

Committees on Arms Export Controls

Oral evidence: The Arms Trade Treaty HC 492

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Questions [50 - 75]

Members present: Chris White (Chair), Douglas Chapman, Jeremy Lefroy, Amanda Milling, Mr Virendra Sharma, Stephen Twigg

Witness: **Dr Anna Stavrianakis**, Senior Lecturer in International Relations, University of Sussex, gave evidence.

Q50 Chair: Dr Stavrianakis, you have kindly appeared before this Committee twice, so thank you for that. Could you introduce yourself and your work on the arms trade treaty, to give a bit of context?

Dr Stavrianakis: My name is Anna Stavrianakis. I am senior lecturer in international relations at the University of Sussex. I have been researching and teaching on UK and international arms export controls for over a decade, and some of that has included work directly on the arms trade treaty and participant observation at some of the treaty negotiations.

Q51 Chair: How do you view the significance internationally of the treaty? What do you think the role of the UK was in negotiating the treaty in the first place?

Dr Stavrianakis: Under the arms trade treaty, there are now international legally binding rules, based on international humanitarian law and human rights standards, governing international arms transfers. That fact is in itself of significance; it is a major international achievement, especially now that at least two thirds of the world's states say publicly that they are committed to improving regulation of the arms trade. That in and of itself is a considerable achievement. It also creates a yardstick by which observers and those trying to hold Governments to account, such as yourselves, can assess what states are doing.

Having said that, there are two serious challenges at stake. One is ensuring that states' practices meet that public statement of intent. Based on research that I and others have done on existing regional regimes, like the EU common position, I am nervous and sceptical about states' existing records of good practice. The second major challenge is to avoid the arms trade treaty becoming a legitimisation mechanism; that is, a means by which states parties can point to their membership of the ATT and say, "See, we are good international citizens," thereby managing their reputation in that way when their practice remains very different. The Saudi case is partly why that has become such a big issue for the UK at the moment.

Q52 Chair: You talk about holding Governments to account. Give me an example of a country. What would you consider is best practice?

Dr Stavrianakis: In terms of the ability to hold states to account?

Chair: And a Government's response to that.

Dr Stavrianakis: That is a really hard question, because the playing field is weighted so heavily against those trying to hold states to account, given the levels of secrecy and the ability of states to say that this is in the national interest or that is a defence or security issue, thereby shutting out observers. A potentially very interesting case—we need to see how it plays out—is the current judicial review against the UK Government. So far, that is an example of good practice in terms of how accountability mechanisms can work. There are three layers of law—national law, EU law and international law through the arms trade treaty—that a domestic group of activists is using to hold their Government to account in a domestic court. The High Court has now said that there is a case to answer and it can go ahead. What happens remains to be seen in the coming months, but so far that is an example of good practice.

Q53 Chair: Would it be unfair of me to ask you to predict what might happen?

Dr Stavrianakis: Yes. I am not in the job of making such predictions. The Saudi case is simultaneously a very hard case and a very easy case. It is a very easy case because the amount of evidence that has been stacking up means to me that at the very least there is a case for the Government to answer. In my mind, and that of Philippe Sands of Matrix chambers and many others, the UK is breaking the law in authorising arms exports to Saudi Arabia. In that sense, the Saudi case is an easy one because there is so much evidence. On the other hand, it is also a very hard case because Saudi Arabia now accounts for almost half of UK arms exports. If you want to see a case where arguments about national security, economic interests, strategy, stability and so on come into play, that is the case. I cannot make a prediction. If the court case can reveal some of the workings of the process whereby those licences were granted, at the very least it will give observers a better understanding of how it works.

Q54 Chair: I want to try to take it down a notch. Do you think the judicial review would have been brought about without the arms trade treaty being in place?

Dr Stavrianakis: Yes, I think it could have been, because the UK's existing obligations under the EU common position and its domestic legislation already contain the provisions that are at stake under the arms trade treaty.

Q55 Amanda Milling: Going back to the arms trade treaty, to what extent would you say it is adequate as an international agreement, and how could it be improved and made more effective?

Dr Stavrianakis: The arms trade treaty text has some quite significant weaknesses that were the result of trying to negotiate between all the UN member states over a period of years. There are issues around the scope and type of weapons that are covered, and there is an issue over the term “overriding risk” and so on. That will always be the case in any treaty that is negotiated multilaterally. You would be very lucky to get the wording that the activists and proponents want. What matters is how it is put into practice. For example, the UK is applying the ATT to the whole UK military list; it is going beyond the narrow scope as written, because there is wording in the treaty that says “encourages states to apply it in its fullest.” The wording of the treaty could have been stronger from the perspective of those interested in protecting international humanitarian law and human rights, but the wording is adequate if states wish to implement it vigorously. The core issue is the political will and the political interest in restricting arms transfers where there is a clear risk that they will violate human rights and damage international humanitarian law.

