



HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT

Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy

Oral evidence: [National Security Strategy and the Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015](#),

HC 810

Monday 14 March 2016

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Members present: Margaret Beckett (Chair); Lord Boateng; Baroness Buscombe; Lord Clark of Windermere; Baroness Falkner of Margravine; Mr Dominic Grieve; Lord Levene of Portsoken; Lord Mitchell; Dr Andrew Murrison; Robert Neill; Lord Trimble; Stephen Twigg; Lord West of Spithead and Mr Iain Wright

Questions 1-34

Witnesses: **Professor John Gearson**, Professor of National Security Studies and Director of the Centre for Defence Studies, King's College London, **Professor Patrick Porter**, Professor of Strategic Studies and Academic Director of the Strategy and Security Institute, University of Exeter, and **James de Waal**, Senior Consulting Fellow on International Security, Chatham House, gave evidence.

Q1 Chair: May I thank our witnesses for coming to give evidence? We look forward to their contributions. I know that everyone has name labels, but if colleagues could identify themselves, it would be helpful, to keep the witnesses informed. We are talking about the National Security Strategy, as you know. Why do we have one?

Professor Gearson: I will throw out a suggestion that I have developed over the last year: we have been moving towards an approach to national security that we have codified to some extent in written form. Why we need one is probably because the policy papers and the occasional documents have not given enough focus to allow Whitehall and Ministers to develop an approach that will deal with the challenges we now face, which are much more diffuse than previously. If you are asking whether it is a good idea, I would say that ultimately,

Oral evidence: National Security Strategy and the Strategic Defence and Security Review

even though it is an imperfect process, it is better to have one than not to have one.

Professor Porter: Building on that, I would say it is partly because in this country there is an anxiety that has been echoed in successive parliamentary reports that Britain, for some reason, has struggled to do strategy well; this is an attempt to integrate the arms of power and the arms of government into one kind of synthesis, to do it better. It is also part of an international trend. If you look around, there are about 27 different versions of the National Security Strategy or a defence White Paper across Europe alone, and then of course beyond that in Japan, Australia and Russia.

On a more macro level, it is, if you like, that the party's over—that is, the 1990s post-cold war slumber of the Pax Americana is under threat on a number of fronts. There is a sense of a return of great power rivalries and increasingly scarce resources to meet problems, so there is a sense that we need to do some more organised thinking. It also reflects the broadening of the security agenda; there is simply more to think about. Whether it is failed states, weapons proliferation, poverty or mass migration, a whole lot of things have to be thought about very carefully in terms of ranking interests.

This, of course, began in the US—codifying a public strategy for international consumption and for domestic consumption—in the wake of Vietnam and a number of disappointments, as an attempt to force review and accountability. As John says, it is better to have one than not to have one. It is a useful internal exercise to organise thinking. The challenge is to make sure that these kinds of documents, which we can only expect so much from because they are public documents, provide some kind of direction for choices as well as being a very effective signalling document about what you are doing.

James de Waal: The only thing I would add is that there is, of course, a constant process of prioritisation and reallocation of resources across Government. The fact that you have one big formal exercise once every five years and produce a big document has some advantages and some disadvantages, and I think the balance at the moment is advantages.

Q2 Chair: I know some people hold the view that if the strategy is published, it is less valuable. Are any of you aware whether there is, as this Committee has sometimes suggested there should be, a classified version? If there is, have any of you seen what is too brutal for our delicate ears to hear?

James de Waal: I understand that there is a classified element to the National Security Risk Assessment, but that is all I know.

Professor Gearson: I don't think we have seen anything. Obviously, defence has long had things like planning assumptions that are not put into the public domain, so I am sure there would be equivalents of that. In the past, if you look back at the 2010 document and, in fact, the first, 2008 document, there were often criticisms about which countries were mentioned or not mentioned, but that is not something that would be helpful in the realm of diplomacy—to name countries. However, you run the risk of having the proverbial elephant in the room if you are not discussing very important countries at all. The document can become so anodyne as to become meaningless, so there is a balance to be struck, but I would be disquieted if there wasn't a classified version that the NSC considers.

Professor Porter: Of course it's a risk—these things can be leaked—but I think there is a case for classified written guidance on what these things mean, as much as anything else to help Governments and Departments to operationalise choices. You have to get a balance, as Professor Gearson says, between the democratic element and what is traditionally a very important part of strategy, which is the covert element.

Q3 Chair: When the Prime Minister gave evidence to us about a year or so ago, he talked about this version being a refresh rather than a complete re-examination. Is it your impression that this refresh has learned anything from the 2010 NSS?

James de Waal: I should say I had a bit of experience of the 2010 SDSR, as a bureaucrat. I used to be a Government official, and I was in a working-level role. In terms of overall strategic approach, there are many similarities. The so-called adaptable posture that the Government took in 2010 is very similar to the kind of flexibility and range and desire for active international engagement that we see in this one. The big difference, of course, is that now the Government are in a position to spend more money on defence and security. In some respects, it was a more challenging time in 2010, when the story was fundamentally about making savings, whereas the story this time is that you have some more resources—where should you allocate them?

Professor Gearson: Another thing that has not changed is that this document is postponing, or is accepting, significant risk and pushing it further and further away. If I have an observation about 2010 and this one, we have now pushed our risk to the middle of the next decade,

whereas in 2010 it was supposed to be pushed to the end of this decade. We have now assumed that we can have a 15-year period of accepting quite considerable risk in terms of our military capabilities.

The only other area where there seems to be a slight change is this, and perhaps it relates back to your first question. Another important reason for having these sorts of documents is that if we are going to talk about security as being about our citizens rather than the mechanisms, structures and power elements of the state, you have to communicate with the citizens in a more meaningful way. With all respect to those who were involved in drafting both documents, I would say that the consultation and the engagements with the citizens and the wider groups have been at the less ambitious end of the spectrum of what perhaps could have been done.

Chair: That is a point of view this Committee has expressed frequently.

Q4 Lord West of Spithead: When producing the 2008-09 National Security Strategy, the first one we ever produced, I was able to draw on the National Security Forum's input—this was a body of people outwith the Government; all sorts of highly accomplished people—to look at specific issues. One of them is sitting at the table as I speak. I found that extremely valuable in terms of trying to put together the first ever National Security Strategy, because it was so different from the grand strategic overviews this country produced in the late '40s and early '50s, which were basically documents from the Chiefs of Staff Committee. Do you think that there is merit in having a body—I am not saying the National Security Forum exactly, but a body like that—to draw in expert advice from across academe, the military, industry—everywhere—to help the National Security Committee, the Cabinet and so on to produce this sort of document?

