

Defence Committee

Oral evidence: [The Indispensable Ally? US, UK and UK Defence Relations, HC 992](#)

Tuesday 18 April 2017

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Members present: Dr Julian Lewis (Chair); Douglas Chapman; James Gray; Jack Lopresti; Johnny Mercer; Mrs Madeleine Moon; Gavin Robinson; Mr John Spellar; Bob Stewart.

Questions 135-189

Witnesses

I: Dr David Blagden, Lecturer in International Security and Strategy, University of Exeter, Professor Patrick Porter, Academic Director, Strategy and Security Institute, University of Exeter, and Dr Martin Zapfe, Head, Global Security Team, Center for Security Studies.

Written evidence from witnesses:

- [Dr David Blagden and Professor Patrick Porter \(INA0006\)](#)



Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Dr David Blagden, Professor Patrick Porter and Dr Martin Zapfe.

Q135 **Chair:** Good afternoon and welcome to this session of our inquiry, “The indispensable ally? United States, NATO and UK defence relations.” Before I ask the members of our panel very briefly to introduce themselves, we will all be very well aware that the Prime Minister has decided to call a general election for 8 June. This means that we will not have time to publish a report on this important inquiry before Parliament is dissolved. However, I wish to assure everyone concerned, particularly our witnesses, who are giving up their time and giving us the benefit of their expertise this afternoon, that the evidence that is given today will not be wasted. It will be published in the usual way, and I am absolutely certain that our successor Committee will return to this matter as a priority. Would you introduce yourselves briefly for the record, starting with you, David?

Dr Blagden: I am David Blagden. I am Lecturer in International Security and Strategy at the University of Exeter.

Professor Porter: Good afternoon. I am Patrick Porter. I am Professor of Strategic Studies at the University of Exeter.

Chair: Welcome back.

Professor Porter: Thank you.

Dr Zapfe: Good afternoon. I am Martin Zapfe from the Center for Security Studies in Zurich, Switzerland.

Chair: Thank you very much for coming today. Our questioning will begin with Johnny Mercer.

Q136 **Johnny Mercer:** Thank you very much for coming. I will start with you, Dr Zapfe, and work down the line, very broadly at first. Do you think the UK is over-reliant on the US as a military partner?

Dr Zapfe: First of all, as a German working in Switzerland who is obviously non-British, I will reserve judgment on the specific defence policy of the United Kingdom in these times. Suffice it to say that I think Europe as a whole is overly reliant on the US when it comes to its security. That is the case not just for the UK, but for NATO and also the European Union as far as military matters are concerned.

Q137 **Johnny Mercer:** What are the dangers associated with that and how on earth do we get to a place where we are not overly reliant on them?

Dr Zapfe: The danger is obviously that for decades European states have spent too little money on defence issues. As you well know, we are well below the 2% threshold on defence spending. This has repercussions for



HOUSE OF COMMONS

capabilities, for forces, for plans and all aspects of national defence planning. For the last 25 years Europe has enjoyed what can be described as a peace dividend. My own country—Germany—is first and foremost among those countries. That has created, to a certain degree, hollow forces. We have the tanks, we have the structures, we have nice pictures and we have certain capabilities, but it is far from certain that those forces and capabilities could be brought into effect on any battlefield.

Q138 **Johnny Mercer:** Okay. Professor Porter, what would you say to that?

Professor Porter: Britain and the European states are over-reliant on American patronage, partly because that is the intention of America's grand strategy to begin with. It is not an accident. It is not a design flaw. It was the original design to make sure America has an outsized scale and commitment for the continent to remain a European hegemony. But part of your question begs the question: how much reliance is too much? It is too much if it threatens Britain's ability to act independently in pursuit of its vital security interests in extremis when American power or American will is not there.

I very much agree with what has been said. If it is a question of how do we do it, there is the obvious answer of spending more money, but that is not very popular these days, and to buy enough security to be able to do it yourself is an expensive undertaking. Short of that, there are questions about more effective Anglo-French collaboration and whether there is a relative shift of commitment, and America is tilting more towards Asia. I don't think it will abandon Europe, but I think there is a tilt in that direction.

There is also a question about Britain being a global player. It is taken as an axiom these days that for Britain to be a legitimate international player it must be global. I would question that. I think Britain can do more to concentrate resources in its most vital region—in its back yard, as it were—particularly on NATO's eastern flank and particularly in northern Europe. There are competing views about that, but if strategy is about limitation and concentration, some hard choices must be made.

Q139 **Johnny Mercer:** Dr Blagden, is there anything you would add to that?

Dr Blagden: The flipside of Patrick's point that this is not an accident but the original design of post-1945 US-led hegemonic order has been that this is a calculation on Britain's part as well. We have been willing to consume the benefits of American hegemony—consuming a club good—which has enabled us to have other areas of social spending that we would not have been able to have in a different world where we were providing a much higher level of defence for ourselves, while retaining what we regard as certain core capabilities. We retained the ability to lift a brigade-size amphibious force to the south Atlantic. Even through the really dark days of defence spending of the 2010 SDSR, we held on to these things.

In many ways that is a prudent calculation. The problem is that we then forget that it is a strategic calculation and a trade-off, and mistake it for a



HOUSE OF COMMONS

change in the nature of the world. We are building up these intellectual dependencies and not doing strategy for ourselves, but consuming American-supplied security and both the intellectual dependencies and the material dependencies that we might be storing up alongside that scene. We operate a ballistic missile submarine force because we want our own independent deterrent, but at the same time we take American supply of what you might call command of the global maritime commons, for example. We think we can operate SSBNs, but not have maritime patrol aircraft at the same time. That is a weird mix and a key thing. It is a prudent strategic calculation to begin with and then storing up dependencies.

Q140 Johnny Mercer: It is interesting because when we are asked in this place to vote on foreign policy—for example, Syria—we are often given the line that the UK possesses some unique capabilities that the United States and others do not. Is that something you agree with in your professional opinion?

Professor Porter: One of the capabilities Britain has had historically is its location.

Q141 Johnny Mercer: But in terms of capability equipment that you would spend money on, what is it that we have that the United States do not have that is in the public domain?

Professor Porter: I am not sure it's a case of Britain having things America does not have, but that its ability to augment some of America's capabilities, intelligence assets—

Q142 Johnny Mercer: It's difficult for us. Everyone kind of knows that, but we are constantly told the line by our own Government, as we were on Syria, that when we intervene in these conflicts, we bring a unique skill set and ability to the fight. You are saying essentially what many of us feel—that that simply is not the case. And if this country is going to go on operations, we need to not treat people like they are stupid and pretend that we have some unique capability. Would you go along with that?

Professor Porter: Yes. There are other valuable things about Britain joining in, in terms of burden sharing and legitimacy. "Not unique" does not mean "no value"; it's just a different kind of value. I think that is what you are driving at.

Q143 Mrs Moon: Professor Porter, Harold Wilson did say no in terms of Vietnam. Some people would argue that there were financial consequences from that and that the Wilson Government was brought down by America refusing to renew loans and to support loans. But are we that much of a poodle that we always have to follow whatever America wants us to do?

Professor Porter: I would suggest the opposite. In order to maintain and sustain influence, sometimes you should say no and not be so reliable as to be taken for granted. Sometimes you have to be a bit tricky. Britain and America have said no quite forcefully to each other a number of times: in 1956, when the US 6th Fleet was stalking British ships after the Suez crisis



in the Mediterranean, to 1973 and the Heath-Nixon crisis about suspending nuclear intelligence co-operation, to 2016, when an American President said, "You might have to go to the back of the queue." There are actually times when they have conflicting interests and they coerce each other. But I think in the long run they will co-operate where their interests coincide, rather than assuming that one will always be that reliable. So actually it's not just that you can afford to say no; sometimes you ought to on principle.

Q144 **Jack Lopresti:** Are there dangers posed by the President's desire to stop supporting NATO allies that refuse to pay their way and, aside from the NATO aspect, do you think that this position has any impact on the US-UK relationship? That question is to anyone.

