cut the Regular side of the armed forces because we have the Reserves," but what if the Reserves are needed elsewhere? Here is the dilemma. The Regular side of the armed forces is likely to be needed in an expeditionary capacity. We are increasingly relying—not just the UK, but other countries too—on Reserves to take care of the home side of defence, which is becoming increasingly important. How do we make sure that both sides are looked after? Until now, the reality has been that the home side hasn't really been very much of a demand at all, because there wasn't really much that needed to be done. Now, if we count on the Reserves to take care of that, which is a good idea because Reserves are more likely to have a connection to the area in which they live, what does that mean about the numbers that they are able to allocate to expeditionary functions, where they have played such an important role in the past two decades?

Q10 **Mrs Lewell-Buck:** Patrick?

Dr Bury: That question was a source of a lot of problems, in terms of the political genesis, which you are referring to, of FR20. The great thing is

that the narrative is not about the Reserves offsetting the capability; it is about what the Reserves can do to help anywhere, so it is a slightly different starting point, I would say.

The Reserves have typically been 10% under-manned throughout history, and they are about 15% now. If we could close that gap—another 5% would be historically where we should be.

On the wider point about what is actually going on and the risk with the downsizing, if you look at the integrated operating concept in the Defence Command Paper, it is generally perceived, certainly among academic colleagues that I have, that there is a calculated gamble going on, which is that we are going to do this, as the CDS says, as a step change in how we do our business. We are going to be more tech-savvy, smaller, more agile, dispersed and able to operate in the threshold. There is some risk with that. The risk is that, in the next 10 to 15 years, what if there is a mass inter-state war that we have to get involved in? Yes, we will have reduced the Army, we are waiting for this technology and these platforms to come on stream, and we are reforming our Reserve. Where do you generate the mass? One of the critical points I see here is that the strategic Reserve is quite important. It may be more important than we realise in this 10 to 15-year window. One of the things is that, with covid-19, we saw 750,000 volunteers drop off bags. We saw the mobilisation of Reserves in some cases, to help with that. We saw the Army out. But what we did not see—it would seem to me to be such a win-win solution, given the money that was being spent at the time—was a test mobilisation or partial mobilisation of the strategic Reserve, or the Regular Reserve, as it is known now. This is all going to be about data. Then you have to see who turns up. What are their characteristics? What are their skills? What are their medical standards? From that, you have a cohort and you need to do the repeat and rinse to check what we have. Actually, in terms of generating mass and this 30,000 to 45,000—if we take in all three services—there is something there that is, as one CGS said to me, a potential "get out of jail" card if it is managed correctly.

Q11 **Mrs Lewell-Buck:** Patrick, you have hit on something that I have raised before and that I am worried about. There may be a vacuum as we reduce some capabilities to make way for new capabilities, and you said that it is critical that the strategic Reserve is where it needs to be. Is it where it needs to be yet? How long do you think it will be before it gets to be where it needs to be, if it is not?

Dr Bury: At the moment, my understanding is that there was going to be an exercise—again, a test mobilisation—to collect data and see how this actually works, because it has not really been done since, I think, Iraq in 1991. I am not sure when the last one was called. Yes, it is like an untapped resource. We know we have these people, but do we have their addresses? Do we have their contact details? Again, this is a question for the MoD, but we need some thinking about this. Given the nature of the reforms that are under way, it is a calculated risk. I think it would be worthwhile putting some resource and attention into just, "Okay, how do we do this? Who would turn up?" Instead of thinking, "I've got 30,000

people who are going to turn up, and they're useful," what would they be useful for? What role exactly? Is it just home defence and, therefore, the standards are lower? What if it is expeditionary, on the continent or whatever? My point is basically that there is an untapped resource there. I do not think that people really know exactly how capable it is, and that is something we need to gather data on.

Mrs Lewell-Buck: Thank you. I will let others come in now.

Chair: Thank you, Emma. Let's go to John Spellar, who will be asking about the Reserve Forces Review 2030.

Q12 **John Spellar:** The opening question is: why do you think the Reserve Forces Review 2030 was needed?

Elisabeth Braw: Because so much has changed. It feels like the previous review was about how we salvage this body of people that has really been an afterthought, even though it was so badly needed in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Now, this new review looks more at the homeland and the incredible skills that the people already in the Reserves have and that can be tapped into for the new threats that the UK faces. Essentially, it is like finding that you have a resource that you never realised you had or you never paid attention to, and now you have a problem to which this resource is an answer. In a sense, this review by Lord Lancaster and his team tries to map out or draw up a plan for how those skills can be utilised. It is challenging, obviously, because we are talking not just about military skills but about civilian skills, and this is really a new way—or a novel way; it may not be completely new—for the Armed Forces to think about the people that they bring into the Reserves.

Q13 **John Spellar:** But are they clear as to what they actually want from this? Within your answer, there were a number of aspects that the Reserves fulfil. It is not just numbers; it is partly, as you were saying, about new skills, and skills that the services could not afford to bring in and to employ directly. Is there not also a tendency—quite apart from basic infantry surge capacity—to see the Reserves almost as the fourth emergency blue-light service for the country, for all sorts of things, from vaccinations to floods? Have the Government and the report really got to grips with trying to reconcile that and establishing some sort of framework for handling it?

Elisabeth Braw: You hit on the fundamental dilemma that the report faces—and not just the report, but the country—which is that those skills are available but the Armed Forces cannot expect to tap into them on the cheap, as opposed to creating them and bringing in people in a full-time capacity to do exactly that. In a sense, one could argue that what the report is trying to do is get those skills by using people who are already giving their time because it is the right thing to do and because they are committed to the country. If they have skills and the Armed Forces need them, the Armed Forces will say, "That's available. We will just take advantage of it because it is already here." That is the fundamental dilemma. The report says we should not just use their services for civilian

skills on the cheap, but in essence, if you see your Reserves as a resource with skills that you need, that is exactly what you are doing.