Professor Porter: Very much so. I would almost go further and say that there is an important distinction between expert consultation and integrated evaluation, built into the institution itself, which makes it harder for anyone to ignore and makes it easier to probe and test assumptions. An interesting contrast is sometimes made with France, which has involved trade unions, and civil society more broadly, in the consultation process. The Australian White Paper is far from perfect, but it does have this document, which was produced with consultation in the Community Consultation Project. We went beyond Canberra and talked to a lot of people who were interested in a broad set of questions about national security, prosperity and civil-military relations. I think we are missing an opportunity to build in what we might call red teaming: that is going beyond just talking to people and having a

continuous process of adversarial but friendly testing of assumptions. I can talk more about that later.

James de Waal: I think it depends. Again, I should say that I was involved in the 2008 national security strategy.

Lord West of Spithead: I know you were. You were doing it for me.

James de Waal: I would also mention the 2009 defence Green Paper, produced by the last Government. They set up a thing called the Defence Advisory Forum, and again, I think a number of people in this room were on it. There are a number of different aims for consultation. One is just to show that you have been consulting, one is to spread understanding of what you are trying to do and one is genuinely to consult.

Q5 Chair: We were keen on the latter.

James de Waal: Well, the utility of the latter depends a bit on where the starting point of the exercise is. Both in 2010 and in 2015, the Government approached these exercises with quite a clear idea of where the frame was. In 2015, it was that they were going to spend a bit more. They were going to commit to nuclear weapons. They were going to maintain this idea that Britain should be active internationally, in an expeditionary way. ISIS terrorism was the main thing; the US alliance was still going to be a real keystone of the British approach. There was no real scope for challenging any of those things. I should say that I think there is nothing wrong in starting with that, but it does beg the question of what your consultation is actually for and what you are going to change about Government policy through the process of consultation. What is Government willing to see challenged?

Q6 Lord West of Spithead: James, what I find interesting in what you have just said is that you have very neatly encapsulated what the NSS should be without saying, "We decided what it was before we wanted to actually look at what it was." I know we have consensus, built around knowing each other and being in various clubs and goodness knows what, about what our strategy ought to be, but that may not be the way we should be producing it.

James de Waal: Yes. My impression of this and the last SDSR is that they were basically implementation plans for a view of the world and of Britain which had already been decided.

Professor Gearson: We are conflating consultation with advice. One of the benefits of the advisory board is to be slightly more independent.

Obviously, it cannot be totally independent, but it would be there on an ongoing basis, meeting and thinking about this, outside the period of Government trying to deliver a message about what it wants to do. If an advisory board adds value in thinking about the world and the NSS, then it is a positive thing, although it will not stop the Government doing what it wants to do.

Professor Porter: All the assumptions that are to be found in this kind of document may be perfect and very well founded, but the point is to have a process which lifts it out of the axiomatic into thinking in a calculated way and bringing it up to the surface.

Chair: Baroness Falkner, I was going to call on you in the next session, but did you want to come in on this?

Q7 Baroness Falkner of Margravine: In contrasting 2010 with 2015, do you think it matters that this is the product of a single-party Government and the previous one was the product of a coalition? Can you see a difference? Is anything discernible in terms of wider ownership versus narrow ownership?

James de Waal: My impression, for what it's worth, is that the important difference, or at least part of it, is that this is a Government in its second term. They have the experience and the knowledge. In 2010, it was a great and sometimes difficult learning process. That, to me, is much more important than the coalition.

Professor Gearson: I would add that I think this one is slightly more ambitious and slightly more prepared to take risks in identifying the range of tier 1 and perhaps tier 2 challenges. I know we may talk about the NSRA later, but the principle of being willing to have hostages to a broad view of the world and of our threats seems to come through this document in a way it did not in the 2010 document. I don't think I would necessarily put that down to coalition politics, but it could be, because everyone was being tentative. As James says, the Prime Minister is still the same person, and the drivers behind the 2015 review are not merely financial, I would suggest, but also the result of quite significant events in the last three to four years as well.

Chair: I would now like to turn to international relations.

Q8 Baroness Falkner of Margravine: Staying with border partnerships and alliances, the NSS seems to be painted in very broad terms. Professor Gearson, you have commented on how very wide its perspective on alliances is. I think you said at one point that so many countries were mentioned that it more or less encompassed the whole world, except for

South America. I think you were giving evidence to another Select Committee when you said that. There are pros and cons in developing strategy where you think you have so many obligations, partnerships and rights. My concern comes from the lack of focus that that sometimes brings about and the capabilities to deliver that.

I have some particular concerns. William Perry, who was in London a few days ago, said he thought that one of the reasons the world was more unstable now than ever before in his lifetime was due partly to NATO enlargement—too much enlargement too fast—so there are too many obligations now that add to the tension. I see, for example, Turkey in that ambit, and I see Saudi Arabia, which is a partner in some areas because of energy policy, and yet is a real spoiler in terms of our interests in other areas, such as counter-terrorism and extremism and so on. Do you believe that we should be identifying such a wide range of alliances, or would you have preferred a more narrow focus for our rights and obligations vis-à-vis others?

Professor Gearson: I will stick my oar in, but I think my colleagues will have something else to add. I would just say that as a critic of previous defence reviews where there was a very narrow geographical spread, I cannot really criticise this review for being broad, except that I do not discern from the document what the unique British role is in this internationalist viewpoint that it presents. Clearly, if you look back to the 1997-98 SDR, as it was called, it identified the Gulf and the Mediterranean region and perhaps North Africa as areas likely to see British engagement and involvement, and then of course we end up with our armed forces for a decade in central Asia within two years. If global-reach terrorism and insurgent groups represent an existential challenge to democracies in Europe, it is quite appropriate that we look at this phenomenon in international terms, not in national or only regional terms. However, as I say, looking at this list of countries with which Britain has good relations and will try to develop things, I don't see the priorities as I perhaps would have hoped.

Professor Porter: There is a phrase that you often hear: global strategy. I often wonder whether that is a contradiction in terms. Strategy is about limitation, about ranking, about making quite difficult choices. Whether that happens in a public document is another question. I certainly think there is a case for looking at what some defence reviews do internationally, which is to have a concentric-circles model where you try at least to marry a sense of what really matters—what is vital versus what is desirable—around some sense of your geographical position. It doesn't end at home, but it begins at home and moves further out. In that context, the Anglo-French collaboration

is becoming more valuable. Britain's own neighbourhood is a lot less benign place than it was a short while ago.