In terms of improvements, if nothing else, the schedule for making changes to the treaty is bound by the terms of the treaty; you cannot do it before 2020. I would be less

worried about changes to the wording of the treaty than about surveying states' practices and things like the conference of states parties, which is the mechanism whereby states meet to discuss it, to see how they hold one another to account, or not. I would be much more interested in looking at practice rather than the wording of the treaty in terms of making it stronger.

Q56 Douglas Chapman: You say in written evidence that the UK Government argued that the ATT would have no real effect on their arms licensing policy because they are already compliant. How much of that do you believe, and what is your current assessment of it?

Dr Stavrianakis: I was not surprised to hear the UK Government say that, because they repeatedly make the claim that they have one of the most robust regimes in the world, and so on. To its credit, the UK signed and ratified quickly, and has incorporated the ATT into national law. It has changed some of the wording of its national laws to take into account the ATT, and that is great. That is important.

My reservations are twofold. Based on the history of UK practice, under the EU common position, which has already been in force for almost 20 years, the UK still fairly regularly violates the spirit, if not the letter, of the common position. I do not see what is different about the ATT that would make the ATT have force in a way the EU common position does not have force, so I am not convinced by the history of UK practice that the ATT will make a sudden difference.

The second issue is that there is some very interesting wording in the arms trade treaty that could pose a greater problem for the UK Government than they might like to think. A good example is the language in the ATT about equipment that might be used to "commit or facilitate" human rights violations. That opens up a very interesting route for those trying to scrutinise behaviour and hold the Government to account, because so far in their export licensing they have applied a very narrow interpretation of risk and whether equipment might be used to commit violations.

That broader language of "commit or facilitate" means you are not looking at just the gun the sniper used to shoot someone or the tank the police used illegally to control a demonstration; you are looking at wider systems of military equipment that play into military and police organisational practices that are part of a system of repression. I think that could open up a way for commentators to try to hold the Government to account more thoroughly.

Q57 Mr Sharma: Is it practical to have an international body to enforce the terms of the arms trade treaty, or is it sufficient that signatories are self-policing?

Dr Stavrianakis: There is no prospect of having a supranational body, and I am not convinced, even if it were politically feasible, that it would necessarily be the most effective way forward. The best way for the arms trade treaty to proceed in terms of states holding each other to account is through the mechanism of the annual conference of states parties. What matters is practice. Are states going to use that annual meeting to discuss matters of substance around licensing decisions, or are they, as we have seen so far—admittedly, it is very early days—going to use it to discuss procedural issues as a means of not talking about issues of substance?

There are possibilities that the conference of states parties could set up subsidiary bodies, and one of those bodies could look at implementation, decisions and substance, but you fall into the problem of who will cast the first stone. There is one very easy set of criticisms that will be bandied around, for example, between western states; Russia and China will not be there because they are not signatories. There will be stone-throwing between antagonists and competitors, but among those who are like-minded who will cast the first

stone? Who will say, “Actually, that decision went against the terms of the arms trade treaty,” because another state will say, “Let’s look at your record.”? There is a political difficulty around self-policing, but it is more politically feasible, and probably more effective, than any kind of supranational body.

Q58 Jeremy Lefroy: Signatories to the treaty are supposed to undertake a risk assessment before licensing defence exports. How important is that part of the treaty, and is the UK fulfilling its obligation in that respect?

Dr Stavrianakis: The risk assessment is absolutely crucial. Article 6 contains express prohibitions and the circumstances under which states absolutely must not transfer weapons. Article 7, which is the national risk assessment whereby a state decides whether or not to license a transfer, is the absolute heart of the treaty. Is the UK fulfilling its obligations under the ATT? Looking at a case like Saudi Arabia, the answer is no. As regards the risk assessment, the language in the arms trade treaty is slightly different from something like the EU common position. The UK has made it clear that it will interpret the arms trade treaty in the light of its existing obligations under the EU common position, which contains wording about a clear risk that a proposed export might be used to commit violations of human rights. In practice, whenever challenged, the Government’s response is that there is no evidence that UK-supplied equipment has been used. That is a very different sort of statement. If you are assessing the risk that your equipment might be misused, evidence that your equipment in the past has been misused is one of the things that you will obviously take into account, but it is not the only thing you should consider.