Dr Bury: I think in terms of the why, the 2010 SDSR had implications for the Reserves, and in 2015, we had a sort of refinement of the message about the Reserves following that SDSR. As the Committee well knows, we have a lot of transformative change planned at the moment. It makes sense, then, to look. It is good that it is not an afterthought, as I mentioned, and that it is much more integrated in the thinking and conceptualisation. That is the way.

On whether what is new about it is the harnessing of civilian skills, I think that is something—especially in the relationship with industry and employers—that was there in FR20 and was not achieved, as Elizabeth said. There were attempts, and it was improved, but it could go much deeper. I have been quite critical of FR20, but for me, this is a positive step in the right direction. In terms of the detail that you are looking for, I do not think that it is really in the remit of this document. If you look at the independent review in 2011, which was led by Julian Brazier, that was an "up and out" first of all, and then a "down and in"—there was a bit more detail on the "down and in". This is more like the "up and out", as it sort of recognises itself.

On the demand—what exactly are you going to do, and how are you going to do it in terms of the resilient task—they have obviously thought about it, but I think they know that they have to pass that on to another team. You have the implementation with Defence People. I hope, given the nature of this, that it is being integrated across a whole load of streams—*[Inaudible.]* I see it as the opening gambit: this is what we could do, this is how we need to think about it, but the detail needs to emerge now. And fair enough, it has happened quite quickly. It just needs continual monitoring as well.

Q14 **Sarah Atherton:** My colleague, Emma, spoke about the missing of recruitment targets. Elisabeth, you spoke briefly about employers, particularly in the private sector. The RF30 looks at persistent but episodic commitment from Reserves, going forward. Do you think this review focuses enough on the support for employers?

Elisabeth Braw: I think it has the ambition to focus on it, but it just doesn't explain how it is going to happen. That is, as some might have said, a huge issue. The Armed Forces could get phenomenal goodwill from employers if they engaged with them. As everyone on this Committee knows, the relationship between Reservists and the Armed Forces now has been primarily between the Reservists themselves and the Armed Forces, and less between the employers and the Armed Forces, with some exceptions, obviously. That puts employers in a bad mood, because they lose a resource every so often, especially during crises.

I pay tribute to a private sector group, the Engineer and Logistic Staff Corps, that sprang into action during the first weeks of covid. The members, who are all in the private sector, reached out to their colleagues

within industry to get various resources and help build the Nightingale hospitals. I think that would be possible far beyond the Engineer and Logistic Staff Corps during crises, big and small, if there were positive relationships.

At the moment, in the private sector there is unnecessary hesitation regarding the Reserves. They are seen as a scheme that just takes talent from companies when they need it. Forgive my long answer, Sarah, but the short answer is that we can get a lot more out of employers, so to speak, by just involving them more—there wouldn't even need to be a lot of costs—just making them feel that they are part of this big package that the MoD and the Government are trying to put together to keep the country safe.

Q15 **Chair:** Can I explore that a bit further? When we look at the numbers, it is quite a colossal drop in Reserve capability when you look back from 1990 to 2001. The numbers went from 76,000 to 20,000. There are two aspects of this. First, it is what Reserves bring to the table—what it allows us to do. People often deter us from looking at numbers and say, "It isn't about numbers. It's about what commitments can you meet." Nevertheless, 76,000 to 20,000 does limit the commitments you can even step forward to do. Is that a concern in what offering the MoD and No. 10 could provide from a hire-power perspective?

The second part of this question is to do with the relationship with society. I believe the Reserves provide a bond, a link with society, that the Regulars don't have. Many people share my concern that there is a disjoint between what Britain as a whole thinks of our Armed Forces and what they are actually like. Ever fewer people have a direct connection to what it is really all about. The Reserves have that function and that ability to keep people aware and updated, and therefore more likely and inclined to see great investment and support for our Armed Forces in general. Elisabeth, would you agree with that? Please free to expand.

Elisabeth Braw: I completely agree. There is a strange duality among the UK public regarding the Armed Forces. There is almost a veneration of the Armed Forces. We love seeing the Trooping of the Colour and so forth, and we are completely convinced that should anything happen the Armed Forces will sort it out. That goes back to John Spellar's question earlier about the fourth blue-light service and that we, the public, expect the Armed Forces to rise to the challenge, whatever the challenge may be, from flooding in Somerset to Olympic security to terrorist attacks to expedition race commitments.

However, we don't know much about what goes into it and what the numbers actually are. As you said, Chairman, the numbers have dropped, but I am pretty sure that nobody—very few members of the public—would have any sense of the stretched reality of the UK Armed Forces, including the Reserves.

With the Reserves in particular, they are in a sense the ambassadors of the Armed Forces, because with ever-declining Regular forces, fewer and

fewer of us have met anybody serving in the Regular capacity. So this is the opportunity for the Armed Forces to interact with the public, but if the numbers decline, clearly that makes it more difficult and there is clearly a smaller chance to interact.

If I may just make one practical point, the Reserve Office on Horseferry Road is very close to where you are at the moment—many of you on the Committee. That Reserve Office is always closed. It gives the public the idea that the Armed Forces are for a small group of people and you need a key to get in. Imagine if people could just see what goes on at that office in Horseferry Road. It's not just about the office on Horseferry Road, but it demonstrates the disconnect between the public and the Reserves in general. Over.