That of course brings in NATO as a vital thing. It is not that we are wrong to have a breadth of partnerships, but there has to be some logic underlying what happens when one of those things comes into conflict or strain with another. If your partnership with one group and your partnership with another group clashes within Syria, for example, having some conscious logic of what really matters and what only matters slightly is a really important device.

James de Waal: I would just add two things to what my colleague said.

One is that I would like to see a bit more focus on a particular region or theme, but where that focus comes from has to reflect the national political debate and the national sense of what is important rather than any kind of analysis by eggheads every five years.

Secondly, my impression about reading the alliances section—in contrast to Professor Gearson—was I was quite struck by what seemed to me an anomalous emphasis on what the UK could do on its own, or the UK national contribution. It seems to me that the fundamental starting point is that the UK is going to be part of an alliance, and I would have liked to have seen perhaps a little bit more integration in the way that—it was perhaps more the narrative and the tone of the paper—recognised that, rather than always saying, “This is a UK national capability and this is what we are going to do.”

Q9 Baroness Falkner of Margravine: Picking up on that, do you think it is perhaps rather woolly in terms of lots of emphasis on aspiration and values and not quite hard-headed enough in terms of interests?

James de Waal: My personal reflection is that I quite like the idea of there being values. What is disconcerting to me is the use of the word “value”, because whose values are they? There is a lot of ambiguity there, so I would prefer “law”. I see this in the debate about the intelligence activities of the UK: there is constant reference to values that the intelligence services have. Values are so ambiguous; I prefer this to be law and rule, which is actually written down somewhere.

Q10 Lord West of Spithead: Does this not come back to the question asked by the Chair at the beginning: what is this for? When you start talking about foreign policy and links with other countries, you have got to make a choice, slightly, in an open document: are you messaging? Are you playing realpolitik? What exactly are you doing? Because the reality

of what might be best for the United Kingdom might well be not something you would wish to publish in a document and, therefore, almost inevitably you are going to get some mixed messaging when you try to relate that to something that you base your defence or security capability on. Don't you feel there is a bit of a dichotomy—a bit of a problem—there?

James de Waal: I think inevitably it is where you draw that balance, and that of course is a subject for great debate. Again, one of the useful evaluation tools for this is the credibility of these various assertions and how they are received around the world, because it is not just Britain proclaiming that it is for these things. I would have thought that one of the most important sorts of consultation that the Government may have done on this is their contacts with other Governments, and perhaps beyond other Governments. I am not quite sure about the degree to which that was factored in, but the measure of values or the balance between values and interests, it seems to me, is in the eye of the beholder.

Professor Porter: I am not necessarily sure that this document can come down quite as hard on the side of law, because there are some times when the letter of the law is violated by western countries when they are doing what they think is the right thing to do, just like all permanent members of the Security Council have at some point violated international law when they think it is justified and in the national interest—that is just part of the world we live in.

We do need some organising concept. I prefer the concept of a stable, governing order within which the reform that we like can happen, but part of the difficulty is that sometimes countries like the UK, Australia and the United States talk about themselves as rules-enforcers—the rules-based international order is a key part of this document—and at other times they are helping to overthrow regimes—they are taking the law into their own hands, if you like. That is not necessarily a problem until you start talking about absolute things like rules and morals; then, people will judge you by that standard.

Professor Gearson: It is not a very realist approach to say that we expect a world system that reflects British values. It may make it easier to get on in that world, but perhaps this document does not speak as much about interests, as we said before. Ultimately we still live in a global system of states, where states pursue national interests.

Chair: Lord Mitchell and Lord Levene want to come in.

Q11 Lord Mitchell: I would like to take another look at the frequency of the National Security Strategy and the fact it is published every five years. The Prime Minister said that it is refreshed every year. To me, that means a bit of tweaking here and there. It just seems to me that over the past few years, we have seen things such as the growth of ISIS, Russia back on the table and China being very aggressive, each of which has profound strategic implications for this country. Setting this thing at 2010 and 2015, with minor adjustment between times, strikes me as a bit naive, actually. I just wondered what people think about it.

Professor Gearson: I have quite strong views about the fact that having a regular review cycle may or may not be a good idea, but the National Security Strategy deserves an ongoing, active capacity to look at the world as it is, rather than the way that we hope it will be and have decided it is every five years. One practical thing that worries me is that the SDSR and NSS teams that were brought together to create this document in quite short order are being dispersed back to deal with Brexit and whatever else it may be—including some of the heads of the new agencies. Off they go, and the only ongoing activity is that there is going to be an implementation report to Parliament, I believe, by the Minister in the Cabinet Office. I would have liked the NSS team in some capacity to be kept in an enhanced national security secretariat. I know that proposing spending and increasing bureaucrats is not a popular thing, but I think the subject area deserves ongoing consideration, so I am agreeing.

Professor Porter: Absolutely, it would be unwise to expect any process that can do medium-range accurate predictions over the next five years and be completely right by the end of that five years. But I think there is a more indirect value in a process that gives very busy Government officials time to step back and think beyond the day-to-day, short-term tactical level, and to think about defining problems so that when something comes up that is completely unexpected—for example, the crisis in eastern Europe, the rise of Islamic State or the migration crisis in North Africa—we can work out by what criteria we evaluate exactly how this matters to us. In that sense, the process that creates the document within Government, if done well through proper self-scrutiny, can be just as valuable as—if not more valuable than—the document that comes out at the end.

James de Waal: I slightly disagree. My perspective on this and other exercises is that they are not, themselves, the policy blueprint. They provide a kit of tools that the Government can use to deal with the sorts of problems they imagine are going to turn up, but it is not a substitute for the day-to-day policy process, which, of course, has its

own dynamic. One can argue that it would be nice if the day-to-day policy process were a bit more long term in the way that it operated. A document like this can help to do that, but it does not guarantee it. I am seeing the question rather from the other way around.

Q12 Lord Levene of Portsoken: I would like a little more information and thought given to how we relate the different conflicted areas to each other. Take the example of China. When the President of China came, everybody from the Queen and the Prime Minister downwards were working as hard as they possibly could to be nice to them. That links into commercial interests if there are large contracts coming up for consideration. Those may, in turn, conflict quite severely with other commercial interests from other countries who do not want us to do that. At the same time, they also have an impact on strategic issues. For example, are we going to help the Chinese nuclear industry and is that a good thing or a bad thing? Does it save us a lot of money? Does it get us a leg up in terms of technology, or is it giving them a huge benefit in terms of people spending money with them, which helps them to improve their technology?

I recognise that there is no easy answer to that because these things are essentially in conflict, but I think that ought to be given some consideration. It is particularly relevant at the moment when you look at the issues relating to Hinkley Point, where there are hugely conflicting reports. If you look at it as a layman, you say, "Well, what is the right answer? Is this a good idea? Is it value for money or not?" Somehow, I would like to see some thought and rationale given to how we can relate these to each other, who is going to have the final say, and who we believe.