Dr Blagden: Yes, there are dangers. First of all, NATO is an attempt at creating a seemingly indivisible edifice out of something that we know is not. There is simply no way an American leader cares more about or as much about Riga as they do about Chicago, so we have to try to create this façade that it is one indivisible entity. As soon as the security provider of that alliance—the hegemonic leader, or whatever term you want to use—even raises the possibility of divisibility, that has some effect, potentially, on its deterrent credibility.

Beyond that, this refrain is actually not an unreasonable refrain in American foreign policy; it's made by senior statespeople of both colours. The issue is perhaps bound up with some of the President's other policy platforms and, potentially, some incoherence in various policy statements. The question is what that could then mean in terms of potentially emboldening adversaries or making adversaries think that the thing is not completely credible. Then we get into: what kind of scenarios might we actually be talking about? So the American abandonment of Europe is perhaps not imminently a realistic fear; the question is whether, as the US pivots towards Asia, it becomes increasingly unwilling and perhaps eventually unable, even, to shoulder all of Europe's security burden, and, indeed, whether it starts to operate in a more transactional way with those European partners, making support conditional on certain forms of behaviour and turning it into a coercive relationship.

Professor Porter: One danger is that because the main fear often spoken of is American abandonment of Europe, we lose sight of the more realistic, smaller-scale dangers that it poses. I think that, for a number of reasons, there is a very powerful constraint in the Washington foreign policy establishment, even around the Trump Administration, towards inching it back towards orthodoxy—that is, America must be a European power and NATO must be the instrument of its leadership in Europe. I think the danger comes more in a general deterioration of relations where both sides resent each other and both start suspending co-operation, thereby creating a fragmentation. It is difficult enough with a large-scale alliance, which can potentially be unravelled and divided by a determined adversary. That becomes even more of a problem when you have this transatlantic breakdown. So at some point, we do have to start admitting that European contributions have to be revised.



Dr Zapfe: I would agree with my co-panellists, but I would go even further, if I may. The moment that President-elect or the then candidate Trump, during the campaign, qualified article 5 and pointed towards the spending commitments of the allies, he did precisely that—he qualified article 5. And everything that the US has been doing since then has been trying to put this genie back into the bottle and to make the US credible again. But this has been noted by friends and foes alike and has made it easier for our foes to undermine the cohesion of the alliance, as has been noted. It has the short-term upside of inducing allies such as Germany and France and others to increase defence spending, that is true. Then again, NATO is not a company. In the long run it might well be dangerous and the short-term upsides may not outweigh the long-term dangers of basic doubts of the US commitment.

Q145 **Jack Lopresti:** Wouldn't you say it is appalling that such a small number of the 28 actually pay the absolute bare minimum? Some of us were in Sarajevo a few weeks ago at the NATO parliamentary assembly talking to representatives from countries that wish to join NATO. When I asked them—given they only spend, I think, 1% in Bosnia at the moment—if they had any intention of making the absolute bare minimum, they were clear that they did not. That is unsustainable and I do not think the Trump position is an unreasonable one, actually. Is there anything realistically credible in the medium term that the Administration can do to compel NATO members to pay their fair whack?

Dr Zapfe: In the end, it comes down to the basic notion of statesmanship, of being able to balance the necessities of working with your allies with the necessity of keeping pressure on those allies. One has to grant President Trump that he has managed to increase this pressure at magnitudes compared with his predecessors, who have made the same statements time after time after time. You can just read, as you well know, the speech by Secretary Gates, which did not lack in clarity some years ago. The result that President Trump already had on the alliance is significant. At the same time, this has also to do, as you know, with the emergence of a credible threat. It is not just Trump's threat; it is a threat from the East, from Vladimir Putin, from Russia, which was also duly noted in Germany. So a statesman should be required to keep this pressure on but, at the same time, let no doubt creep in that the US basic security commitment is valid. This has not been found yet; at least I am not convinced.

Professor Porter: I very much agree with your point that, in order for America to bring pressure to bear to get others to do more, at some point it is going to have to threaten to do less. I am not sure it is wise just to threaten in a kind of hollow fashion to pull out. One of the problems, though on the other side of the pond is that Washington has to start forming a view of what it wants Europe to be. If they want to rearm in Europe, if they want countries such as Germany spending 2% or more—and I think that is wise—they have also got to accept that, at some level, they are ushering in multi-polarity. I think that is inevitable anyway and the task is to manage that multi-polarity. But, by demanding that first world states with latent strengths start realising that strength and then



HOUSE OF COMMONS

accepting that they need to accept the consequences of what that brings—saying that you want unrivalled American leadership and unipolarity while demanding that other rich states start investing as though it is a multipolar world—it's going to introduce some tensions. I think there are similar difficult questions that Europeans have got to ask themselves about what they want America's role in Europe to be, as well as having the right to complain about it.

Q146 Chair: Before we move on, it is quite interesting that, of the most exposed frontline states—the three Baltic states and Poland—Poland and one of the three Baltic states are already meeting the 2% guideline and the other two, I think I am right in saying, have given very firm commitments that they will meet the 2% within the next few years. Could that be an argument to say that the combination of Russian assertiveness and President Trump's line on this question of not defending so strongly those that don't meet the guideline, turned the other way around, actually means that those that do meet the guideline—even the most exposed states, such as the Baltic states—can now look to President Trump and say, "Right, we are doing this, we have done this and we expect you to stand up for us"? Would you comment on that?

Dr Blagden: One thing to bear in mind is that this is not a sudden shock in many of these exposed peripheral European states' strategic orientation. We can turn the clock back 10 years—more than 10 now—and ask what interests Poland or the Baltic States have in Iraq. Is Baltic security bound up with the counter-insurgency campaign in the Sunni triangle or whatever? Clearly not. What are these states doing there? They are performing a role in trying to bind the United States into their security.

The tokenistic way of putting it would be "flags on the table", but certainly functioning as useful allies in an American-led security order. So, right, Uncle Sam wants to go to Iraq? I guess that is where we are going because, ultimately, that's our security provider vis-à-vis the thing that never went away from us, which is the big and potentially hostile major power just to the east of us.

Your point is well taken. If you are a much further western European NATO state, you have this luxury that there are buffers in the way. You can continue with your social model, which is a direct transfer from American taxpayers to European welfare states via the Department of Defense. That is the European compact, if you like. In the same way that America has this paradox between wanting others to do more whilst simultaneously wanting unrivalled hegemony, Europeans want America to provide their security whilst complaining about Americans bossing them around.

Absolutely, one of things about creating the 2% threshold and then reifying it—which brings its own problems—is that once you are meeting it, you have something to turn round with and use against your security patron if they are looking capricious. Perhaps if they continue to behave capriciously, this is a further signal that things are afoot and changing.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Professor Porter: Absolutely, it has long been a problem that is now coming to a head that, within NATO, there are conflicting visions of what NATO is for.

As you say, there is this eastern flank view that NATO is quite straightforwardly an insurance and deterrent against Russian adventurism. Then you have this other view of NATO that it is there to provide cheap security and precisely to have a downward pressure on costs, so you can invest resources in other things. Then there is the Anglo-American rough agreement that NATO is about insuring not only American leadership on the continent, but preventing Europe fragmenting. Somewhere along the line, those three visions, and their very different policy implications, start to collide.

Your point is well taken that the states that do meet their commitments can shout more loudly when a crisis arises. We had better be prepared to stick to our word.

Dr Zapfe: I would make two provocative comments for the sake of the debate. The first is to highlight the difference between the pressure that the US has tried to exert on its allies in the last years and the one that is being exerted by President Trump. Secretary Gates, Secretary Mattis and others have repeatedly said that the US could moderate its commitment to its allies if spending targets are not met. President Trump has conditioned this commitment on spending targets. That's a difference. The first is moderating the military input into European security, the second is possibly—and it is right to walk it back afterwards, but it is out there in the policy realm—threatening the commitment per se. Speaking objectively, I would say that is a dangerous cause if it is not reined in by the current US administration.

