



House of Commons
Defence Committee

Towards the next Defence and Security Review: Part One

Seventh Report of Session 2013–14

Volume I

Volume I: Report, together with formal minutes and oral evidence

Written evidence is contained in Volume II, available on the Committee website at www.parliament.uk/defcom

*Ordered by the House of Commons
to be printed 18 December 2013*

HC 197
[Incorporating HC 1090-I, Session 2012-13]
Published on 7 January 2014
by authority of the House of Commons
London: The Stationery Office Limited
£14.50

The Defence Committee

The Defence Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Ministry of Defence and its associated public bodies.

Current membership

Rt Hon James Arbuthnot MP (*Conservative, North East Hampshire*) (Chair)
Mr Julian Brazier MP (*Conservative, Canterbury*)
Mr James Gray MP (*Conservative, North Wiltshire*)
Rt Hon Jeffrey M. Donaldson MP (*Democratic Unionist, Lagan Valley*)
Mr Dai Havard MP (*Labour, Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney*)
Mr Adam Holloway MP (*Conservative, Gravesham*)
Mrs Madeleine Moon MP (*Labour, Bridgend*)
Sir Bob Russell MP (*Liberal Democrat, Colchester*)
Bob Stewart MP (*Conservative, Beckenham*)
Ms Gisela Stuart MP (*Labour, Birmingham, Edgbaston*)
Derek Twigg MP (*Labour, Halton*)
John Woodcock MP (*Labour Co-op, Barrow and Furness*)

The following Members were also members of the Committee during this inquiry.

Thomas Docherty MP (*Labour, Dunfermline and West Fife*)
Penny Mordaunt MP (*Conservative, Portsmouth North*)
Sandra Osborne MP (*Labour, Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock*)

Powers

The Committee is one of the departmental select committees, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No 152. These are available on the internet via www.parliament.uk.

Publications

The Reports and evidence of the Committee are published by The Stationery Office by Order of the House. All publications of the Committee (including press notices) are on the internet at www.parliament.uk/parliament.uk/defcom.

The Reports of the Committee, the formal minutes relating to that report, oral evidence taken and some or all written evidence are available in a printed volume. Additional written evidence may be published on the internet only.

Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are James Rhys (Clerk), Dougie Wands (Second Clerk), Karen Jackson (Audit Adviser), Ian Thomson (Committee Specialist), Christine Randall (Senior Committee Assistant), Rowena Macdonald and Carolyn Bowes (Committee Assistants), and Sumati Sowamber (Committee Support Assistant).

Contacts

All correspondence should be addressed to the Clerk of the Defence Committee, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA. The telephone number for general enquiries is 020 7219 5745; the Committee's email address is defcom@parliament.uk. Media inquiries should be addressed to Alex Paterson on 020 7219 1589.

Contents

Report	<i>Page</i>
Conclusions and recommendations	3
1 Introduction	9
Background	9
How do we define a strategic approach?	10
Was the 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review strategic?	11
2 The case for a national strategy	14
The drivers of SDSR 2010	14
Public support for defence spending and for expeditionary operations	15
The case for a national strategy?	17
3 Defence and Security Review 2015	20
The UK's place in the world	20
The changing context for the DSR 2015	21
Geo-political situation	21
Changing character of warfare	22
The changing role of the private sector	23
Identification of priorities and threats	24
A Comprehensive Spending Review	25
Sequencing of the NSS, CSR and DSR	26
4 Preparations for the next DSR	29
Strategic skills	29
Accurate and timely historical analysis	29
Process	31
A shadow process and red team challenge	33
5 Conclusions	34
Formal Minutes	35
Witnesses	36
List of written evidence	36
List of Reports from the Committee in Session 2013–14	37

Conclusions and recommendations

Was the 2010 Strategic and Security Review strategic?

1. We have previously noted that the 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review and the 2010 National Security Strategy were governed by the overriding strategic objective of reducing the UK's budget deficit. (Paragraph 12)
2. We have found it difficult to divine any other genuinely strategic vision in either document. This is the first of a series of reports that we intend to publish to assist in the preparation of the next Defence and Security Review; we hope that they will both inform and shape the next Review and the next National Security Strategy and help to drive a more strategic approach to security across Government. (Paragraph 12)
3. There is a need for an agreed definition of strategy. Our inquiry has suggested that there is not a clear definition being adhered to within Government. We offer our definition of strategy as “a course of action integrating ends, ways and means to meet policy objectives”, which the Secretary of State has accepted, as one that should be adopted in preparation of the next National Security Strategy and the next Defence and Security Review. We recommend that the Ministry of Defence should work within Government to ensure that this definition is used consistently. (Paragraph 13)
4. We welcomed the establishment of the National Security Council which has given greater operational focus and coordination across Departments. However, we echo the criticism of the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy that the National Security Council is failing to take on the higher strategic role that it might have done in Government. (Paragraph 14)

The drivers of SDR 2010

5. The 2015 Review should set out the Government's thinking on how the Armed Forces need to be re-balanced following the end of operations in Afghanistan, and address the challenges inherent in regenerating their capability following the end of operations. (Paragraph 18)

Public support for defence spending and for expeditionary operations

6. One of the greatest strategic threats to defence is the disconnect between the Armed Forces and the public caused by a lack of understanding of the utility of military force in the contemporary strategic environment. The Government cannot hope to bridge this divide without looking to explain what it believes the UK's position in the world could or should be, and the manner in which that is to be delivered. Without a proactive communications strategy, there is a serious risk of a lack of support for defence amongst the public. We ask the Department to review its communications strategy for the next Defence and Security Review and keep the Committee fully informed of its conclusions. We are convinced that there is an important role for this

Committee, and Parliament as a whole, to play in articulating the case for defence to the public at large. (Paragraph 24)

The case for a national strategy?