Professor Gearson: There is an interesting emerging development, which is that the countries that are listed and were not listed in the 2010 document as areas of interest include Japan, for example, which completely conflicts with what you have just described, to some extent. If there is one thing the Chinese are sensitive about, it is any other country taking an interest in its disputes with its various neighbours, many of which we have long-standing defence relationships with. We haven't spoken about them in great detail.

I think you are right to say that these things conflict. I am not so sure that this document should provide clarity, but I guess the outgrowth from the NSS approach is the creation of a National Security Council, which should be a place where it is not decided only by Ministers. To go back to my boring point about the ongoing capability of staff, that is a subject that should be considered by the NSCO or the secretariat itself

so they can advise Ministers. I'm not sure that this document reflects that joined-up approach to something as big as China.

James de Waal: It would be entirely possible for the Government to say, "Okay, the range of issues on China are too complicated to deal with in the normal course of Whitehall business, so we're going to use this National Security Strategy process as a mechanism for sorting this out. We're going to decide that one of the principal questions in this exercise is our relationship with China." It seems that it decided deliberately not to tackle that sort of question, and instead to use the process for other things. It's really a matter of how you want to use the machinery of Government to deal with that sort of thing, or whether you are sufficiently capable of using it that way.

Professor Porter: I think this is a good example of where it would be quite useful within Government to have a scenario where you face a hypothetical situation in which one or the other side in Asia—the United States or China—starts demanding that you make a choice and, in the words of a Chinese envoy to the Australian delegation a few years ago, pick a godfather. With a bit of luck, that won't happen.

It might even be the case that the Government and the United Kingdom can have a predominantly commercial relationship with one side and a predominantly security-related special relationship with the other, and that the two things can be kept apart. I have some worries about that, because one thing that links them is the maritime choke points and all the trading interests. Those are highly political things. The point is not that that's right or wrong. It is one of those things that could be very usefully tested behind closed doors, and then we can work out from that what kind of risks and costs we are willing to bear.

Q13 Baroness Buscombe: Taking China as an example, I am concerned that this document is trying to say too much and therefore falls between stools. For example, the question of China is not properly addressed in it, but there is another opportunity somewhere else. I note that the US National Security Strategy is 29 pages. The Commons Library refers it as a "vision document". Would that not make more sense? When we tackle something like international relations, we can go into a bit of detail and set out some assumptions without drilling down properly into detail. I have some concerns about the threatened cuts to the defence budget in Norway, for example. Would we not be better off with something shorter but with a different process to take that strategy—that vision—forward into more detailed areas that are clearly defined?

Professor Gearson: I will let James come back on the thinking in 2010. It seems to me, as an observer, that there was an attempt to try to bring Departments in from behaving as if they were not part of the process to passing statements or positions into the Cabinet Office, which were then collated in the NSS. I suppose that the logical end result is to have this one document. Even last time, we had two documents. I happen to think that if we can ultimately find a mechanism that enables Departments to believe they are part of the process, your suggestion would be a good one.

The security strategy should be a statement of principles and aspirations—a vision, if you like—but not at the expense of the Departments going back to normal business and saying, “Oh yes, the Cabinet Office produces an NSS every five years. That’s not really our business.” It is absolutely essential that the spending Ministries and the lead Ministries are integral to the process, and not merely detached observers and contributors on some occasions. That is my worry about going back to separating them.

Professor Porter: The US is an interesting example, in the way that you have, on the one hand, a very elaborate security architecture of advice and consultation that is mandated by law and yet, on the other hand, it produces, as you said, this relatively short document, which is almost a theological statement about American leadership. That is not without value; it can signal a lot of things. The danger is that it gets so general, so undefined and so unbounded that it becomes more of a symbolic signalling document than a strategic document that is about some calculation of ends, ways and means.

What the US does have is a quadrennial defence review. The worry, as I understand it, in America is that the two things do not inform each other very well, that there is this very general document and a very specific process within the Pentagon and that there is not enough of an intellectual bridge, with one informing the other.

James de Waal: The Government deserve a fair amount of credit for making this a real so-called cross-cutting exercise. As Professor Gearson says, they declined to remain in departmental silos in how they were approaching this, partly, I think, for reasons of corporate government as well as because that makes sense theologically.

I think that with all these documents, the key is that people will be asking, “What does this mean in practice?” Although these big statements of vision are interesting for academics, practitioners will be looking at where the rubber hits the road and at what this means in

terms of change, in particular. There are a number of ways in which you could do that. For example, you could ask the National Security Adviser, "When you are next taking a paper about China, how does this relate to what you put in the National Security Strategy? Is there a direct channel between what you are saying?" Of course, he will say, "Of course there is a connection," but then you can say, "Well, where are the financial connections? How does your financial planning work out? What is it you have to re-evaluate in the National Security Strategy as a result of your decision?"

Chair: I am going to move on to the next section: threats and risks. Lord West.

Q14 Lord West of Spithead: This is really thinking about how we constructed this. Primarily, we did it in 2008-09 and then even more so in 2010 and 2015 to do with threats and risks. We have always had the classified NRA, which we have looked at anyway, and there has been talk already about how the nature and range of threats have changed, although the only thing that all of us in this room know absolutely is that none of us can predict whatsoever what is likely to happen in the next 24 hours. When that thing happens, that will become one of the risks and threats, and we will all say, "Well, of course, that is one of our risks and threats", but within the next 24 hours it could be something totally different. I am not sure whether we have really grasped that within the context of this. Are there known threats that are not addressed in it?

The other question I would ask is about the seriousness of a threat compared with its likelihood. For example, with a terrorist getting an improvised nuclear device, it is a pretty serious threat if one of those goes off in London. That is up there somewhere, isn't it? I was always told as a Minister that because of all the things we had in place the likelihood was very low, but it did not mean that I did not want to look at it at all. I am not quite sure of that sort of balance we had.

The other thing is, is the fact that there might be a typhoon that causes a bit of a problem quite the same as a world war caused by Ukraine going tits up? Sorry, I mean going wrong; I have to use the right frame of words. Do you get the feel of my concern, and do you think that this has been tackled properly within this document?

Professor Gearson: It seems to me that the difference between 2010 and 2015 is that, for example, the military are referred to, or have a role, in more of the serious tier 1 and 2 threats than in the previous document, which seemed to identify only flooding as a situation in which our armed forces might have a priority role.