Q16 **Chair:** Thank you for that. Patrick.

Dr Bury: On the first part of your question, what you are getting at is, "Does quantity have a quality of its own, especially when you need mass?"—yes, is the answer; that would be my answer, to a large degree. The Reserves and the Army Reserve Battalion, which I can speak about with a bit more authority, are generally slightly lower-tech, because of the availability of weapons, etc. What is the relationship with that and mass, on a more lethal battlefield, which is automated? It is interesting. I haven't really thought through all the consequences of that. But generally quantity is something you need.

The second gist of the conversation is then, "Well, what's happened with society? What is going on with society and the nature of that?" Some of the interesting things I talk about at the end of my book are that if you take the Reserve Force—of about 35,000 combined, 31,000 aimed for in FR20—as a percentage of the workforce, it was 0.1%. In 1990, the Reserves represented 2.4% of the workforce; in 1964, at the end of conscription, 0.43%. So, you have got this 76% decline in the size of the Reserves as a percentage of the workforce.

Now, huge things have changed in the workforce, so we have to adjust for women in that and we have to adjust to more people working. But you end up with this—what might be going on is a change in the nature of societal capital, which a lot of sociologists have argued is potentially happening.

From my calculations, it was like this. If we wanted to make this sort of transformative change back in 1964 and grow the Army Reserves by 11,000, it would have taken six months rather than seven years or something.

So there is a really interesting premise that I latched on to in this report, which is, "We have got Generation Y coming through, and Generation Z after that. They are more into volunteering." Certainly, the research does support this, but we haven't got there yet.

What I detect has happened is that there has been a rise in individualism, shown across a lot of metrics, and how does this sit with volunteering?

Now, there are some positive things here. We saw what happened with covid: 750,000 volunteers. There are more people looking to join the Reserves. We could be on a reversal from where we were with the baby boomers—that is what I am getting at. However, the data there is still a little bit shady.

So, yes, I think the Reserves are a good touchpoint. If you had a bigger Reserve, would it help that touchpoint? Look at the Scandinavian example of total defence. There is a big difference in mindset about how they do things. How do you get to that place and how do you get to that place with more employer support? Actually, I would say there is a way. Yes, you can make employers feel more value, but ultimately this is probably about money.

Chair: Thank you. Martin, did you want to come in here?

Q17 **Martin Docherty-Hughes:** Just briefly, Chair, on Patrick's point about volunteering. Volunteering, outside of the extraordinary, is overly reliant, and I can only speak from a Scottish perspective and not for the rest of the UK, on an older population who are diminishing in number. And if you are financially or socially excluded from what I think, frankly, are ideas of middle-class existence—for example, in very working-class communities—you probably don't even know what the notion of volunteering is, and the stats back that up.

So, surely we can't equate normal civilian volunteering with Reserve volunteering—or do you, because the facts are that we are not getting people joining the Reserves, either?

Dr Bury: That is a fascinating point. This is an ongoing discussion. We—

Q18 **Martin Docherty-Hughes:** Forgive me for being blunt, Patrick. It is not an ongoing discussion. It is the reality that we do not have enough people volunteering in any aspect of civilian life, never mind military life.

Dr Bury: Yes. I would say we have seen an increase in people with an interest in joining the Reserves recently. It has really increased, but the problem is the pipeline and they are not coming through. I'm not able to speak with any authority about general volunteering in society; it is not my area of specialism. But I do know that, generally, as people have argued, there has been a rise in individualism and a decline in volunteering up to and including the last five years. Other people say that this new generation coming through are quite motivated by bigger problems in the world and are happy to volunteer, so perhaps there is a trajectory where we are coming to a little bit of an end of individualism and returning to volunteering again. I don't know. But a premise of FR30 is that we will be able to recruit more of this new generation because they will be more open to volunteering.

I cannot refute your experience. I was just putting it in the context of some of the presumptions of FR30.

Martin Docherty-Hughes: Forgive me for pushing the point, Chair, but I think it is important to state that if you look at some of the indices of

volunteering, across the whole of the UK and Northern Ireland we see a diminishing number, especially among those in communities that are socially and economically excluded. Volunteering is only an activity once you have the ability, socially and economically, to give up free time to do it, so we need to be very careful on that point, Chair.

Chair: Thank you, Martin.

Q19 **Derek Twigg:** Given what has been said so far during this hearing, what do you think the outcomes of the review will be in reality? Should the role given to the Reserves in the integrated operating concept 2025 be focused on high-end tasks such as war fighting or the whole spectrum of active tasks? Perhaps I will start with you, Elizabeth.

Elisabeth Braw: My concern is that the document is hugely ambitious, and that means there is a big chance of a disappointing outcome. Specifically it is very ambitious on giving potential members of the Reserves the opportunity to essentially design their own package for how they want to be involved—dial up or dial down, and use their civilian skills or not use their civilian skills—and that requires a lot of HR management and database management. I am not really sure how it would work. I am concerned that even though it is a fantastic approach, it might be administratively a bit too challenging for the MoD at the moment.

I am also concerned that that will result in the upgrading of the current approach and not the transformation that the report sets out, including the transformation in how to engage with the employers. If I may just make a point, since total defence was mentioned earlier: total defence relies on people wanting to be involved. It is not a matter of people or companies constantly being compensated; it is a matter of people and companies feeling that they can make a contribution to keeping society safe. I think that transformation can happen in the UK, but it will take some time. This report, if implemented, could be a part of that, simply because it encourages people to think of themselves as a resource to UK security. It is just that administering that resource will pose a practical challenge that I hope the MoD tackles, but I am concerned that it won't.