Secondly, on the 2% target pledge, it can be counter-productive in the long run, not because 2% is bad per se, but because many countries in Europe—especially Germany and others—are willing to increase defence spending but might be unwilling in the long run to do so in response to pressure from a US President who is not perceived as friendly towards Europe. Plus, as you well know, Parliaments have the power of the purse and that might not be sustainable over years. It may be good in the short run.

Lastly, call me a pessimistic on this, but being German I think I can say that I would be surprised if, 10 years from now in 2024, assuming Germany had met its commitment and spent 2% of its GDP on defence, those countries that today call for increased German defence spending would be fine with Germany spending over €60 billion each year on its armed forces. I would be surprised.

Q147 **Mrs Moon:** Certainly within the NATO Parliament the discussion is less about the 2% figure, which is seen a sideshow issue popular with the media. Actually, it is nonsense and nothing to do with anything. What is more important is capability, deployability and interoperability. Are we in danger of getting dragged into the 2% sideshow rather than looking at



HOUSE OF COMMONS

what the important issues are, if you are looking at a coherent defence policy and the security of Europe? The 2% figure is nonsense, because in terms of the long-term maintenance and support and deployability of equipment, you need a heck of a lot more than 2% just to stand still. You need at least 6% to stand still. Why aren't we being more honest about what people need to be doing, rather than getting into sideshows of popular jingoistic debates about 2%?

Dr Zapfe: I could not agree more with your first comment. The 2% figure is a sideshow. It is an important signal that has initiated some important processes. There is a danger of getting into an unholy alliance with President Trump and the pressure he exerts on the alliance. Other issues such as capabilities, forces deployment and interoperability are far more important. You have to add in the strain of two elections during the next months—it is now three elections. The period during an election campaign is not the best time to be having debates on defence spending. In the weeks and months after those three elections, we will have to agree that spending is necessary and needed. I do not believe that we will have 2% in 2024.

Professor Porter: I am more sympathetic to the 2% issue, not because I agree with it. In some ways, 2% is an arbitrary figure. Some kind of agreed minimum on measurable financial contribution has to be part of the debate, because these things do cost money. To have the amount of mass that you can deploy at scale that is ready enough and that has enough sustainability does make certain financial demands. All sorts of things are needed along with that. As you said, 2% is not enough for purchasing the equipment needed for anti-submarine warfare and for high-tempo land warfare—all of these things—but that is precisely why it is a problem: some states are not willing to even go that far.

Where I would agree is that the debate has to begin there but it cannot end there. There are other issues apart from Russia to do with the relative priorities of states. For example, in southern Europe the migration crisis and the overspill from the Middle East requires other capabilities. There needs to be some variation—not too much—of capability in the region as well. There needs to be enough for the main thing. Worse than having an arbitrary figure is having no figure at all, and therefore a lack of accountability. The fact that we are talking about it and the fact that the Trump Administration—rather cackhandedly—has made this threat is starting a welcome and overdue debate on what different countries do.

Dr Blagden: My point—echoing everyone else—is that 2% is an arbitrary floor. Is there political value in that? You say it is frippery for the media, which is probably true. If it starts a sensible debate about security spending and the fact that a post-Cold war moment of UNPOL or peace—whatever you want to call it—is coming to an end means that we have to have this debate. It serves as a starting point. The problem with saying, "But it's about capability" is that you then get into capability-targeting, and we start having these fighting-the-last-war kind of debates. Back in the noughties, everyone was saying, "Europe, why are you sitting on these large armed forces? Why have you still got sheds full of tanks? Why have



HOUSE OF COMMONS

you got fighter planes? Denmark, stop operating submarines, they will never again be our star major power in the region. The future of security is in the Middle East. The future of security is building liberal democracy in places where it is not—indeed, countries that followed the US impetus towards that, under Washington’s urging, saying: ‘You need to be there with us doing this thing.’”

I am not disagreeing with you, but my one reservation about capability targeting is that you then end up starting to pick capabilities. As soon as you are picking capabilities and saying, “You should be able to do this thing; this is the current, fad-ish game in town”, you can become fixated on certain missions that, in 10 years’ time, might not be your mission. Does that make sense?

Q148 **Chair:** There is a slight problem with 2%, isn’t there? It is fine as a target for those countries that have never achieved it, but it shouldn’t become a target for those countries, like ourselves, that never spent below 3% until about 1996-97.

Professor Porter: One difficulty here is that it is often reduced to a discussion about, “Well, if we’re going to meet 2% or 3%, what do we cut? What has to go instead of it?” I think this is actually part of a much more difficult conversation that I hope the country is about to have, as of today, about the actual tax base and how Britain extracts resources in the first place. I am not sure about you, but waking up every morning and listening to “The World Today”, in story after story the bottom line is that there are not enough resources for the increasing demands on the state’s coffers. If a lot of things are now ring-fenced within Government, we have to think again about the way in which we allocate resources to start with.

Q149 **Bob Stewart:** We have dealt with Europe a bit; let’s go east of Suez. How important do you think a British contribution is east of Suez? I am particularly thinking of the increasing threats of the expansion of China and of North Korea. How can we support our allies—obviously the Americans, but equally, the Australians and the New Zealanders? I think it is appropriate to ask you, Professor Porter, with an accent like yours, to answer that question.

Professor Porter: Thank you very much. I should also say for the record that I became British as well, so there is some conflict. There are really two views that are given on this. One is the mainstream view that Britain’s security interests are global and its need to sustain its credibility as an alliance partner is a global one. Britain can bring important forces to bear in things like the South China Sea, and—

Q150 **Bob Stewart:** What sort of resources, quickly?

Professor Porter: Maritime, air power, protection.

Q151 **Bob Stewart:** Apart from that? What are you talking about? An aircraft carrier snooping around there, with its escorts?

Professor Porter: Absolutely, yes. As well as that, there is the claim, which I am dubious of, that because of the imperial legacy, Britain’s



HOUSE OF COMMONS

knowledge and cultural attachments to these parts of the world mean it can act as adviser and that kind of thing. I respectfully disagree with that. I think Britain should be looking to make a contribution to global security through its region. Increasing rivalry between China and the United States is only part of a global picture about a more multi-polar world, and Britain should concentrate its resources where it can be effective.

That is also becoming important because Britain, in recent times, has taken quite a conflicted and ambiguous stance in its relationship with China. If it was to do what it is currently doing, which is, on the one hand, to commit itself to American primacy and being a good partner to America, and on the other hand embracing Beijing as a commercial partner, and hoping that those two things do not come into conflict, it would at least be prudent not to get too far into Asian conflict. I don't think Britain should be doing all of that, but if it is going to do that—this triangulation policy—it would be best not to go east of Suez.

Q152 **Bob Stewart:** So your view, in a nutshell, is, "Don't go into the South China Sea"?

Professor Porter: Yes.

Q153 **Bob Stewart:** To the other two—we are short of time—do you agree with that?

Dr Zapfe: I would rather not comment on whether the UK should position its ships east of Suez. I will say that the moment it does, and the moment any conflict in the South China Sea erupts—most likely involving the United States and others—the important question of where to stand will arise for many European countries. While during the last six decades of NATO's existence global disagreements between allies have been buffered by the need to stay united in Europe, I have my doubts that a US President who has a rather mercantilist understanding of global security and global politics would accept Germany and France, and the UK for that matter, standing by in neutrality in any conflict involving the US.

Q154 **Bob Stewart:** So your answer is "nose out" as well. What about you, David?

Dr Blagden: Your question—on "east of Suez"—is a big gap. The Gulf—

Q155 **Bob Stewart:** We are already in the Gulf, by the way.