I have spent many years looking at terrorism, and in objective terms road traffic accidents kill far more people in Britain than terrorism. It is too general to say that we do not care about road transport accidents and deaths—there are huge elements of our Government that concern themselves with transport—and yet terrorism is an example of a significant consequence but low-impact event that distorts policy, to some extent. That is why I would like to see this document quickly move to a review of our counter-terrorism strategy, and to make it a true strategy, so that, as you say, we can genuinely see what the actual threat of terrorism is to us.

Going back to Mr de Waal's point, the only policy impact of the terrorism agenda is to stop attacks on British streets. That is the key objective. We might say in these documents that we want to destroy terrorism as a force in global affairs, but actually, in policy terms, it is about preventing attacks—that is what comes out of genuine policy. The tiers do not give any clarity about what the priorities are. I note that there is a get-out-of-jail clause that says that tiers 1 and 2 may become more important and could expand.

I would like to see some links between the budget and the tiers so that the tiers mean something. What is the difference between tier 1, tier 2 and tier 3—other than the colour coding in the document? In policy terms, if an official reads this document, will they understand what it means? We have a significant increase in spending on the security services, but it doesn't link to which tier threats that is happening for.

To my mind, that is where the weakness comes, not that we haven't identified unidentified threats yet. Of course everything over the past four years was not predicted in the previous document. That is not the point. The point is: where should our national priorities be in the next five to 10 years? Where should spending be focused? That would be my suggestion.

Professor Porter: There is a real issue with what actually causes unpredictability in the first place. It is a good step in both documents that they try to provide an education about all the variables that go into whether something is a threat. It is about not only body count but likelihood. A terrorist carrying out a dirty bomb attack or a serial wave of bus bombings might not kill that many people compared with other things, but it would put enormous strain on social cohesion, so other things go into the impact. It is a good step that it tries to tackle that.

Things can be unpredictable not just because the world is a random, non-linear place; one of the reasons why things can be unpredictable is

that human beings have a very powerful blinder about things they do not want to believe are possible in the short or medium term. In other words, prior disbelief in a threat can be a cause of unpredictability. If you read through the SDSR 2010 document, Russia is mentioned twice, with regard to security dialogue and reducing gas or oil prices.

Q15 Lord West of Spithead: That is slightly my point.

Professor Porter: Right, but actually, if you go through it, as you know better than I do, on a range of fronts—from military exercises to rhetoric to probing British offshore waters and airspace—there was quite a lot of warning not that anything was necessarily going to happen, but that there was a possibility of it. Perhaps there was off-the-record and behind-closed-doors consideration within the risk register, but there is not much guidance about that in the document.

Q16 Lord West of Spithead: No, I'm afraid there wasn't.

Professor Porter: Right, okay. The good news is that we can do something about that. We can make ourselves more receptive to unpleasant scenarios that go against wishful thinking. There are things you can do—circuit breakers that you can build into the process—to do that. With what we are doing now, there is a similar problem but with east Asia. It is the same problem in a different setting.

James de Waal: First, on its own terms, this is not a security review. It is a security, influence and prosperity review. Some of the threats that are mentioned only come under two of those categories. That might feed into the question about whether some of these issues really ought to be in a security and defence review. Secondly, among the different tiers there does seem to be quite a category difference between things such as a massive public health crisis and terrorism in terms of the direct physical impact on individuals.

That leads on to my third point, which is about something that is missing from the review, or for which there is no evidence available: how the Government are assessing the impact of these various threats, whether in physical human life terms, economic terms, social cohesion terms, prestige terms or what have you. It may be that they are doing that but we cannot see it. Again, in theory you could link that to the financial and other costs of the various countermeasures you have put in place to deal with these particular threats. Again, though, the financial information is lacking about how the Government divide up their cake on that. That would enable you to redistribute resources, if you wanted to, and to evaluate how successful the resource spend has been.

Q17 Lord Boateng: Mr de Waal, you have served in our Diplomatic Service and are aware, as are a number of us around this table from different perspectives, of the challenges facing the office in joining up HMG's responses to crises and providing a platform for that response. Public health has risen very high up the agenda and is now a tier 1 risk, largely as a result of the incidents that have occurred in the past year or so. To what extent is this document of assistance to the practical day-to-day work in the Foreign Office, the Ministry of Defence and the Department of Health as a way of getting more co-ordinated and effective preparation for the sort of challenge that public health now presents? I am thinking, for instance, of World Health Organisation reform. Do you think that, as a result of this document, that will now go higher up the agenda of our various Departments?

James de Waal: This is not a cop-out, but I think it depends very much on the implementation mechanism. Again, I am slightly out of date with the management processes of the Foreign Office, but in theory you could try to see some formal cascade between this document and individual post-business plans or area business plans to say, for example, if you are dealing with a country where health is a major concern, that goes up your priority, and you also get more resources for that.

One of the things I would be looking for is the degree to which the spend that comes out of these various pools, the joint funds that the Government have set up, is directed according to what is set out in the document. There are various questions marks about that process, but in theory that is how it ought to work and that is where I would look to see how effectively it is being implemented.

A second subsidiary question relates to the Foreign Office's own thinking about what its role is in this area. Is it supposed to be the cutting edge of international health policy? I would doubt that. I would see the Foreign Office much more as the people who have the overview and can see how international health policy interrelates with all the other things Britain is trying to do internationally. It can try to bring a bit of direction to that. That may mean, as a result either of this document or the discussions that went into it, the Foreign Office corporately and in various key posts then decides this has gone up the agenda, but it is not clear from the document itself what is going to happen.

Q18 Lord Boateng: Professor Gearson, if you look at the US response to Ebola, it was heavily militarised so far as Liberia was concerned. Our defence forces have a very high reputation in Sierra Leone and a presence

there, although more limited than it was. We seemed to have a much more civilian-led response, certainly initially, to the crisis. Are there any lessons to be learned from that in terms of the way in which the Ministry of Defence is brought in to these conversations at an early stage, and will it be as a result of this new strategy?

Professor Gearson: There are some interesting points there. One reason why the NHS and civilian medical advice were so prominent initially is partly the fact that we have substantially reformed our structures for defence medicine over the last 20 years, so although we have a deployable capability, which was brought into this, there was a decision to put the expertise in the NHS, which the defence sector draws upon, rather than the other way round. I think the US still has a fairly independent defence medical capability. That is one observation.

The point about the document is an interesting question about something that isn't here and we haven't mentioned yet, namely, what is national security? We were asked whether this document is necessary. Is there a danger in securitising something as profound as health policy? It is a question I would have liked the document to address to some extent, at least to bound where national security ends. We can all identify things that we are pretty sure would be in it, but I do not think those parameters and boundaries are there, and I do not think that national security is automatically anything that involves certain Ministries, such as the Ministry of Defence or the Foreign Office. I do not think the Foreign Office would regard itself as exclusively an agency of national security, although it makes a very important contribution to it.