Q20 **Derek Twigg:** What do you think are the biggest barriers?

Elisabeth Braw: It is hard to set up the system that quantifies what these skills are and how to utilise them, and also how to design these individual packages that are one of the aspects of the report. The US, as a prospective member of the research, should have the right to dial up or dial down, do this or do that, but how is that captured in the database and who is going to evaluate whether you should be able to do it, or whether you should do something different? It is just a phenomenally complex administrative task, but I don't think it is more challenging than other things that have been overcome in administrative systems before.

Q21 **Derek Twigg:** Okay. Thanks for that. Patrick, can we come to you? Maybe you might want to comment on whether the Government's ambition has not really been properly explained so far.

Dr Bury: I completely agree with Elisabeth's point that fundamentally a lot of this—the more nuanced approach to using Reserves, with reinforcement, especially an active contribution, persistent and episodic—is all based on data. If we are going to use skills, it is about data, data, data. Agile workforce management is something that is ongoing, but that is a big challenge. You go to Reserve units and some of them I have been to don't even have computers that they can log into, or not enough. There is a big leap to happen there if this is really to take off.

In terms of some of the other problems and barriers I would see, if you look at the operational—again, I am referring to FR20—that needs money. If you want contingents of Reserves that are deployable at two years' notice or less, depending on what your readiness standard is, in certain national or specialist units, that needs money and it needs constant attention, so that they can train and resource. Those are the kinds of barriers.

I'm sorry—would you repeat the last part of your question?

Q22 **Derek Twigg:** Is the Government's ambition matched by being able to practically improve and change the Reserves to meet the modern challenges?

Dr Bury: That is what this paper is. It is ambitious. It has got vision. We could be critical. We could say, "All right, this makes sense—active operational and strategic." It could be, which is a criticism of previous Defence papers, "Are you just trying to do everything everywhere and how do you prioritise?" That comes back to the nature of what a Reserve is, in a traditional sense. It is about contingency. There is a tension there between defining the demand, defining the role and the situation changing. There has to be some sort of notion of organisational adaptability.

The Reserves, when I speak to them, crave a bit more direction and coherence about how they are going to be used and what they are going to be used for, but actually there maybe needs to be a slightly blunter conversation about the fact that they won't know—"For this chunk of the organisation, we will tell you that you are going to do this, as much as we know, but this chunk, you need to prepared to do the resilient task, the operational task, the active task." As the report rightly says, there is a lot of overlap between these.

I do feel that, at the risk of looking for coherence and clarity, you could end up making the wrong choice. If you look at the history of the TA in the 1930s, it goes from air defence to, "Oh no, you are actually now reinforcement for the BEF," and "Now you are back to air defence," and—guess what?—they ended up being used as backfill and training for the Army. There is a lesson from history there: things change. In the pursuit of clarity, you surrender adaptability.

Q23 **Chair:** Let's explore that a bit further. I think chapter 2 of the report is going to be the biggest challenge. It is almost redeveloping and

modernising a cultural relationship between the Reserves and society. When you look at the Integrated Review and the tilt towards cyber-resilience and towards new aspects of the character of conflict away from traditional, conventional capabilities, the Armed Forces simply do not have those skillsets. They simply cannot afford to pay for the individuals required to have the necessary degrees and expertise, because we cannot compete with civvy street.

Does this work need to start immediately? It is not just MoD that needs to do this. It is all of the Government—to underline the needs and the fact that the Reserves are the answer to help us meet our requirements to defend ourselves in a changing world. Elisabeth, would you agree with that?

Elisabeth Braw: Yes, and thank you for raising that question. We should remember that in the Integrated Review that the Government announced, they are planning to create a civilian Reserve. The Government have planned that for exactly the reason you outlined, Chair, which is that the Government simply cannot pay for the civilian expertise that it needs in a crisis, and it may not have that need on the sunny day or when things are going well, but it would have that need in a crisis. I think the plans for a civilian Reserve alongside today's military Reserve are fantastic. As you say, Chair, it is fundamentally about the relationship between the Government and the armed forces on one side and society on the other side, and who is responsible for keeping the country safe.

We have had the incredible luxury now for three decades—some would say longer—to be able to sit back and assume that the British Army and the other services will take care of whatever the problem is. That just doesn't work any more, and some other countries are trying to bring in other parts of society; the Scandinavian countries that dismantled total defence are trying to bring it back. It is not as easy as it seems. The UK Government should be credited for understanding that this is a need that must be urgently addressed. Coming back to your point, Chair, it is not about doing it in 2030; it is about doing it now.

On top of that, we should remember that civvy street pays well but it is also pretty boring, and the Government can capitalise on the fact that, working for the Government in a crisis, you can do some pretty important things that you cannot do in the private sector to the same extent. So it is not a matter of paying people lots of money to help the Government in a crisis, even though those people should be paid adequately—it should not be a question of offering your services for free to the Government. I think there is lots of goodwill among the sort of people with the skills that the Government needs. Coming back to your question, Derek, it is just a matter of maintaining that database so that the Government knows who to ask for among the people who are already involved, and maybe who to ask for among the people who are not yet involved, and whom to recruit, which employers to approach, so that those specialists can be of use to the armed forces and the wider Government in a crisis.

Q24 **Chair:** Patrick, do you have any other comments?

Dr Bury: I completely agree, Chair. It would be good if more effort went into a greater conversation between Government and society about the resilience piece. One thing that is quite successful in some of the Baltic nations is just how early in national education this subject is talked about and examined. If you can come at it with a bipartisan, unbaggaged view as much as possible, that helps too.