Dr Blagden: Yes, absolutely. If you are thinking about supporting the US balancing effort and you believe that UK security remains invested in propping up US hegemonic leadership, whatever that means, being the state that is among the pre-eminent security providers of Europe—if not the pre-eminent security provider—while focusing on sea lines of communication in what might be called Europe, the Mediterranean and as far as the Middle East, makes a lot of sense. When you look at the state of our escort fleet and we start hearing things about the Queen Elizabeth class in the South China Sea, I do raise an eyebrow at that.

Bob Stewart: So that's a hat trick. All three of you say no.



Q156 **James Gray:** Can you talk a little about North Korea? The traditional position has been strategic balance from the United States and they have said that all this sabre rattling goes nowhere, but that is quite different, of course, from what Mr Trump has been saying in the last couple of days. We all very much hope that this does not occur, but let's imagine that there were some form of exchange between the United States and North Korea. What would Britain's role be in that, if any, and do we have capabilities or equipment that would be useful in it? Or what is your general view on the likely outcome in North Korea? If you know that, you are a cleverer man than I am; none the less, you can try.

Professor Porter: If I was asked to lay a wager or make my best possible guess about what is likely to happen in North Korea, I think that, as with Trump's America and Europe, over time there will be a tilting back towards orthodoxy. There is an experiment with the alternative idea where you cut the Gordian knot, whether it is pulling out of NATO or unilaterally and suddenly bombing North Korea. Then the realities of the options start to become clearer. Already in the last few days, the Trump Administration has been walking back to emphasise China's mediating role, which is a much more traditional view, given the limitation of the options and what is an acceptable cost—that is, the cost of striking North Korea and North Korea's ability to retaliate.

I do not think that Britain would have too much of a role in terms of an exchange, except for a diplomatic one at the United Nations. I am not sure what it could bring to that particular crisis. One other useful thing to say is that Britain could try to give good advice. One of the great advantages of the Anglo-American relationship is that occasionally you can shout at each other in a friendly spirit, as Margaret Thatcher did with Ronald Reagan, and give advice. I think there is some advice to give about moving back towards a more unsatisfactory but survivable stand point.

Q157 **James Gray:** That generally is right. I am sure you are right on that. Let us try to be even more hypothetical and think of a time when the Queen Elizabeth class carriers have been built and manned—manning being with a question mark—and are actually deployed in the South China sea. Do you think there is a likelihood of Britain becoming embroiled in this or similar type exchanges at that time, from 2020 or 2025? Is there a danger here?

Dr Blagden: Yes, absolutely. I think that is quite a compelling case. If you want to attach an escort to an American carrier group and send it to east Asia as western solidarity that is one thing; sending a power-projecting capital ship to that region at a time when that region might kick off, for want of a better term, is another.

Thinking about Korean peninsula scenarios, some of our worst-case fears are that North Korea begins to collapse in the face of South Korean and American pressure and then the Chinese feel they need to prop them up, or the state unravels very quickly and there are fears over its nuclear weapons programme so we get the United States and China both charging



HOUSE OF COMMONS

into that territory to try to secure the nuclear weapons that might become loose within it.

Thinking about these scenarios and then thinking about the risk-reward ratio of Britain being majorly involved in a conflagration like that, it is—you put it very well—absolutely dangerous.

Q158 **James Gray:** Deviating from my script, if the Chairman will permit me to do so, I have another equally hypothetical area. Can you tell me what you think NATO's role ought to be in the north-west flank, in other words, the Russian bastion concept and the creation of risk in the North Atlantic and Arctic areas and all the change regarding the ice and all that? We are getting conflicting messages back from NATO as to what it believes its role should be in defending the US-Europe supply lines across the north. What are your thoughts on the north flank?

Dr Blagden: One of the concerns I have heard voiced is that we all now begin our discussions about NATO with the Baltic three and Poland. I have heard Norwegians who are very concerned that somewhere like Svalbard would be an ideal place to run an article 5 test: land some Spetsnaz there for a couple of days and see if NATO blinks. Do we all just kind of embarrassedly look away, and hope the problem resolves itself? If we do not blink, suddenly we are into, "Oh, okay—we know that article 5 is slightly divisible here. We know it can be tinkered with up in the high north, as well as in the Baltic Poland scenario, as well."

I think that something we all need to work on is making sure that NATO's fixation does not just become the three Baltic states, but, absolutely, as you say, thinking about the broader Arctic ocean, the north Atlantic, and then thinking of the UK as an SSBN-operating maritime power. There is a lot of danger in becoming fixated on the Baltic and not looking at the wider naval-maritime balance and the high north.

Q159 **James Gray:** Okay, but to what degree do you think NATO actually have got a view on this? Have they thought it through? Have they got a policy with regard to the north-west flank and the north Atlantic and all that?

Dr Zapfe: First, if I may, I will briefly comment on the North Korea issue, and then give the answer to that question. Any operation against what would be the North Korean nuclear programme would have to be highly sophisticated and highly complex. There is a very small margin of error in any case. Apart from high-value cyber-intelligence assets or knowledge that other countries might have, there is nothing allies might contribute to any US war effort that might improve the effort and not complicate it further.

Secondly, yes, there is a very strong internal debate within NATO. I do not think it has a policy. I do not think it knows what to do. I know that people in the bureaucracy in Brussels think about it very hard; and the first field that will see a reform in this direction is of course NATO's command structure. As you know, it is currently under review. That review will, I think, be finished by February next year. I do not have a crystal ball, but at the end of this review we will see a certain return towards a



regionalised approach to NATO's command structure. As you know, currently both joint commands, in Brunssum and Naples, are functional commands. They do not have a certain regional focus. At the end of this review we will see one command looking east, one command looking south and, as I have heard in the last weeks in Brussels, there will be some form of command, at whatever level, looking north and north-west, obviously being staffed by those countries most concerned with the threat. That is just a start, but a very important one.

Q160 Douglas Chapman: Thank you very much for bringing some sanity to the South China sea situation. It is quite revealing. Can I return to the kind of relationship that the UK has with the US and NATO? From your point of view, how crucial and important is that relationship between the US and the UK as regards the future NATO? If any part of that jigsaw, if you want to look at it like that, is weakened or removed, how would that resolve itself, and what are some of the solutions that would be put in place?

Professor Porter: I would say that for a lot of reasons, the Anglo-American relationship is vital to the operation of NATO, not least because the rest of the members would not really have conceived of or gamed out a situation without them—so the very fact that that dependency has built over time and this is an Atlantic-led, or north Atlantic-led, alliance. What is just as important is a functioning quadrilateral, as they call it—Britain, America, France, Germany—as the most important informal dialogue that goes on in terms of making the alliance work and being able to respond quite quickly. It is smaller than the North Atlantic Council and larger than just the Anglo-American relationship. I think that without that effective dialogue—all the pressures that are being introduced this year and beyond make that all the more important, not as a formal mechanism but as an effective set of relationships.

Dr Blagden: To my mind, it is absolutely pivotal. With our most cynical hats on, it is the only bit of the relationship that lends anything to the façade that this is an alliance of equals. It is the only bit that makes the pretence that this is not just American security provision to a bunch of weakling dependants look plausible. UK interoperability, a combination of capability and the willingness to deploy and operate independent logistical lift capabilities—all these are what make it seem and function like an alliance instead of just straightforwardly a big brother with a bunch of little kids clustered around his ankles.

Going beyond that, this relationship, as Patrick is pointing out, is the thing that has made it work. The thought process is not there of it not being this. For a long time post-1945, Britain has been a middling major power that was not great anymore, but was somewhat more than minor and fulfilled a particular role. In some ways, we are still performing that role while having reduced to quite normal levels of capability that are not particularly remarkable in Europe any more. We are, obviously, beset now by various domestic challenges or things that straddle domestic and foreign policy. I think we might be about to run your experiment and find out how NATO works with a distracted or inward-looking Britain. That is an awful phrase; I apologise.