Q59 Jeremy Lefroy: To take you up on that, let’s say the UK had been supplying weapons to the Turkish army. Last Friday, weapons of the Turkish army were used against its civilians. Turkey is a NATO member and has been a reliable ally for many years. Would you therefore say that we should have anticipated that, because Turkey has had coups in the past, we should not in that case be supplying arms to Turkey because it might have a coup in the future and the arms might be used against its civilians?

Dr Stavrianakis: That is certainly one of the conversations that should be happening.

Q60 Jeremy Lefroy: It would apply to most countries in the world in that case.

Dr Stavrianakis: Yes, and that is why it is so important.

Q61 Jeremy Lefroy: I think we are moving out of the real world if we start to take these kinds of things into consideration.

Dr Stavrianakis: It would not necessarily mean an embargo on Turkey, or that we should suspend all arms export licences, but it would mean that you look extra carefully at licences that would be likely to be used in the types of practices that you know a state has a history of doing.

Q62 Jeremy Lefroy: How far back do you go? Would you therefore not supply weapons to France because of Algeria in the 1950s? Where is the cut-off?

Dr Stavrianakis: I do not think there is a single historical cut-off; it depends on the country, the recent past and the political context. If the armed forces, police forces or paramilitary forces have a historical record that has not really gone away and, while things seem calm now, you know that if there are protests, there is likely to be a repressive response, it is a judgment. It is important to recognise that it is always a judgment. It also depends on whether you see the arms trade primarily in terms of a trade like any other—except it is not really like any other because the stuff is dangerous so you place extra layers of control on it—

or you see it as a strategic, military and security issue whereby you do it only if you are sure that it will contribute positively to your aims. They are quite different approaches to the whole question of who you export to, why you export, what risks might be associated with it and the controls you want to put on it.

Jeremy Lefroy: Perhaps I may follow up.

Chair: Yes, I am very interested to hear the answer.

Q63 Jeremy Lefroy: Probably in an ideal world one would just manufacture weapons for one's own defence and not export them, because you would not want to do that, but in the practical world you cannot undertake the cost of being self-sufficient in manufactured weapons to defend yourself without engaging in exports, and clearly that is where this treaty plays a very important role. If you have to take into account circumstances that occurred quite a long time ago in respect of your customers—America with the Vietnam war, and France and Algeria in the 1950s—we could go back to our own record, which is not great in certain places. If the United States was a signatory, which it is not, it might say that certain things the United Kingdom had done in the past means that it will not do it. You end up effectively bringing the whole thing to a grinding halt and leaving the entire manufacture of weapons in the hands of Russia and China, which will never be signatories to it as far as we can see. In my view, you are then almost handing control of security to those countries. That is the long-term potential implication of what you are saying.

Dr Stavrianakis: Potentially. I think that is quite a dramatic example.

Jeremy Lefroy: I agree, but I am trying to tease out where you would draw the line.

Dr Stavrianakis: I appreciate the core of what you are saying, which is the question of how far back you look and how cautious you need to be. In many cases, you do not need to look that far back. Some cases are harder than others. Other cases are not really that hard, and you do not have to look that far back. The Saudi case is a good one. You do not have to look that far back. At the beginning, when there was the whole discussion about the Saudis not being really engaged in a regional war before—“It's the first time they're using the equipment and they might not know what they're doing”—there was a very small window of time when that may have had some credence, but by this stage you can look to the quite recent past and see evidence, and have information, that suggests there is going to be a problem.

In cases of exports to middle eastern or north African states in the Arab spring, there was a sense of surprise. The protests and the response to them took policy makers by surprise, but equally you have been supplying weapons to those repressive regimes for decades, and it is only by luck that you have not had something like this already. It is about overall orientation. What is the nature of the regime we are supporting? What is the weight and role of their coercive agencies, their military, police and paramilitary forces? What type of society is it, and which social forces are we supporting when we supply weapons to them? Depending on how you understand foreign policy, you will have very different answers to that question.

Q64 Chair: What you have been saying is quite interesting, not least about the time lag and the historical information we have. To take Jeremy's line of questioning, if it was a positive regime change, there could be a very narrow gap of time between when it would be unacceptable to supply arms and when it would be acceptable. How would you include that in your judgments?