Q25 **Chair:** I am reminded that I did a number of trips to Afghanistan, from 2005 to 2012, I think, with the Americans on a C-17, and every time I did a trip to the cockpit and had a chat with the pilots, I would find that the week before they had been working for American Airlines. These were Reservists; they spent three weeks doing one job and three weeks doing the other. The private sector benefits from offering these skillsets. Civvy street can be a little bit boring, as you say—flying straight and level. I am sure they enjoyed having the interest. It is a great example, and I hope it is something that we can promote. Let us expand a little further. Sarah, over to you.

Q26 **Sarah Atherton:** I think it is going to be a very progressive decade for the Reserve force. One of the four key areas that the report focuses on is the expanding role of the Reserves, through a reinforcement, operational and strategic Reserve. So what do you think about this deduction? Patrick.

Dr Bury: In some ways, it just mirrors what we kind of have. In the reinforcement Reserve is the individual replacements; it seems to me there is less mention of units, and more about individuals putting their hand up, and saying, "The Army are actively engaged here and here. In this location, doing this task, I want to be a part of that and I am able to do it." Then you look at the commitment types—"I'm able to do that as much as 180 days," like what we know the volunteer Reserve do now, or "I'm actually going to essentially join the Army for four years on full-time Reserve service." There seems to be that element, which although is not actually specified, is, it seems to me, more individual. This is about skills and what the Chair was talking about—hopefully harnessing and integrating the biggest amount of skills from society.

The operational one is more what we think about the Reserve has been—the organisation of mass, whether that needs to be high readiness or low readiness, deploying units to contingencies, whether operations or not. The strategic Reserve, or what is currently known as the Regular Reserve, has always been there. What the report is saying is that we need to think about that more and tap into it.

In a way, it is about matching what we have to the viewpoint, the operating concepts that have just been outlined—saying, "Yes, we may need to war-fight, and if we do that, it's going to be the operational Reserve; yet we may need to be constantly active and engaged, and if we do that, it's going to be the reinforcement Reserve." That is my understanding.

Sarah Atherton: Elizabeth?

Elisabeth Braw: I have no major points to add, but I will draw a comparison, or draw your attention to a related example: the Swedish model of war placement, which was part of total defence. That meant that key personnel at all levels of seniority in the private and public sectors had contingency roles designated by the Government. Just this morning, I had breakfast with a former executive at Ericcson who had war placement as an executive at Ericcson, because it was in the Government's interest that Ericcson kept going during a crisis or a war. I wonder if such designations of senior executives or key specialists, whether or not they are in the private sector, could be part of the reservist force in a capacity which is not included in this report, but which is related to the others, apart from the strategic Reserve. That would be another way of engaging the private sector and keeping them involved and happy with the concept of Reserves, given that they are likely to lose personnel for some period of time during a crisis.

Q27 **Sarah Atherton:** Thanks. Patrick, you spoke about a fusion between the Regular and the Reserve forces. In chapter 3, the review mentions contingent versus active, and specifically using 5,000 Reservists to fill Regular military roles, either on a full-time or additional commitment capacity. Should we be using the Reserves in this way? To flip that on its head, is that a good a way of integrating and using the technical expertise and the skills of the civilian sector?

Dr Bury: In terms of what it says in chapter 3 and the 5,000 or 5,500, this is just the nature of what has happened and existed before FR20, but it has increased. In my book, I argue that the nature of FR20 and punching for integration among the volunteer Reserve with the Regulars created a new situation. Originally, the Regulars were the core and the Reserve were the periphery. What FR20 has done has pulled some members of the volunteer Reserves much more into the core orbit, and they are the people who are generally self-employed with really specialist skills, who like to do the Reserve piece, or who generally have more time on their hands and are able to commit. Then you have the traditional volunteer Reserve, who have more opportunities to train, to develop and all that, but who have limited time and so cannot do that. That is what I think has happened.

That is one of the natural outcomes. Of course, there are budgetary, manning and personnel issues about how we manage slots and move people across. That is a part of it, but in general that is a result of FR20. If you want to bring them closer together, that is what is going to happen: some people will come much closer into the orbit of the Regulars.

Sarah Atherton: Elizabeth?

Elisabeth Braw: I have nothing to add to that.

Q28 **Sarah Atherton:** Does either of you have any concerns about the use of specialisms that are quite rare and sought after in civvy street? Take medics, for example. How do we backfill medics in our NHS?

Elisabeth Braw: I am concerned about that, not just in relation to medics but in all specialties. Unfortunately, in a crisis, both the employer and the Government will need those specialists. That is the fundamental dilemma of reserves: especially as the threats to our national security change and involve more threats to daily life, more threats below the threshold of war—not just threats, but aggression—the civilian specialisms will be needed in two places at the same time. A Reservist is, by definition, likely to have split loyalties, because he or she wants to do the right thing for both the Armed Forces and his or her civilian employer.

I do not know what the answer is. It is clearly in the interests of the country that the Armed Forces absorb as much civilian expertise as possible that is of use in a crisis, from medics to cyber-experts to water infrastructure experts and everything in between, but employers will be very unhappy to lose those experts during a crisis. It is the fundamental dilemma of the changing national security picture we live with now.

Sarah Atherton: Patrick, do you have anything to add?

Dr Bury: Listening to Elizabeth was fascinating. I had not really thought about the second-order effects. In a crisis, you have two organisations pulling on this resource. You mentioned medical personnel in Afghanistan. That worked well because it was a contingent operation; there was a clear deployment schedule, so they knew when they were coming up, and often you had teams from a hospital all deploying together. One potential option for medical capacity is that, if certain units draw heavily from certain hospitals, you have a more strategic mobilisation plan in the event of a resilience operation domestically; you deconflict. These people know that they will come to the Army reserve to provide these capabilities; others know that, even though they are Reservists, they definitely won't. Beyond that is the crux of the resilience problem.