Q161 **Douglas Chapman:** How would it work, for example, if a distracted US were there? As you suggested before, their focus and plan for the future is probably more Pacific-orientated than Atlantic-focused.

Dr Blagden: At the moment, the United States has a vast amount of spare capacity. Effectively, for all the talk of the rise of China—I do believe that matters, and it is important that we are going back to some kind of multi-polar world—at the moment, the United States has a level of military and strategic capacity to not have to make terribly hard choices. Going forward 10 or 20 years, if China has continued strong or even modest growth, the United States will confront a very different kind of world in which there is a genuine other great power again. At that point, the United States might have to make genuinely hard choices. As we have seen, Trump says “I’m going to roll back on NATO,” but there is a surfeit of capability to re-commit to it. That is what we have seen in recent months.

Professor Porter: We have played this tape before, a few weeks after 9/11, at the height of the view among hard-liners in Washington that America did not want to be bound by alliances or to be fettered. It wanted to be an unfettered giant. NATO actually invoked article 5 to support it after the 9/11 attacks, and it was largely brushed away. Only a few years later, with the crisis in Iraq, all of a sudden the call went out for alliance and forms of co-operation and solidarity. We are likely to get that on a much more macro scale, as David suggests, if in the future America’s internal fiscal crisis and its confrontation with rising states comes together and puts a great strain on it. NATO should confidently expect to be called upon again in that sense.

Dr Zapfe: I agree with my co-panellists, but I want to add one further personal thought. You mentioned a distracted US. No matter how much we spend in NATO, in the European Union or in each country on defence, for the next 10 or 15 years—I do not want to give a specific number, but maybe around that benchmark—the US will be the indispensable nation for European security. It has the capabilities, forces, manpower and nuclear and extended deterrents, and it has—or at least had—the resolve and credibility to support NATO. This is all dependent on US commitments. No matter how much we spend, we will not be able to outspend ourselves out of this hole. It will take time, resolve and many, many hard questions.

Q162 **Douglas Chapman:** A lot of President Trump’s comments—we have already discussed 2% and the discussions around that and people paying their way—have made sure that the main focus has been on finance. The interoperability, deployability and capability of our forces, our kit and items that we put a lot of investment into have been raised at this Committee a number of times. Is there sufficient focus within NATO on looking at those issues, rather than focusing purely on the 2% and by how much money we might be able to increase our spend on defence overall? Do we need to put more focus on the actual pragmatic and practical links between the various countries that make up NATO?

Professor Porter: One promising area where this can be improved is in the revival of, although I hate to use the word, war gaming at NATO level



and about NATO-style scenarios—speculating about little green men scenarios and the ability of NATO under strain to respond. There was a very good exercise recently at RUSI, for example, looking at the problems of NATO's over-reliance on connectivity in an age of disruption from Russia and at its ability to overcome access denial problems with a near peer. In other words, there is an intellectual side that is very important in terms of preparing minds for shocks and contingencies. It is not a new idea, but the idea of creating uncomfortable scenarios through which to test your assumptions has had a welcome revival. Developing the ability to respond to the undesired or unexpected, as well as the outward-facing, propaganda side of NATO with its big declarations at its summits—having that in the back room with the officer corps and diplomats working through scenarios very carefully, not least because it also develops alliance relationships, is an important element and should be encouraged.

Dr Zapfe: Absolutely. In terms of interoperability, the principles are good, tested and working; however, the challenge is far more intense. NATO has had magnificent experiences in Afghanistan; it has pushed the level of interoperability to new heights. However, that was against an enemy who was not able to jam communications; it was against an enemy who was not able to contest you entering his region. So what NATO has to do right now is to plan for high-intensity warfare and rapid deployment into areas that the Russians contest and can contest if they want.

Is Brussels aware of this challenge? Yes, absolutely. Is NATO as a bureaucracy focused on this? Yes, absolutely. However, can it do much without the member states? No, it cannot. The solution that NATO has found up to now—you will be aware of the very high readiness joint taskforce it has and the NATO response force—has a certain aspect of navel-gazing and of Brussels coming up with ideas to cope with problems out of the tool box that it has, that are geared not towards the problems but towards the tool box. NATO will only be able to cope with the challenges you have just described if the nations spend more money, and spend it energetically and in a targeted way towards high-intensity warfare capabilities. That is expensive and will take time and there is no quick fix to this problem.

Dr Blagden: A long-standing refrain has been that Europe is not actually short of defence spending or uniformed personnel. It actually has a surfeit of both, they are just often wildly inefficiently deployed. Fixating on whether we are spending the right amount of money can sometimes miss the point when that is not the issue—generating real capabilities has been the issue. Coming back to a point I made—

Q163 **Jack Lopresti:** You cannot do that without defence spending. We are going round in circles. You are talking about capability and commitment. Unless you spend the money, you are not going to have the commitment.

Douglas Chapman: If you spend it, spend it well—

Jack Lopresti: But you have got to start somewhere. You have got to say, "I am joining the most successful military alliance in history. I have



HOUSE OF COMMONS

agreed, by joining that club, that I will maintain a minimum level of defence spending." That is not jingoism; it is just honouring your commitment.

Dr Blagden: Absolutely. I am not disagreeing with that at all. The point I am making is that as soon as you do capability targeting, you can end up in this problem again of whether you are picking the correct capability. If we were to turn the clock back and have this hearing 10 years ago, the complaint would not be that Europe does not have enough heavy forces or bodies; the complaint would be that Europe does not have enough light, flexible—remember all those kinds of jargon words that we used to invoke—forces.

Patrick's point was about war gaming being the way to reach better insights. It is also about red teaming so that conclusions do not all come from the same community and so that they get tested. Indeed, perhaps we need a bit of a shift away from thinking about the most probable contingencies and towards thinking about the most dangerous or most high-stakes contingencies. We do that a bit with the national security risk assessment in the UK, which has gone in that direction a bit, but of course that brings its own set of problems. We might say that it is still most likely that the expeditionary operations that the British armed forces are going to be involved in are Middle East stabilisation contingencies, say, but in some ways that is stripping the imbalance of threat or danger out of capability.

If you are going to go down the capability targeting route, you say, "Are we getting the most bang for our buck, rather than fixating on targets for numbers of bucks?" It is not even a target for that; it is a target for proportion of another number. It is a shift away from that. You need to shift more towards worst-case scenario planning than towards most-likely scenario planning, to my mind.

Chair: I think we are quite sympathetic to the view that we should look at worst-case scenario planning, given the pretty dismal record of forecasting the outbreak of conflicts before they occur.

Q164 **Bob Stewart:** How important to Europe are our future military capabilities? When I say Europe, I mean NATO. How important does NATO consider them—not our current capabilities, but our future capabilities, including aircraft carriers with no aircraft? Maybe Dr Zapfe should answer that.

Dr Zapfe: The view from the continent, if you like.

Bob Stewart: The view from Berlin.

Dr Zapfe: The view from Zurich, in that case.

Bob Stewart: You are very German, anyway.

Dr Zapfe: Yes. Numbers are particularly important.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Q165 **Bob Stewart:** So mass has its own credibility?

Dr Zapfe: Absolutely, it has.

Q166 **Bob Stewart:** Or numbers—there are 82,000 in the Army.

Dr Zapfe: Yes, but then deployable forces. A recent RAND study was just published some days ago, and the findings I have echo those findings about the major countries in Europe being able to field a maximum of one brigade, and that is over a pretty long time. We need more to be fielded quickly and decisively, and we count on the UK to do so, besides Germany and France—most likely Germany.

As for the ability to conduct and orchestrate joint operations, the UK has been good at that. It has huge experience, compared to other continental powers like Germany and France—we have not done so in decades, and France has not done so on the same level as those the British have participated in. Joint operations, the enablers and the C2 structures are important. The joint expeditionary force—JEF—is a good start. Cyber and intelligence is definitely a British strength that Europe desperately needs, as far as I can tell.