Dr Stavrianakis: There are certain indicators you can look at. You can look at a state's military doctrine. Does the training of their police forces in the use of weapons include adherence to international standards? Often in those cases there would be international support for that transition, so you build that in. Is adherence to certain rules and systems set out in that? I do not think anybody is arguing for a black and white, yes/no situation; these

things always require judgment and they are always historically contingent. Having said that, I think some of the decisions have been historically myopic; they have been either politically myopic or politically interested. On the one hand, it requires judgment; on the other hand, some of those judgments have been disastrous.

Q65 Chair: From your responses, I understand that you would not have supplied any defence exports to Turkey. Is that what you are saying?

Dr Stavrianakis: If I was who? If I was the Minister in charge?

Chair: If you were the person signing the licence.

Dr Stavrianakis: In what time span? When did I have this role?

Chair: In the scenario Jeremy put in front of you.

Dr Stavrianakis: I asked those questions because I think it matters when you are talking about. If I had been in charge of export licensing to Turkey over the last several years, I would have been trying to make sure that I got input from the human rights people in the Foreign Office and from those parts of the licensing bureaucracy that pay attention to the likelihood of protest and the likelihood of the regime to respond violently, the economic role of the military in Turkey and so on. I would be trying to get a sense of the place of the military and police forces in society. I would hope to have had an in-depth understanding of the power of the military and police forces in Turkey up to that point.

Q66 Stephen Twigg: You have already touched upon Yemen and the impact of defence exports to Saudi Arabia, and I think you have answered my question in part, but I would like to give you the opportunity to set it out fully. You have described defence exports to Saudi Arabia while the conflict in Yemen is ongoing as “the first real test of UK arms exports policy under the ATT.” Could you set out for the Committee exactly what you mean by that, and whether and why the UK might be in breach of its obligations under the treaty?

Dr Stavrianakis: The arms trade treaty has been in force since December 2014. At that point the UK, having signed and ratified it and made clear that it did not envisage any significant change to its arms export policy, was faced with criticisms about its arms export policy and practice towards Saudi Arabia with the outbreak of the war in Yemen. In that sense, for the UK Government it is sheer bad luck that the Yemen conflict kicked off at the point when it was a signatory to a treaty that it had made quite loud public noises about supporting. In that sense, it was simply a case of timing. Sorry, I’ve forgotten the second question.

Q67 Stephen Twigg: Are we in breach of our obligations?

Dr Stavrianakis: Under the terms of the arms trade treaty, specifically article 6.3, which is about whether the state has knowledge at the time of authorisation that the equipment will be used in war crimes, by now I think there is significant evidence to suggest that the Government either had, or at the very least should have had, knowledge that that would happen, so that would fall under the prohibitions, and there are exports that should have been prohibited. The next stage of applying the ATT is the national risk assessment. If an export is not prohibited under article 6, you move on to apply article 7 where you are assessing whether there is an overriding risk that the proposed export might be used for violations of human rights. There is significant evidence to suggest that that is the case. You have yourselves heard from Philippe Sands QC. It is the opinion of Matrix chambers that the UK is indeed in breach and that is precisely what is being tested in the courts.

Somebody asked earlier—it might have been Amanda—whether it was only because of the ATT that this case could be brought. I think that, under the terms of the EU common position, arms exports to Saudi Arabia would also have been illegal because of the wording

about clear risk of use in violation of international humanitarian law and human rights. The fact of the arms trade treaty simply adds another layer; it is another legal instrument to point to—another way to say, “You are violating this, this and this.” There are international, EU and national obligations.

Q68 Stephen Twigg: How credible do you find the UK’s claim that the UK is not a party to the conflict in Yemen?

Dr Stavrianakis: I find it politically very interesting, and I do not find it credible. The reason the UK can say that is that it is not a formally declared state party. The UK is not at war with Yemen in formal terms. In another sense, the UK is at war in Yemen because it is supplying weapons and military advice to one of the key parties, the Saudi-led coalition. In that sense, I would say the UK Government are heavily involved in the war in Yemen. The UK Government are also heavily involved in the war in Yemen through DFID and the enormous role it has been playing in providing humanitarian assistance. You have two sets of competing claims. Surely, this suggests a contradiction at the heart of Government policy. On the one hand, you have the MOD and the Foreign Office engaging in military and diplomatic support for the war; on the other, you have DFID mopping up, essentially. The counter to that is that they are complementary, because in order to improve the humanitarian situation, you need a peace process and we provide military support in support of that peace process. That is the political contestation that is going on at the moment.