Q29 **Sarah Atherton:** A future challenge. The review talks about moving away from Regular/Reserve headcounts, which are targets and measurable, to maximising whole-workforce flexibility. Is that a good thing, and do you think the MoD will buy it?

Dr Bury: For me, there is still a question mark over this one. I get the idea of integration; I get the idea that we are going to have more seamless movement, especially of the reinforcement Reserve, into core military active duty. Nevertheless, I did not understand 100% why you would just subsume them completely.

I think a lot of it is to do with cost and the different costs of mobilising and budgeting for picking up a Reservist vis-à-vis a Regular, as the report mentions. Often, when an officer, a commander, is there and tasked with deciding who to use, the Regular appears cheaper, for a number of reasons. Potentially, treating the whole workforce as one, rather than as two different budget streams, means that you would end up using the Reserves more.

Is it a good thing? Essentially, it means a slightly larger budget, doesn't it? More money has to come from somewhere, because the cost stays the same. If that helps to move things and generates a business reason for it, so be it. Other than that, I was not completely clear about what the thinking was behind that.

Sarah Atherton: Have you anything to add, Elisabeth?

Elisabeth Braw: I'm unclear, Sarah: is your question whether it is a good thing to move away from headcount as the quantification of the size?

Sarah Atherton: Yes.

Elisabeth Braw: I think it is a good thing, simply because headcounts, especially in the Army, are so easy to use as a measure, but they say very little about the quality. Nobody would dispute that the Army Reserves in the UK are very good, but just to make the point, if we look at Russian conscripts, that is a very large number of people, but many of them don't want to be there. In fact, I would argue that most of them don't to be there. They are not of a very good quality, but each of them counts as a person, and I think that that illustrates how risky it is to use headcount as the only measurement.

To come back to Derek's question about how to measure if you don't use headcount, that is a challenge, and I would love to see the database or CRM system that comes up with a quantification that is as useful as headcount and maybe better reflects the quality of the people involved.

Sarah Atherton: It would make our job to scrutinise harder if we didn't have facts and figures, but thank you both.

Q30 **Chair:** I think Henry V said something about having good men worth 10 of the other if they are motivated, and I think that's so important, but mass does count; that is also important. On that, is the offering there? Are we doing enough to attract people into the Reserves today—in this day and age—particularly with the change that has taken place? As we have articulated and implied today, there is going to be an ever greater burden on what the Reserves offer in relation to the changing character of conflict. Patrick, do you want to go first?

Dr Bury: If it is a more usable Reserve—clearly, the vision is for that—it's going to need more money, and a part of that is the offer. Flexible working, using your civilian skills and the different kinds of commitment are all really important for Reserves because, hopefully, you get more through the door and they are more fulfilled because they have more choice. But what was really interesting to me in this—and it's great to see—was the idea of the educational offer. I was at a RUSI conference on the Reserves side six years ago or something like that, and I said, "If you're going to really think blue sky about this, look at what they do in the States." The investment in education through the GI Bill and the stuff that is available through ROTC etc. essentially lift a whole section of society up, in terms of their opportunity, by giving educational benefits in return for service.

If you are going to do that, there is obviously, as the paper notes, a huge university population, but we are not just interested in that; we are interested in apprenticeships, too. And a lot of them are heavily in debt. So thinking about that is a really positive thing. It is proven to work in nations that are fairly similar to us. It also has the community piece, the society piece. It has the give and take, which is relevant: you do a bit of this, and we value that and you get this back. It's a marker in the sand, I would say, for the Government to say, "That is something we are going to back." Again, it comes at a cost, but it is certainly really good to see.

Chair: Thank you. Elisabeth.

Elisabeth Braw: If I got to have a say over what the Government eventually decides, it would be to not just see but treat employers as allies. If you think about how people sign up for the Reserves today, it's because they envision that it's a good idea, and that is a very time-consuming way for the Armed Forces to get people, because individuals have to be convinced one at a time. What if companies—major companies but small companies as well—helped the Government do the bidding by including a Reserve service as something that they endorse and that they propose to their employees? And why would they do that? Well, I think the Government and the Armed Forces could highlight the fact that, as a Reservist, you get really good training that most civilian employers do not or cannot provide. If that were the case, if the Armed Forces highlighted that or maybe offered more training, civilian employers would be, I think, very happy to send their employees off to the Armed Forces as Reservists and to encourage them to join the Reserves, because the companies would get something in return for that as well.

Q31 **Chair:** There is a changing threat picture that we are seeing. I mean, I have said this; others on the Committee have different views, but I certainly feel like the trajectory at the moment, the next five years, looks pretty grim. Things are probably going to get worse, then they are going to get better, certainly with the potential of cyber-threats and economic harm being caused by passing military to military build-up. Are we doing enough to explain to British society that these threats are accumulating; that times are going to be difficult; and that there is huge geopolitical play taking place, and that we've got to get our act in order? This is not to scare people to join the reserves, but it certainly must encourage companies to liberate their employees to come and serve, because that is a bit of an issue: people simply cannot get the time to do their reserve work.

Elisabeth Braw: I completely agree. The challenge, I think, for the UK Government is that it has looked after the population very well, and the Armed Forces have looked after the population very well, for a very long time. No politician wants to be the person who says, "Wider public, you should be concerned about this," because it implies that the Government have not been able to solve the problem. If we look at daily life and what people see, they walk down the high street and they feel perfectly fine, and they say, "What are you talking about? I don't see any national security threats. Why should I be concerned? Anyway, if anything should

happen, the Armed Forces will step in and build Nightingale hospitals, pile sandbags, or go to Afghanistan. Why should I be concerned?"