The nuclear deterrent, as you know, is secondary in terms of official policy right now. However, you will have noticed that in the last few weeks and months, there have been quite interesting debates in the ivory tower of science—the scientific community—on the possibility of a Euro deterrent based on the French and British deterrent forces. This is all hypothetical right now.

Q167 **Bob Stewart:** A Euro deterrent—I love it.

Dr Zapfe: Yes. Based on some level of nuclear sharing between—

Q168 **Bob Stewart:** Nuclear sharing, decision making—I mean, NATO makes decisions at the speed of a striking slug.

Dr Zapfe: Yes.

Q169 **Bob Stewart:** Even article 5 commits us to convening and having a meeting. It doesn't actually commit us straight away to going to war, does it?

Dr Zapfe: No, it doesn't.

Q170 **Bob Stewart:** So can you imagine a Euro deterrent—a deterrent that is effective with the Euro decision-making machinery behind it?

Dr Zapfe: No, sir, but three years ago I would not have imagined—

Q171 **Bob Stewart:** I don't want to delay it, because actually I think your answer is that the British capabilities are pretty important.

Dr Zapfe: They could become very, very important—even more important than today. We don't hope that it will become that way, but it will. If I may make one last comment, resolve is hard to quantify or measure, but



HOUSE OF COMMONS

the UK is considered a hard and credible ally, and that counts for something in times of crisis.

Professor Porter: First, I agree on the importance of Britain's nuclear deterrent, partly because it is an independent centre of decision that complicates the calculations of any aggressor. They are talking not just about America's willingness to exchange a city for a European city, but the willingness of countries that have direct skin in the game to do so. A British or French nuclear deterrent is a very important part of the deterrence picture.

I also very much agree with the spirit of your question that there is an issue here well beyond the 2% debate, about the hollowing out of Britain's conventional forces, although there are some improvements happening—I don't think it is carriers without planes any more. However, if defence capability is not reducible to the size of the budget—it is also about its relationship with the size of the policy that it is designed to serve—in extremis, if Britain had its current defence capabilities and budget, and was only defending Britain, it would be a lavish defence budget. The fact that it is stretched with so many missions so globally means that it is much harder to bring a weight of power to bear in time in any one area. There is a much more difficult thing about realigning what you have with what you want to achieve.

There are now questions about whether you want to do more and spend more, or whether you want to have a more reduced, more focused and more ranked policy about which areas of the world we defend. It is a question of means and ends: if you are going to shrink one, you might need to look at shrinking the other, or vice versa. We cannot just talk about doing more with less; we have to think about what the policy—

Bob Stewart: That is what we always do—we always talk about doing more with less. That is what politicians do.

Professor Porter: Yes, and that worries me a bit.

Q172 **Bob Stewart:** I think it worries this Committee. I will stop on that question and go on to the next one, because we are short of time.

Dr Blagden, you are going to have the \$100 question: if the Americans were not there, could Europe defend itself against a Russian conventional and nuclear attack, which of course are the same thing?

Dr Blagden: You have already drawn my ability to say, "Ah, well, it depends what you mean against"—

Bob Stewart: Of course.

Dr Blagden: Of course. The answer is, "No, but". Defending against nuclear has always been a misnomer. In many ways that was the great insight of mutually assured destruction—cold-war deterrence theory. Does Britain or do the European states have the ability to make serious threats that are enough to—



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Q173 **Bob Stewart:** We had an escalatory ladder when we had a flexible response, in so far as we had tactical nuclear weapons, which is something that seems to have gone into the mists of time. That does not necessarily mean the same.

Dr Blagden: This in essence would be my answer: Britain and the likes of France have a gap. If you are talking about a stamping-on-little-green-men scenario, then forces like the Parachute Regiment, the Royal Marines and UK special forces, which are excellent, are ideal. If you are talking about making a credible threat to destroy all major Russian centres of population, then Britain and France can actually do that too. The problem is the thing in between—the thing that is not just stamping—

Q174 **Bob Stewart:** Which, fundamentally, is the problem, because Russian strategy puts the whole lot together and envisages the use of tactical nuclear weapons as part of a conventional battle force, particularly having practised it. What you are actually saying—all three of you, I think—is that our weakness is the fact that we probably have a hell of a big gap between conventional defence and pressing the nuclear button. We ain't got the means to bridge that gap—is that what you are saying?

Professor Porter: Which means that we might end up in a crisis in which we have to make a devil's choice between utter escalation and backing down.

Bob Stewart: Exactly. Because of time, I am going to shut up. The Chair has told me to shut up—he has been looking at me, "Shut up."

Chair: Never. I wouldn't dare. That was very useful, thank you.

Q175 **Mr Spellar:** We have talked about the capabilities and the financing, but may we look briefly almost at the doctrine—at whether we have the appropriate command structure and strategic concept? Does NATO have those to carry out everything required of it?

Dr Zapfe: In terms of the command structure, I have just outlined a few aspects of the review currently ongoing within NATO. There are people responsible for the command structure who think that it is not up to the task right now. It needs dedicated commands, dedicated forces and dedicated planning facilities looking east, south and maybe north/north-west. This is clear and will be a priority for the next years within NATO; it has to be. What was your second question again, sir?

Q176 **Mr Spellar:** In other words, it is the command structure and also the strategic concept.

Dr Zapfe: Yes, the concept—very briefly on this. As you know, the strategic concept is partly a misnomer. It is not looking forward but is consolidating a consensus within the alliance. The question right now is: are we able in the next years ahead to implement those very important reforms within NATO on the basis of the current concept of 2010? I think we are.

What is necessary, as I said, is the command structure reform, a new military strategy, increased defence spending and better co-ordination. I do not see where a new strategic concept that brings new buzzwords to town is helpful in this debate, apart from giving us something to write about, which we do for a living. That is good but in terms of NATO we don't need it.

Do we want it at a time when President Trump might want to write some things in those concepts that are not cherished in other capitals? I really doubt that. I think we don't need it and we should go on with the bread and butter of an alliance and do defence policy.

Professor Porter: There is a real danger in the perennial working through of strategic concepts and doctrines. There is this underlying idea. I remember from the height of the war on terror—the war on terror that we are going back into, but I mean the last time—there was this constant assumption that, in order for NATO to survive, it must always be relevant to every kind of conflict; that it must always be tailoring itself for every kind of conflict.

Maybe we should think about an alternative and more unfashionable, classical idea that NATO is primarily relevant for one big major thing: to deter and respond to major threats on Europe. That does not mean it is irrelevant to everything else, but there is the idea that NATO constantly has to be plunging into every crisis and readjusting itself every five years to every crisis, rather than focusing on the fundamentals. That alternative ought to get more of a hearing as we plan but I do worry that, in the constant search for relevance, it is becoming a bit of a fashion victim.

Q177 **Chair:** Thanks very much. Before we move on, I would like to ask whether there is any danger that the Americans might think, however mistakenly, that because the United Kingdom is withdrawing from the European Union that that in any way marks a diminution in its determination to participate fully in the defence of Europe, via NATO. Do you detect any belief of that sort in the United States?

Dr Blagden: I do not see that. I see that, for Trump and his right—the Bannons, if you like—the British decision to leave the EU is a vindication of their world view. That is what they would expect and, hence, they are heartily enthused about it.

From my interactions with more foreign policy establishment-type views, the attitude is, "Ah, the Brits are going to need this relationship even more now," so they are likely to double down on it. Through different causal paths, the different factions of that Administration might be arriving at the same conclusion, which is that the UK is going to need this relationship as much as ever.

Q178 **Chair:** So there is no danger at all then that the UK might come under any pressure to relinquish the position of Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe, for example?



Professor Porter: I know there has been some speculation around that. There is some strand of American opinion, particularly on the establishment side of the argument and around the campaign of Hillary Clinton, that Brexit equals isolationism and a withdrawal from the world.