Q69 Stephen Twigg: To ask a broader question, in the recent strategic defence and security review, the Government placed promoting defence exports at the centre of trade policy. When you spoke earlier you talked about a dilemma or choice between seeing the arms trade in trade terms and seeing it in more strategic terms. Do you think putting defence exports at the centre of trade policy is compatible with the ATT?

Dr Stavrianakis: In the way the UK goes about it, I don’t think so. The arms trade treaty is designed to protect the legitimate international transfer of weapons. In that sense, they are not at odds with each other. However, the imbalance between promotion and regulation is such that in UK practice those things are at odds. The promotion of defence exports as a matter of trade policy is wrong on several levels. It is economically wrong because the economic arguments around arms exports are overstated and contested. Unfortunately, there is not a lot of research going on about that. There is much more room for robust political debate about the actual economic benefits of arms exports.

Q70 Chair: That is quite a big thing to say. Can you support that?

Dr Stavrianakis: There was a flurry of work in the 1990s that looked precisely at the issue of jobs and the economic arguments around arms exports. There are quite clearly two camps. One camp supports the MOD and Government line about the number of jobs and the economic gains made by arms exports. There is another strand of research that says, “Hang on a second. You didn’t take into account state subsidy on research and development. You didn’t take into account the role of the armed forces in demonstrating and promoting all these items. You didn’t take into account the opportunity costs of other forms of high-tech engineering and highly skilled work that could be done in the UK if we had a different orientation towards our economic policy.” These are really big questions. In the 1990s there was a flurry of debate about it and the reports were quite diametrically opposed. That debate has unfortunately died away. Now I see the Government being able to make a series of claims that there is not much new research on investigating. For me, it is very much an open question whether arms exports are beneficial to the UK economy.

Beyond that, there is also a strategic question about whether it is wise to send so much military equipment into regions like the middle east when you do not know where the weapons will end up. There are questions of blow-back. Weapons are transferred to one party and diverted to another and they reverberate back on you. Therefore, there are strategic questions before you get into any of the moral and ethical questions about what it is to sell arms. In the UK, the debate very quickly moves between the two poles of jobs and skills, and morals and ethics, and it is quite difficult to have a sensible nuanced debate about what is actually happening.

Q71 Stephen Twigg: Is there a country having this debate in a more nuanced way? Is there a country that still has an arms industry and is selling arms but where the regulatory aspects are given greater weight?

Dr Stavrianakis: The Saudi case has shown us some of the good practice of countries such as Sweden, the Netherlands—Flanders, because of their funny system. They are not exporters on the same scale as the UK.

Q72 Stephen Twigg: Of course, but they are exporters; they are not countries that have taken a decision absolutely not to have an arms export industry.

Dr Stavrianakis: Exactly. They are in something of the same ballpark as the UK; they are fellow EU member states and parties to the same EU common position. They are significant arms exporters to Saudi Arabia and the middle east, and they have taken those decisions partly because of the economic status of their industry, their political culture and so on.

Q73 Jeremy Lefroy: You present it as a dichotomy between jobs and industry and the moral and ethical considerations. I would say there is a third consideration, which is national defence. The United Kingdom has always wanted to have, quite rightly, an independent defence industry to protect ourselves, and the whole rationale for exports is that they reduce the cost of our defence. We have to make a decision. We can say that we will continue to build our own aircraft and ships, by and large, and not sell any overseas, except to wonderful countries like Switzerland and so on, and accept that the cost to us will be much greater in our defence budget. We will have to spend an awful lot more because a lot of the money is tied up in fixed costs, as we saw with the Type 45 frigates; the cost of building 12 and the cost of building five or seven was not proportionate, and a huge amount was involved in research and development. If we are to have an independent defence industry—certainly this Government and, I believe, all Governments would want that, because we do not want to be dependent on anybody else for defence—and we are not going to engage in large-scale exports, which account for about 35% to 40% of defence turnover, we will probably have to spend in the order of 1% or 2% more of GDP on defence to get the same type of equipment as we have at the moment. Surely, that is at the heart of the argument.