Actually, I think that if the Government were to be transparent with the population about the number of threats—the number of subversive, aggressive actions—that it has managed to stave off, I think people would not panic. Well, they might panic eventually, but they would rise to the challenge and say, as you suggest, Chair, "I want to be part of the solution, because it is in my interest that the country be kept safe, because I enjoy this lifestyle that we have here."

Q32 **Chair:** Patrick, can I turn to a different point? We are seeing our regular Armed Forces being reduced by 10,000, and however you argue, that is quite a heavy footprint to reduce. The Integrated Review talks about greater upstream engagement, because China is luring countries to its way of thinking, perhaps ensnaring them in some of its projects, and so forth. The more we keep our friends closer, the more we continue to engage and work with them, the less chance of this happening, but of course, you cannot do that if you do not have the troops. Do reserves perhaps have a role in filling that void, in doing more upstream engagement: more work abroad, as well as in the UK?

Dr Bury: That is a really good question, Chair. The Review looks at this in terms of the Global Britain role, and it talks about leveraging networks, particularly in the Gulf. You have a large population of ex-Regulars and Reserves in business out there who can leverage relationships and so on.

There is an interesting point here. Having talked to a couple of Reservists, they said that if you look at what is going on with the specialised infantry battalions in the Regulars, in terms of them matching up with different geographic locations, and if you then look at what goes on in the American Reserve, they also do that, but they basically match expertise and regional expertise with units. Then, if those units are going to do their annual exercise, they go to that country and build those relationships, and they repetitively go there. It gives a bit of stability of mission and a bit of coherence.

That is something that I did not see in the report that could be thought about and potentially integrated, alongside some of this specialisation. Maybe with some of our operational Reserve, we should be saying, "Actually, you are going to do your taskings over here. These are our core partners; this is where you are going to go repeatedly and build up relationships." As we well know, consistently rotating through personnel means that it is always a different face, and in these cultures, long-term relationships matter. The report does mention that.

Chair: Thank you. Finally, can we turn to Emma?

Q33 **Mrs Lewell-Buck:** I just wonder if there is any other country that does this better than us, and if there is anything we could learn in terms of implementing anything they have done.

Dr Bury: A lot of this comes down to terms and conditions of service, or TACOS.[1] Under FR20, originally, they were going to be changed. The limitations on Reservists, and how you use them, sometimes comes down to the interpretation of the language in certain subsections of the terms and conditions of services. There was an update in 2014, which was more to do with Defence operations other than war—it is called DAOTO, but I can't remember exactly what that stands for.

The report identifies this and says maybe we need to bring the Reserve forces terms and conditions of services much closer to the Armed Forces. It needs to be done with nuance and sensitivity, because fundamentally if you just start mobilising Reserves en masse for what would be a sort of active task of the future, that is going to have institutional repercussions in that unit.

Essentially, there is a balance to be struck here. The very nature of Reserve service in some ways is that you are there as a worst-case scenario. CDS has said it. When they had trouble recruiting for the Reserves in the first four or five years of FR20, there was a very substantial change in the message actually, which came out—it was like, "Look, it is for worst-case scenario." Recruitment did seem to pick up a bit after that.

You have got this tension between a more operational deployable Reserve, and historically, it has definitely been less recruitable. That is the challenge.

Elisabeth Braw: I will just give a small example that I know won't be fully implementable in the UK, but is a good source of inspiration, and that is Norway. Norway has this phenomenal system of selective national service where, out of the annual cohort of 60,000 young men and women around 8,000 are selected for national service. Some of them will choose to stay on in the Armed Forces in an active capacity, in the active force, and everybody else goes into the home guard.

We should remember that, because the national service is so selective, it is extremely prestigious to be selected for it. It is like being admitted to Oxbridge. As a result, the Armed Forces have the best and brightest of each year group, regardless of educational background, regardless of any sort of background. They just choose the best and brightest. Some of them, as I mentioned, go on to a professional career or active duty in the Armed Forces. The others go on to the home guard, which is similar to the Reserves. They serve in their local communities. They are, in a sense, the fourth blue-light service, but not by accident, by default, and they take pride in being that active citizen component in their local communities.

I think there is something we can take from it. What would happen if the UK Armed Forces selected from among the complete year group of school leavers or 18-year-olds—not across the Armed Forces, but for certain

[1] Witness clarification: "The United States and Australia have good Reserve models but their terms and conditions of service are different."

specialisms? I am sure that some of them would stay on in the Armed Forces in some capacity. The rest could go into the Reserves. The UK Armed Forces would have at their disposal a phenomenal asset of well-trained, motivated young people.

Q34 **Mrs Lewell-Buck:** What do you think would be the barriers to implementing a model like that here?

Elisabeth Braw: From my perspective, it would just be a cultural barrier. It is easy to say, "Well, the UK is not Norway, so we can't do it here." I don't think there would be enormous practical barriers, because, as I said, it would not be the complete Armed Forces; it would not be the complete annual cohort of British teenagers, because they are not needed in the Armed Forces.

On top of that, the specialisms that should have these programmes would also be the ones that know that they need additional skills from the civilian part of society in a crisis. It would be a win-win, and it would be an asset for these teenagers to have been selected, so the main barrier is really the novelty and the cultural aspect.

Q35 **Mrs Lewell-Buck:** Thanks for that. Finally from me, is there anything in particular that you think is missing from the review?