Some in the outside NGO community like to talk about national security in terms of intelligence agencies pretty much, and try to narrow it. I see from what this Committee has been looking at that you are in the middle to large area. But unless the Government want to say what is not national security, I do not think you'll get an answer to this question on a major health emergency, although it will affect our citizens and therefore Britain, as a leading member of most international organisations, would have a view. But does that make it national security? I am not certain that that is the clear-cut answer.

That would be my observation, although many years ago, the Americans—Al Gore, I believe—pushed to have HIV discussed by the National Security Council in America, and that was the first time a health question had been discussed in a country that had 50 years of experience of thinking in national security terms. I am not saying it's

wrong; I am just saying we have not bounded it in our statements thus far.

Q19 Dr Murrison: I suppose you could say that you have to make a determination as to whether security is about protecting life versus protecting liberty, is it not? And if that were the case, which one of those tier 1 risks do you think are on the edge? I say that because I know that if you went and asked the public which one they thought was the No. 1 tier 1 as it were, they would say the first one that is listed, and yet in terms of losing life I would say it's way down the list. Following on from that, to what extent do you think this presentation is politically determined as opposed to analytically determined?

Professor Gearson: It's partly about perception of risk as well. You can objectively say the public are wrong to fear terrorism, but they do fear terrorism, and so it is a failure of our counter-terrorism posture that our population feels as insecure, if not more insecure, than it did before we produced Contest. That is something that I have just argued in print recently.

Objectively, does that matter? Well, I think it does. If you say your public and their wellbeing matter, and you've got a citizen-centred national security approach, part of this is about educating the public about the objective realities, rather than just stating them in tiers. I'm not saying that terrorism should be a tier 1 threat; ultimately, it probably should be, compared with other ones. I think I would say that national security is not liberty or security; it's both, isn't it?

Professor Porter: To build on that, I think there is a very interesting tension coming out of the war on terror era, as well. Sometimes it was described or narrated as being about biological life; this is about preventing violence. On the other hand, some people say, "No, this is a threat to institutions and a threat to a way of life." Those are quite different things. If you maximise the protection of biological life, you will probably restrain or damage some of your institutions, and vice versa. There is a very difficult trade-off there, which gets to the problem with wanting not to have a language about security that is ultimately about making people very frightened indeed all the time; that can actually be quite corrosive, as I think your question was getting at, to the notion of liberty.

Q20 Baroness Falkner of Margravine: Going back to the extent to which you have securitised things, there is a lively debate in this Committee about climate change. I think Lord West alluded to it a little while ago, by asking, "Do you prioritise weather, or something else?" One

quick reply each, please: ex-post, looking at Fukushima, would you have seen that as a national security issue?

James de Waal: No

Professor Porter: Yes

Professor Gearson: I'm not sure.

Chair: On that point, I will move on to national infrastructure.

James de Waal: That's what you get if you consult academics.

Q21 Mr Wright: Following on from that, do you think that the NSS attaches sufficient weight to threats to critical national infrastructure? Am I going to get a "Yes", "No" and "Maybe" again?

James de Waal: I'm going to say that it is not my area, so I'll pass.

Professor Gearson: If I could link it to cyber a little bit, I would say that what I do not get from this is clarity about where it is held. A lot of agencies and a lot of Departments seem to have irons in this fire, so in that respect, I am not sure if it is being given the clarity that something like cyber appears to be getting, although that also seems to be the responsibility of lots of different areas of policy at the moment.

If we go back to what should be the public document, I'm not sure how far we want to talk about the risks that Lord West said we have not identified—we do not want to talk about those in too much detail—versus which bits of our critical national infrastructure are essential. I believe that resilience, which ultimately will ensure that, comes from the confidence of the public—this links to what I just said—and therefore as much openness as possible will improve our national resilience. Ultimately, this is about our society's capacity to withstand shock, however it is brought to us. It is not about the physical or even the cyber levels of our current facilities; they can be repaired. It is about our society's ability to cope with it.

Q22 Mr Wright: I'm going to come on to cyber in a moment, but I want to go down the civil nuclear route and foreign involvement in critical national infrastructure. Hinkley Point is being built by the French, and the Chinese have a 30% stake in it. Should we be worried on a national security basis about that?

Professor Gearson: You should think about it on a national security basis. In terms of being worried, I think it obviously throws up a

number of issues. It might be deemed something that you still—the French are obviously one of our closest allies and are geographically close to us. It goes back to the question of whether you can have relationships with countries that are poor in certain areas and very close in others. I think the Americans show that you can. Economically, they are very involved with China, and yet they are militarily projecting power into areas where the Chinese are seeking to change the current order. So you can act like that.

Q23 Mr Wright: There was a really interesting article in *The Times* in October last year, in which an anonymous security source stated: “There is a big division between the money men and the security side...The Treasury is in the lead and it isn’t listening to anyone—they see China as an opportunity, but we see the threat.” Is the British Government speaking with one voice here?

Professor Porter: It’s not clear, from what I know in open source, whether that is true, but there does seem to be a division of opinion between the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Treasury on the complexities of the China issue and what has been termed the “Osborne doctrine” in *The Economist*. I do not know about the inside mechanics of all that.

I do worry about this, first of all precisely because we have not gamed it out. We haven’t actually thought through the potential contingencies, were these two things to come into collision. The characterisation of China as primarily a commercial actor—or at least a commercial actor with regard to our interests and a geopolitical one with regard to the United States—could, under stress tests, become a geopolitical problem for the United Kingdom as well when the United States starts asking difficult questions. It’s not for me to dictate what the strategy ought to be in this forum, but what happens when the Anglo-American relationship and the Anglo-Chinese golden time perhaps come into collision? The nuclear investment is part of that problem, and what is Britain willing to give up if so?

James de Waal: I am not aware of the detail of this case, but I will use it to make a general point. There is often an assumption in the national security debate that autarky is the same as security—that in order to be secure, Britain must be able to do things unilaterally. There is also a respectable argument the other way that only by integrating what you are doing with other countries can you build a common interest that everything should go well. Again, without commenting on this case, I would say that in theory, you could have a situation where

this gives both China and France a strong interest in the success of this project and the continuation of good relations with the United Kingdom.

Q24 Mr Wright: In terms of ensuring that there is a level playing field and that the terms of trade are even, should we be worried that the source in The Times says that the Chinese could be planting software bugs in our nuclear power stations. Is that sufficiently addressed as part of our national security concerns? Would we be subject to nuclear blackmail as a result and therefore critical, nationally important infrastructure, such as our energy supply, goes down?