Dr Stavrianakis: A few things are at stake there. One is the level of internationalisation of the arms industry. There is not really anything called the UK defence industry any more. BAE Systems sells more to the US DOD than it does to the UK MOD. Is BAE a British company? BAE is also an American company, because the US has rules that you have to be a US company to sell to the US military. BAE has designated India as a home market and has a hub-and-spokes system for its production and trading. BAE plays very heavily on the British angle. All its adverts are against the backdrop of the Union Jack and it makes claims about being the biggest employer of apprentices and so on. It plays that card depending on which audience it is speaking to, which makes complete sense; that is exactly what you do if you are a major international company. But the internationalisation of the arms

industry is such that there is no longer anywhere a national defence industry. Even the US, which is the only country that can make any plausible claim to that, is the 10th largest arms importer in the world. There is an agreement between the US and Canada such that there is cross-border production that is tariff-free and so on, but it is still internationalised.

UK defence is not solely a unilateral thing. The UK is a member of NATO. There is a host of co-operative military and security arrangements that exist to protect the UK and for it to contribute to protecting others, so the idea of national defence and that, in the last instance, we have to defend ourselves is not really true. We are so enmeshed in co-operative and internationalised arrangements that things are a lot more interconnected.

Finally, there is a real issue in the UK around problems the military is having in equipping its troops appropriately. We have seen countless examples of soldiers being killed because they were inadequately equipped. Therefore, you have that very real problem set against what I would call gold-plating—big, expensive, prestige projects that may or may not be used and may or may not be strategically useful but consume large amounts of money and much political attention. You have very expensive kit that is always late and over budget and whether or not we need it is strategically contested, and then the very real questions about boots, radios, armoured vehicles and so on.

Q74 Jeremy Lefroy: With all due respect, having been through the armed forces parliamentary scheme and discussed that question of equipment, it is true that five to 10 years ago that might have been the case, but things have considerably improved in that respect. I place that on the record. The message we are getting back in terms of day-to-day equipment is that it is better. I am not saying it is perfect, but we are getting the message from people on the ground that it has improved substantially since perhaps the mid-2000s under all Governments.

Dr Stavrianakis: That is good to hear.

Q75 Chair: Some of the areas you have been talking about will feed into one of our future inquiries in terms of UK defence export promotion. I think you have a lot to say on that subject. The final question of pretty much any Select Committee on any subject is: what are your views on the result of the referendum—in this area? Keep it narrow.

Dr Stavrianakis: Thanks for the clarification. Arms export regulation is and always has been a national prerogative, so even though the UK is party to the EU common position it still has to be implemented nationally. The same thing applies to the arms trade treaty. In or out of the EU, arms export regulation has been and will continue to be a national prerogative. Having said that, the EU has been an important institutional mechanism for trying to harmonise—it has not been enormously successful—practice among EU member states. The whole premise of a multilateral regime is to try to prevent a race to the bottom. There have been information-sharing mechanisms and attempts to harmonise practice across the EU. If the UK is no longer part of that, it is an open question whether the Government will think that they are then freed from any obligation to harmonise with EU member states, or whether they want to influence interpretation by other EU member states. That would then become politically very tricky.

There is a range of EU-level directives and rules. When the UK leaves the EU there will have to be serious amounts of institutional work. Those are the examples Oliver and Roy talked to you about: dual use regulations, inter-community trade, the transfer directive and so on. If nothing else, Brexit will increase the bureaucratic and institutional costs for the UK of regulating its arms exports, aside from causing a massive headache for all those involved.

The final thing is that we should pay close attention to the institutional changes that have happened already in light of Theresa May becoming Prime Minister—the institutional

changes she has made. The splitting of BIS into the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on the one hand and International Trade on the other raises the question of where the regulatory arm will sit. It comes back to the issue I raised with you previously: do you see it primarily as a trade issue or a strategic issue? In the splitting of BIS, the question is whether you see it as an export issue and put it with international trade, or as an industrial strategy issue. If you really think that jobs and skills are important, maybe you put it with industrial strategy, quite aside from whether you would want to put it somewhere else completely because it is a question of strategy and security so you would want to take it out of an economic or a trade situation.

There have already been some quite interesting domestic changes that are related to Brexit but have not been made with arms export licensing in mind. Arms export licensing is a technical niche area that is really significant. I am nervous about what will happen to all that expertise. A good example is that there are two new joint units, and one, which is directly on arms exports—the exports controls unit—is supposed to be going live in July. I have not been able to talk to anyone yet to know what is going to happen to that joint unit, but it was supposed to feature people from BIS, the FCO and the MOD. Who is going to be in that now? Who will head it? What work will it do? I have no idea. There are some quite serious institutional questions at stake.

Chair: Thank you very much. I think you have perhaps posed more questions than you answered. Thank you. It is always great to see you. I thank everybody for attending.