First, if you listen to a lot of the Brexiteers, that is not the case. Secondly, this Government has worked quite hard to double down and to increase its commitment, precisely to make the point that NATO is not linked in that way—that, in fact, it is becoming more important to Britain.

In terms of the Administration actually worrying that it signals a British abdication of responsibility, I don't see any of that at all. I agree with David.

Dr Blagden: I know I am cutting across Martin, who has not had his go yet. If it were to reach the point where Britain was unambiguously not NATO's second most capable military power any more, that pressure would likely be there from all sides. There are Brexit scenarios in which that thing could come about: calamitous absence of deal; big economic hits; fixation on turning inwards; defence budget cuts; and all those kinds of things. If it begins over time to become apparent that France or a re-normalising Germany is the unambiguous principal military power of Europe, pressure would be there from all sides—probably including from the Americans, who are not very dewy-eyed about this and are hard-headed about it. I don't see it being there just because of Brexit as a political act.

Q179 **Chair:** And Martin, Germany won't be pressing to take over that particular role as deputy SACEUR?

Dr Zapfe: We did have it once some decades ago. I don't see it coming for the simple reason that the DSACEUR, as you know, is important in the Berlin-plus arrangement for European operations, but that agreement is basically non-existent due to reasons you know well. The impetus from a continental Europe point of view to have that position is weak.

Chair: Thank you all very much.

Q180 **Gavin Robinson:** Professor Porter, I will direct this to you as somebody who can identify fashion trends and hopefully will not fall victim to the quest for relevance. In some of the evidence we have received thus far, there has been a discussion about changing focus or augmenting focus, which would include NATO's capacity to deal with counter-terrorism. Will that strategic conceptual change fall foul of the inevitable search for relevance? Are there merits to including counter-terrorism within NATO's scope, or only pitfalls?

Professor Porter: There are merits, in the sense that NATO could contribute to it effectively, as it could contribute effectively to counter-insurgency or anti-piracy. My worry is that spreading oneself across all these portfolios comes at some price. Is that price too high? Of course, there are benefits to spreading the portfolio out. For what it is worth, I am more sympathetic to NATO being involved in counter-terrorist airstrikes



HOUSE OF COMMONS

and containing the rise of Islamic State than I am with long counter-insurgency missions. I think those kind of threats are best dealt with in other ways, but that is a value judgment.

My worry would be that things that looked cost-free, and indeed attractive and compelling, during the war on terror—a time of relatively high economic growth and fewer great power rivalries—are now becoming more expensive in depressed economic circumstances with a resurgent Russia and a revisionist China. That is when the cost and benefit columns need to be looked at much more carefully.

Q181 **Gavin Robinson:** Very good. Gentlemen, do you disagree or concur?

Dr Zapfe: I do agree—absolutely. I just have one additional comment. Counter-terrorism is becoming more of a focus for NATO for two reasons. The first reason is that President Trump wants it to be a core focus for NATO. The second is that it is an actual threat, coupled with migration. Many member states—not just the UK, but Spain, Italy and France—are pressuring Brussels, and the allies of the south are becoming more and more important. That is the reason why the Secretary-General thinks it should become more and more important, as I understand it.

The problem is what to do. When we talk about the eastern flank of NATO, we know the language. The language is deterrence, tanks, deployability, interoperability, amphibious forces and A2AD. What can aid warfare in the south, in terms military hardware capabilities, to really help fight terrorism and stem migration? I have a hard time finding those capabilities in NATO and Brussels, and so do those experts sitting in Brussels who have to come up with some ideas for the next mini-summit in May. It will be interesting to see.

Dr Blagden: My only addition would be that the last time NATO—not necessarily the formal structure, but the states that make it up—got itself into a big counter-terrorism-led military campaign, it put the alliance under a great deal of strain. There were divergences between France and Germany. In some ways, we came quite close to breaking the thing that we wanted to keep good for the scenario we now face again by trying to use it on a different problem.

Terrorism is currently back in the headlines, but we shouldn't forget the tremendous successes we have had in counter-terrorism through patient, dogged co-operation, not just between NATO allies, but between anyone who wants to be involved in things like disrupting communications and following the money—all that kind of stuff. The reason why people now have to mount the pavement with cars and kill a few people, which is awful, instead of getting hold of airliners, turning them into skyscrapers and killing thousands of people is because of 15 years of dogged, patient, behind-the-scenes counter-terrorism work. It didn't necessarily need a NATO banner or a pdf strategy document slapped on it to make it into a thing.

Q182 **Jack Lopresti:** In the NATO countries that do not even attain their basic



HOUSE OF COMMONS

2% defence spend, we can see that the Governments are prepared to just sit back and let the Americans keep writing the cheques, hopefully with our men coming over the hill if things get difficult. As far as the populations of those countries go, regarding political will and their understanding of NATO, how seriously do they take it? Is it something that is not really on their radar or do they, like us, see it as a cornerstone of their defence policy? Is there a disconnect? What is your general view?

Professor Porter: It depends on which countries. In the countries that are in the eye of the storm, there is a connect. In the Baltic States—we talk too much about them—or in Poland, flanking Kaliningrad, there is a real linkage and understanding. The further west and possibly south you go, more of a disconnect forms. That has a number of causes. Partly there is less of a storm, but partly as well one of the difficulties over the past 15 years or so has been that western Governments have encouraged the idea that their citizens are to be low-taxed consumers of security, for whom security is somebody else's business. They are simply to receive it as a blessing of good government and it is not something they should have to pay much for. You go to war on borrowing; you don't go to war on tax. Once upon a time, for good or for ill, it was different. The financial settlement was different and there was much greater involvement.

We are now seeing some of the wages of that. If you keep on telling people they are consumers, who should not be disturbed at all by insecurity problems and should be left to go shopping—I am trying to not sound too much like George Bush—it starts to become a real thing and people start to say, "Why should we go beyond 1.5% anyway? We are living in a relatively benign environment. It sounds like a misallocation of resources that could go into health or education"—that sort of thing. So this is part of the need for greater civic involvement, maybe even when we go to war we should make people part of it by taxing them. There needs to be some rebuilding of the civil military state dialogue. The reason they are not thinking much about NATO is that they have been encouraged not to think much about NATO.

Q183 **Jack Lopresti:** If you look at the UK Parliament, you hear across party divides that the first responsibility of Government is the defence of the realm and the protection of our people. Is that not the same in other NATO countries? Is that narrative, if you like, not there? Is this a failure of politicians to lead?

Professor Porter: I think Martin might know more about this than I do.

Dr Zapfe: Just speaking for Germany, the narrative did not exist for 25 years because the pressure was not there. Now, for the second year in a row I think, Germany increased its spending and pledged a decisive increase, even before this 2% storm that hit us a month ago. And there was no public outcry. There was none, because across party lines and within the population there was a certain bad feeling of insecurity and uncertainty in the face of migration and terrorism and after the annexation of Crimea. So I think that the people understand that more defence spending is necessary.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

One of the problems, of course, is the coupling of this increased defence spending with the sacrosanct 2%, which has already affected the election campaign in Germany—as you know, the Social Democrats are refusing to support the 2% pledge. The population is, I think, in favour of it and the leadership has been there under Angela Merkel. More can be done but, for me, it has been rather astonishing to see this rather pacifist population of Germany supporting increased defence spending and supporting a rather tough stance with Russia over the last three years. I did not expect that, I must admit.

Professor Porter: One thing I did notice in this country, particularly during the war on Afghanistan, was that there was a disconnect. There was broad agreement that the first obligation of the state is to secure the citizen; the difficulty was, unlike in that case, that there was a disconnect when it came to increasing spending and increasing the extracting resources. So the tabloids would make a very large deal about there being an insufficiency of helicopters and medevac. They would be the first to oppose any increase in the size of the state to pay for that kind of thing. So there is a desire for a kind of low-tax high-security settlement. Again, it gets back to my point that it is not that people do not recognise the importance of security, it is that they think it should be done for them and they shouldn't have to pay for it or be involved in it.