James de Waal: The technical answer is one that is very difficult to give from outside, but the political answer is one where you have to think about the circumstances under which that might happen. Why might that be in the interests of China or France? What would be the knock-on consequences? How might a situation arise where that would be possible? Those are the sorts of things that you can explore in a national security strategy, but you cannot necessarily make a judgment about the detail of whether it would be conceivably technically possible.

Professor Gearson: I would also just comment that we are talking about this case on its own, but you could say that this is something where the national security approach to energy security would bring that whole approach where we can say that we have significant relationships with gas supplies and access to oil and to renewables. Nuclear power is one part of this, so the national security risk is only one factor in that whole energy security question for our country. On your point about software, one has to assume that that would have been considered, given that they are not going to be the operators, but I do not think we have that information in the public domain.

Q25 Mr Wright: May I move on to cyber? The NSS states: "The range of cyber actors threatening the UK has grown. The threat is increasingly asymmetric and global. Reliable, consistent cyber defence typically requires advanced skills and substantial investment." Does the UK have sufficient skills and investment to meet our national security needs?

James de Waal: Again, it is a very difficult question for me to answer, but one of the striking things about the development of national security strategies over the past five or six years is that what did seem to be a very minority issue—cyber—has now almost come to dominate the area. That would suggest by analogy that certainly in the policy area, there is a great deal of focus on this. It does seem to be the fashionable subject, even to the extent that if you have got a Whitehall project and you want a little bit of extra money for it, you find some

sort of cyber connection. I would say that certainly in the formal profile that has been given to cyber, in the investigation of the various different policy ramifications and in the practice with which the Whitehall machine is learning to deal with the issues, there has been quite a big change in how the Government are doing this. Whether that has turned into front-line talent, I am not sure.

Q26 Mr Wright: Any other comments?

Professor Gearson: I think this is an example of the strength of the national security approach. Cyber is something that requires pan-Government thinking. I would say that the private sector is not as fully engaged with Government as it should be, and that is something that I hope will come out of the various strategy documents. As I alluded to, the fact is that the personnel in some of these offices seem to be quite quickly changed, and that is a subject that could do with some consistent, coherent leadership, rather than it being just another thing that is being delivered.

Professor Porter: Thinking about the nature of cyber capability itself, there is a great bias towards the offensive power of cyber—the ability of an attacker to break in to disrupt critical infrastructure. There is some of that, but cyber as I understand it also gives some important advantages to defenders. They can design their own environment and build in redundancy. It is much harder to inflict a crippling strategic border strike than people think. The amount of intelligence penetration that had to go into the Stuxnet, which was then attributed, probably rightly, to actors—it is not necessarily an invisible thing where no one can work out where it came from, if it is of a sufficient order of magnitude.

Q27 Mr Wright: That is an important point. Do you think that our national skills capability as a public sector—GCHQ and the intelligence services—and that relationship with the private sector are sufficiently advanced to ensure that we can protect our national interests?

Professor Porter: My sense is what Professor Gearson said—not as much as it could be; but it is just, I think, that there are things that can be done quite practically to build up resilience against it, at the lower level, than the way it is often talked about, in terms of an electronic Pearl Harbour or electronic Armageddon, which are some of the ways it is being talked about in the US.

Q28 Mr Wright: There is always a tension between individual privacy and national security. In terms of these big global companies now collecting an enormous amount of data—Google, Facebook—are they undermining our UK security?

James de Waal: You want me to say that Google is undermining UK security? I think I would be quite brave if I were to say that. What worries me is the accountability process. How are large companies being held accountable? The focus recently has been on “Are they paying enough tax?” We can see there is an odd combination of national regulation, which has got to be the key there, plus, kind of, the court of public appeal, plus potential impact on share prices if companies are not perceived to be behaving in a way which is going to have consequences for them with various regulations.

Q29 Mr Wright: But you have seen the thing that is happening in the States with Apple. Is something similar going to happen here?

James de Waal: There has got to be a combination of this kind of broader regulatory approach, plus all the relationship building that is going on, which tries to avoid these sorts of problems coming to confront one another. I would imagine that quite a lot of that is going on, in particular because there is a certain amount of technical overlap between what private companies want to do and what Governments want to do; but again it is difficult for me to give you a judgment on this.

Professor Gearson: One of the interesting areas is that obviously the research funds available to these private sector companies completely dwarf anything that Governments can bring to it—even the US Government; but let’s talk about Britain at the moment. So we have to collaborate with them; but clearly many of these companies in other countries, but possibly here, in the future, are communicating with our publics and saying that they can define our national security interests, rather than the state.

Sorry to get a bit theoretical, but I think it is a really interesting question. Who represents the interests of the public? In a democracy we would say that it is the members of this Committee and the people in this House who are supposed to do it; but the companies are saying “We are going to define what is acceptable privacy, and what isn’t.” I think that is a direct challenge to any country’s national security policy. Who is going to adapt most? We will see.

Chair: The words “a law unto themselves” come to mind.

Q30 Lord Clark of Windermere: Perhaps I should just declare an interest, although technically I do not need to do so. I was a director of Sellafield Ltd for seven years, both in the private company and the state organisation. There was question that Mr Wright raised, very perceptively, about the dangers of France, and especially China, being involved in our provision—and it isn't only the provision of energy; I emphasise that—through nuclear means. Of course it is worth reminding ourselves that we built and operated the first civil nuclear power station in the world. We were for many years the world's leaders; and then for a strange reason, for which we politicians, I guess, are as responsible as anyone else, we lost that capability. We are now in the position that we just don't have the individuals or the resources, let alone the money—but I think the money could be found—to build a nuclear power station.

I have got two questions. The first one is very simple. Do you think, if there had been a national security strategy 20 years ago, that matter might have been raised, and we would not find ourselves in this parlous situation today?

James de Waal: My knowledge of this comes not from reading the new book about it, but reading a review in the Financial Times over the weekend of a book about British nuclear policy, which suggests that this attempt to develop a UK gas-cooled alternative to the pressurised water reactor in the US was flawed from the start, basically because the risks were understated, and there had been a strategic decision by the British Government at the time in the 1960s or '70s that this was important, presumably for political as well as so-called strategic reasons.