Dr Bury: I actually raised this with the Chair: the idea of matching Reserve operational units to places around the world. That is where they are going to be the specialists. That is where they are going to have their activity, as much as can be predicted, and that is where they build the relationships. That would be the smaller point. Obviously, the big, broader point on this is that the detail is missing, but we will wait and see. We have to wait for the next part to come out, and then assess that, and see, "How?" and, "With what resource?"

Elisabeth Braw: It is a fantastic review. If I were to highlight anything it would be any suggestions regarding how to turn employers into allies, because without that, as we have discussed, employers are likely to be on the fence, or hesitant about endorsing their employees' involvement.

Q36 **Martin Docherty-Hughes:** In terms of reflecting on other countries' examples, I thought it was very interesting, Elisabeth, that you mentioned Norway. I am sure you have heard me speak on it before, and I appreciate that type of approach, but it is also mirrored in both Sweden and Denmark. While you say that there might not be any cultural barrier to implementing that model in the UK, do you accept that there are profound policy differences? For example, in these Scandinavian states you find that people are more equal economically and socially. Therefore, those types of policy decisions have an impact on why people join up to those nations' Reserves. It is not just about culture or a Government's investment. Well, it is about investment. You need to invest in society for it to feel part of it.

Elisabeth Braw: That is an excellent point. I think that the Armed Forces could become almost accidentally the way in which people who have not had many opportunities get a leg-up. Patrick mentioned earlier, and the

report mentions as well, the fact that in the US, both through active duty service and in the Reserves, you get an opportunity to get subsidised education, and the GI Bill has brought so many Americans into the middle class. I think that the Norwegian model, which as you said is used in Denmark and Sweden as well, is an opportunity for those young people among us who have lacked the opportunity to attend good schools to be selected for something really prestigious based on—

Q37 **Martin Docherty-Hughes:** Sorry to interrupt, Elisabeth; I know that the Chair will be keen that we keep to time. If that were the case, for example, as a Scottish constituency MP, my constituents are able to access a range of economic activities or levels of education that might not be freely available in any other part of the UK. Anyone who can join the Reserves has different ways or different opportunities to join other activities, whether it be an apprenticeship or higher education. There might be some correlation that they are choosing to do other things, because the offer from the Reserves or the main Armed Forces is just not up to par.

Elisabeth Braw: That is a reality and it is unfortunate. If you do not feel an inclination already, you are not going to join because, as you say, the offering is not particularly attractive. Yes, that makes a difference. I do not have an answer to it, other than creating a programme based on which everybody would be assessed, and the best people selected. I realise that that is unlikely to happen any time soon, but that could be a really transformational programme within the UK for young people, not just created for people who come from more impoverished backgrounds, so it feels like charity if the British Army takes you on; it would be based on skills and affinity. It would have a transformational effect—but I realise that the UK is not Norway.

Martin Docherty-Hughes: Patrick, do you want to come in?

Dr Bury: Yes, just for a second. I have this bell ringing in my ear of a Reserve unit commander in Cornwall—repeated in Wales and the north and west of England—saying to me, "You don't realise that this Reserve centre is really important for employment here." This is post the crash—that kind of era, 2013 or 2014. It seemed to be a major employer in the town for a certain subset. That is quite important in those communities, too.

Q38 **Martin Docherty-Hughes:** May I take up a point you made earlier about trying to incentivise, with the incentive of being closer to the Armed Forces? Many of my colleagues on this Committee would say that it is not really much of an offer if you level it up with the present Armed Forces in the UK, because we have difficulties in recruitment there. Aligning back to Elisabeth's point, would it not be better to level up the Reserves and our main Armed Forces with the rest, or with some of our Scandinavian allies, and we might find that both the Reserves and the Regulars will get more people joining?

Dr Bury: Yes, that is definitely a point. It is interesting that in FR20, they did massively increase the offer, especially trying to get Regulars to come across and stay. But you know what, especially speaking to people, a lot of the Reservists who were there before found, "Well, these Regulars came in, but they were quite clear that they were motivated by the money rather than the mission." There have been increases to the offer and that has increased recruitment, but has it led to long-term retention? Anecdotally, in my experience, not so much.

Q39 **Martin Docherty-Hughes:** Might it be that something better is out there, in terms of an offer, especially for those leaving school or university?

Dr Bury: That is an interesting one. If I had stayed in the Army, I would be on more money than I am now, so the offer for certain subsections seems to be okay. On the graduate thing, which is aimed at officers, I went through this process quite a long time ago, as I am sure members of the Committee have. It was pretty impressive in terms of how that worked and what the offer was, I thought. Today, vis-à-vis opportunities, maybe working at Google, if that is who are competitors are, and what kind of money—

Martin Docherty-Hughes: Or maybe having an apprenticeship in an electricity company in your home town—it does not have to be Google or online.

Dr Bury: Absolutely, yes. The work-life balance is also something to be taken into account.

Martin Docherty-Hughes: Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Thank you, Martin, and thank you to both our witnesses. This is an exciting time to be a Reservist, if I may do a little shout out for them: your country certainly needs you to bring your civilian skills to the table to complement our Regular forces as we adapt to the changing threats that we face.

I did not declare at the beginning that I am a Reservist myself, in the 77th Brigade. I should have done so, forgive me.

I am pleased to have listened to and benefited from the thoughts of Elisabeth Braw and Dr Patrick Bury. We are grateful for your time this afternoon. That brings to a conclusion our one-off session looking at the Reserve Forces Review 2030. We will return to this subject with Lord Lancaster later, in the autumn. For now, thank you very much indeed.