Dr Blagden: My take on this covers a couple of points. Part of it is that a lot of westerners, in the United States and in Europe, mistook a transient condition of the balance of power, which was colossal American unipolarity—probably unprecedented in history—for a permanent transformation of the world. We were sort of told, "International politics is different now. States don't go round coercing each other militarily—oh, how old-fashioned." So there were a bunch of security goods that flowed from American supremacy, if you like, and over a long enough period of time people stopped thinking about security as a thing that has to be fought and paid for, and it becomes assumed to be a background condition, whilst forgetting that it is in fact supplied by a set of structural conditions, like American leadership.

Also, when you consider how much you care about NATO, it is obviously going to be conditioned by how relevant it seems to your security situation. If you're a Pole, then it seems very relevant now. If you're an Italian and you're being asked to go and potentially die for Estonians, well, you know—"Russians buy our consumer goods. They come to our resorts and they're not the ones who broke the Middle East, which is why there are millions of people coming across the Mediterranean and landing on our beaches."

There is that factor: how relevant does NATO seem to your security situation? Sure we all want to consume free stuff—that is the European model. Americans spend a lot on defence and we spend a lot less. We let them be a superpower and in exchange we get more generous social spending than we otherwise would. But within that, looking at the variation of Britain versus the Italians, in some ways it is interesting



because the UK itself wavered. The original response to Crimea was that snapped Cabinet Office memo going into Downing Street, saying, “We can’t sanction the Russians. What will it do to London’s economy—to Knightsbridge property and boarding schools? We’ve got to be careful how we handle this.” Even then, in the UK there was a bit of a waver, like, “Do we go hard on Russia, or not?” And we ended up coming down on: “NATO is the bedrock of our security, it’s under threat, this is a reflex of 70 years. Britain believes in NATO more than anyone else. You know, Germans down, Russians out, Americans in.” We ended up coming down very hard with that stance, but initially there was some aspect of, “Well, how relevant is this to us?”

Q184 Chair: Before I come to Douglas for the last topic, can I just ask you quickly for a reaction to events in Turkey, where we have had a very problematic process leading up to a referendum, which—if it stands, as it probably will—will transform Turkey from being a democracy into being an autocracy, if not a dictatorship? How far can that fit in to the NATO conventional model?

Professor Porter: The one thing I would say is that it is reminiscent of an earlier time in NATO’s history, where it was an anti-Soviet Communist bulwark and not primarily a vehicle for expanding liberal democracy and protecting those values, because there were dictatorships—illiberal dictatorships—in NATO in its earlier time, and we may have to get our history books out and look at how we coped with that before the likes of Portugal and Greece changed. I don’t know what it means exactly for NATO’s strategic concept, but the notion that NATO embodies has just become a lot more complicated.

Q185 Chair: Any other comments?

Dr Zapfe: I think it’s highly problematic. You have pointed, rightfully, to what the effect was of Portugal being a founding member, and that Turkey and Greece have been members, and they had authoritarian leadership for some years. I would say, first of all, those were different times and, secondly, that it was possible because of a shared interest, which was defence against Russia. Do we have shared interests of that magnitude with Turkey and President Erdogan after the referendum? I don’t know—I can’t answer this—but I am concerned for the alliance.

Dr Blagden: It is a bind, because if you do something like kicking them out of NATO—however that would work—that delivers them on a platter to anyone who would quite like to prise Turkey away from NATO and reorient it. Conversely, you will have a state that is autocratic, whether that is a problem or not. We manage to have stable security relations with Saudi Arabia, which is not just autocratic but possibly anti-western autocratic, which historically we have had much more of a problem with.

Turkey have American nuclear weapons on their soil and potentially our best combat aircraft—the F-35—so if you want to ensure that a Russianised F-35 pops up quite quickly, Turkish procurement of the F-35 is now looking deeply problematic. There is the question of how to handle



HOUSE OF COMMONS

that and whether it is possible to move to a more Saudi model, except that they do not seem to even have clearly aligned security interests with us, as Martin was observing. If we keep pretending that nothing has changed, however, they will be that same country, but with American nukes on their soil and the world's best fifth-generation fighter aircraft.

Chair: Cheerful!

Q186 **Douglas Chapman:** I just have one last question. I was out with the Security and Defence Subcommittee in the European Parliament last month, and there was a growing determination and confidence among MEPs about European defence integration. Do you have a view on how that might look in the future and whether it is a realistic proposal or option? Or will people go with the tried and tested NATO model that we support here?

Professor Porter: I think it is realistic to say that it could supplement the NATO structure. I think it is unrealistic to say that it could supplant the NATO structure, for a couple of reasons. First, to reproduce what NATO does under a different rubric takes a lot of investment, time and stress when there just is not capacity for that now with Europe. Secondly, as an estimate, the countries of central and eastern Europe are probably much more accepting of an American-dominated NATO security provision than a Franco-German-dominated European one. This is not peculiar to Europe or America; it is something about states. They are usually more fearful of their neighbours and regional states than far-away ones coming across. There is something about America that seems less threatening than the closer-to-home rivalries on their doorstep.

Dr Zapfe: As you well know, the UK has rightly or wrongly been perceived on the continent as being the main blocking power against further European defence integration. After the Brexit vote, there is a sense of "En avant!" and taking big steps towards deeper integration. I am rather pessimistic about that, for the reasons you have outlined and because the two foremost continental powers—in this case, France and Germany—do not share the same vision of what they want out of it. To put it very simply, with the common security and defence policy, the Germans tend to like the "common" and the "policy" side, and the French tend to like the "security and defence" side. That cleavage is still open and it may be wider than before. I do not see any energetic movement towards something like a European pillar of NATO or a potential replacement of NATO of any kind. It will be Brussels with the ball, if you like, notwithstanding any major external shock, which could change things. For the time ahead, it will be NATO.

Dr Blagden: My point would be that Europe faces some strong federalising drivers. For monetary union to work well, it needs some form of fiscal union. For fiscal union to work well, it needs some sort of political governance—whatever you want to call it—to run it. In that sense, notwithstanding the economic side, a whole bunch of things are pushing European integration. The UK was always the veto check on that. That is



HOUSE OF COMMONS

not to say that other states do not share that UK position of not liking it, but they may not have that ability to oppose it in the way that the UK did.

If France and Germany do not align on the issue, there is nothing doing. Really, we should probably ask this question once we have seen about Le Pen and all the rest of it. Even then, if France and German do not come together and see eye to eye, it is a non-starter. Were they to come together and fashion some sort of attitude that: "The Brits are capricious and dangerous and not one of us anymore. This guy over the Atlantic is very nuts and Russia looks very dangerous. We need some sort of political union with some sort of meaningful military independence here." If they could align on that, to my mind that would be the point at which you would start to see it in a meaningful way. Even those smaller EU members might not like it, but they lack Britain's former ability to oppose it.

Q187 **Mrs Moon:** I wonder if we are getting side-tracked again. Is this not really just the Berlin Plus agreement writ large? That has been operating for a long time. The division was always that NATO did defence and deterrence and Europe did the law and order internal stuff. It has worked extremely well for us over the years, on an ad hoc basis. What is different? What do you see that is so different from the road we have been taking and the road that was agreed at Warsaw last year?

Professor Porter: I think the main thing that is different is the increased fear about federalism—the subjective perception that this is possible.

Q188 **Mrs Moon:** So it is perception rather than reality?

Professor Porter: Yes. I agree with you. I think there are powerful reasons why what you have just said is likely to continue.

Q189 **Chair:** Can I just say that, although we met today under rather exceptional circumstances, I am very glad that the inquiry session did proceed, because we greatly benefited from your insights? It has been a most helpful session. I am quite sure that we will draw on this information—when I speak of "we", that is a successor Committee, however it be formed and whenever it be formed. We will continue to build on the benefits of the hearings that we have held, not least yours today. Thank you very much for your time and your expertise.