Having a strategic approach does not guarantee that you get the right answer. Again, how you measure that up against the energy commitment that you have, because you are depending on Middle Eastern supplies, for example, is one of these tricky balancing questions. My starting point is that I am very sceptical of suggestions that the UK needs to pick winners and say, "We need a national ability to do this or that". I think probably there is quite a narrow range of things. If other countries don't seem to need this, what is it that makes the UK so special? There are other areas—other issues—to do with prestige and credibility and our image of ourselves that I think are valid, but one needs to be clear about why we are doing this, and the case of nuclear power seems to be one that raises more questions and says, "Actually, this is what we ought to have done."

Q31 Lord Clark of Windermere: The follow-on from that is that there is now discussion about what happens if we do not go ahead with Hinkley

Point. There is a great deal of emphasis on smaller, modular nuclear providers. I am pretty sure that, in terms of energy production, that is feasible, although it is not proven yet. It is probably manageable financially, and we might even be able to play a part in the development ourselves, but I do emphasise that the thing that separates nuclear power from any other provision of energy is that it is not only providing energy. The reason why we had the world's first civil nuclear thing was because we wanted the material for defence purposes, for the strategic nuclear deterrent. That is why we did it, and we must never forget that. When you think of Sellafield, where there is currently 80 years' work just cleaning up nuclear facilities and material there, you realise there is an extra challenge on top of the energy provision.

My question is this: if there happened to be a nuclear risk with the smaller—because there are many more of them—nuclear providers, how would that get fed into the National Security Strategy? How would it get fed into the review, given the structure of Government and the level of devolution, of the nuclear industry?

Chair: Before I ask anyone to answer, may I draw the Committee's attention to a rather uncomfortable fact? The Minister has been on her feet now for about 10 minutes, and that may mean that we are heading for a Division, in which case Commons Members will be vanishing. So if I could invite you to be relatively brief, so that we can get Lord Mitchell in before the Division, that would be good. We were going to go on to military capability. If we find ourselves in the position where that is not realistic, perhaps we could write to you all with the outstanding issues that we would like raised. Sorry to butt in in that way, but I thought it was better to warn you now than to hear a horrible clanging noise.

Professor Gearson: I will make one point, if I may. That would be the strength of having a standing advisory body that included industry representatives, and I would expect that to include people from the nuclear industry. This is the point: the relationship with the private sector is so undeveloped. The private sector is called in on occasions, but I know for a fact that if you asked the private sector, they would say they do not know who to speak to. Individual Departments, yes, but not on a national security basis.

James de Waal: This points to a broader issue, which is not just what is the National Security Strategy for, but who makes it, which I think was the title of an inquiry a few years ago. I think there is something to be said for the French model, which is something that wider society owns and where you are open to that kind of expertise and critique. At the same time, it is an opportunity to go and educate as well. So I

think that in terms of working out your concept of the national interest and what that means, it is something that can carry opinion. That is where your point fits a wider debate about the very exercise itself.

Q32 Lord Mitchell: I am very concerned about what I feel are Trojan horses in everything to do with cyber-security. Going back to Hinkley Point, there is not a person in this room who would doubt that the People's Republic of China probably has the most advanced computer cyber-terrorism or cyber-investigation—call it what you want—in the world, and it is state-sponsored. They spend huge amounts of time on it and have many people doing it. They are attacking defence throughout the world—America, this country, wherever. Whatever makes us think that when they do this at Hinkley Point, suddenly they are going to be reformed characters and we are not going to have a Trojan horse at Hinkley Point or, indeed, in some of our communications infrastructure? That is one point.

Secondly, as Iain Wright said before, these American companies—Google, Facebook and, I would say, Apple—have huge amounts of data on people in this country. I brought up this point last time and I received a letter back from Apple telling me that I was totally misguided, that this information goes no further and that it is all kept secure. It basically said, "You should trust us." My basic view on all of this is, "Pay your taxes and perhaps we will trust you." But they tend not to do that. I think we have a major issue that we are not really addressing. I am not sure what my question is. I am just making a statement; full stop.

Chair: Do any of you want briefly to comment? If not, Lady Buscombe would like to ask a question.

Q33 Baroness Buscombe: I was going to come in on that very point if I may, Chair, to say that I have written down here that there are some quite interesting analogies between nuclear and the internet. There is an awful lot of good and an awful lot of not so good. In which case, and going to Lord Clark's point, we lost 20 years of skill sets and so on. We should not be sitting here in 20 years' time, thinking, "God, why didn't we properly and carefully collaborate with the Googles and Facebooks and use their intelligence and their budget, which we would kill for?" That could help us in a sense—through an advisory board, as you are proposing—to navigate some of this very difficult area.

Professor Gearson: If I may make one observation, it seems to me that the secret state—the security state—in the United Kingdom has come to accept that it has to codify the powers that it is given in a

more transparent way. Hence we have the Bill going through Parliament now, which I see as a sea change in 25 years of looking at this. I would just observe that these private sector companies that you are talking about will have the same realisation that they will have to fundamentally change how they approach the public and their relationship with the public. At the moment they have managed to make it, "We're standing up for the public against Governments." By codifying in a transparent and open way, as it seems that we are doing, the pressure is going to shift to some of those companies. I am not optimistic about how quickly that will happen, but I think it is inevitable that there will be a process of transparency.

Chair: We will move on to military capability.

Q34 Lord Clark of Windermere: Let me make the obvious point to start with. It is quite uncomfortable for politicians to debate military issues because, in a sense, we are the opposite. I mean, you bring in the military when we, as politicians, have basically failed. That is the truth of the matter. Nevertheless, we must have some democratic control of the military, and it is quite right that we, as politicians, try to set the overall strategy. If we look at the SDSR, does the UK have the equipment, personnel, infrastructure and skills—I mention skills again—to implement the military strategy set out in it? How do they fit in with the current planned spending on defence as we go forward?

Professor Porter: To praise this document and this exercise, I think it does actually think very seriously about matching up investment in hard capabilities with its objectives. It is not necessarily spelled out in so many words, but it does shift to more of a raiding disruption posture than long-term expeditionary nation building—call it what you like—or light constabulary work. It gives Britain more of a power to do that in terms of disrupting terrorist networks and that kind of thing.

I think the worry is that if the environment out there keeps getting worse, it would be difficult in an age of what we call access or area denial—a time when it is getting easier to find ships and sink ships. That is going to pose some serious problems for a Royal Navy that has exquisite capabilities but probably not enough of an escort fleet. The carriers could either be endangered or you would not dare risk using them. There are also not enough people to run them, so I think at the moment it is okay, but if things keep getting worse in the international relations world, there could be some problems.

Chair: I am sorry; I have to call the Committee to order. That faint noise is the Division bell. There are a large number of amendments

grouped, so the chances are there will be more than one Division. So whether we like it or not, I am afraid this is the end of the session. Can I thank our witnesses very much indeed on behalf of the whole Committee?