7. The imminent end of operations in Afghanistan provides an opportunity for the Government to think more strategically about the UK's place in the world in shaping the 2015 National Security Strategy and the 2015 Defence and Security Review. We believe that there is a persuasive case for a national strategy to be incorporated in the National Security Strategy, defining what position in the world the UK should adopt as the ends of the strategy and setting out the combination of hard and soft power that represent the ways and means of getting there. Even though the strategy will, in practice, be dynamic to meet changing threats and challenges, the document should make clear the process by which it has been arrived at, confirming the Government's priorities, and contain clear definitions of policy and strategy and how they relate to each other. The National Security Strategy (NSS) should be the subject of a published annual report on its implementation. The NSS should provide the strategic context for the Defence and Security Review. (Paragraph 32)
8. The concept of fighting power provides a useful framework for analysis of the operational effectiveness of the Armed Forces. The 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) pledged that it would not entail a "strategic shrinkage" for the UK. We ask the Ministry of Defence to provide us with an assessment of the fighting power of the Armed Forces both prior to the SDSR 2010 and now, and to outline in the Defence and Security Review 2015, the impact of any changes on that fighting power. (Paragraph 33)

The UK's place in the world

9. A vision of the UK's position in the world needs to be articulated in the National Security Strategy as the basis for any consideration of the next Defence and Security Review. As noted above, this requires active communications in which this Committee is ready to play its part. This vision would represent the definition of the ends of the strategy; a truly strategic DSR should outline the ways and means by which those ends could be achieved to provide the integration that is presently lacking. (Paragraph 37)

The changing context for the DSR 2015

10. This short inquiry has only scratched the surface in examining the potential impact of current geo-political developments on the UK and its strategic alliances. However, there can be few developments more fundamental to the UK's strategic position than the US pivot to the Pacific. The Government's thinking on the implications of this and other developments for the country's broader security and for the military capabilities that the country requires is a matter of vital interest for both Parliament and the public. The process of development of the National Security Strategy should be the vehicle for the Government to seek to engage both in this debate. (Paragraph 43)

11. The fact that a number of the asymmetric security threats to the UK, such as from terrorism or cyber attack, may not be capable of being deterred in all circumstances requires the Government to think more strategically about the resilience of the country's critical infrastructure and recovery following a successful attack. This needs to inform the next NSS and DSR and an assessment must be made of the proportion of resources dedicated to these functions. (Paragraph 50)
12. The list of changing factors identified in this interim inquiry gives only a flavour of the full range of those that will need to be taken into account in framing the next NSS and DSR. We acknowledge that some factors affecting Government strategic thinking cannot be put in the public domain, but, if the public is to be brought on board, the Government must do more to set out the rationale behind its strategic thinking and make a commitment to allocate the necessary resources to give it substance. (Paragraph 51)

A Comprehensive Spending Review

13. We raised concerns in our report on the last SDSR that there might be a discrepancy between the ambitions outlined and the resources available to fulfil them. If the expected real-terms increase in funding from 2015 were not to be made available, the Defence and Security Review would have to make clear that strategic ambition would have to be curtailed, and explain how that would be achieved. There is an inescapable link between budget and the capacity to deliver a strategic ambition which must be recognised and acknowledged in any DSR process. (Paragraph 59)
14. A failure to meet the Ministry of Defence's budgetary assumptions could lead to a disproportionate decline in the Armed Forces' fighting power, which would have a significant impact on the UK's strategic ambition. (Paragraph 60)
15. There is a danger of defence becoming a matter of discretionary spending. We note that the National Security Adviser referred to expeditionary capability as "optional". To a degree, the NSA is correct. However, discretionary decisions about the expeditionary capability that the UK retains must be based on proper strategic decision making about the UK's place in the world and not simply flow from the "horse-trading" that surrounds the CSR process. (Paragraph 61)

Sequencing of the NSS, CSR and DSR

16. While we accept that the three documents should be developed in parallel, we believe that the National Security Strategy should be published first. As we have argued, the NSS should outline a vision of the UK's role in the world that should not be driven purely by a consideration of the resources available. (Paragraph 66)
17. The NSS, together with the CSR, setting out respectively the "ends" and the "means" should logically precede the DSR outlining the "ways" of meeting the security objectives within the resources available. The allocation of resources will be based on national spending priorities set to meet the nation's security needs. Once the national strategy has been articulated in the NSS, the process of agreeing the ways and the means is therefore an iterative one. Getting the balance right between the CSR and

the DSR is more important than strict adherence to a particular timetable. (Paragraph 67)

Strategic skills

18. We call on the MOD to provide us with an update on education and skills training in strategy offered to senior officers and officials, both within the Defence Academy and at other institutions. (Paragraph 70)

Accurate and timely historic analysis

19. We recommend that the Ministry of Defence, in close conjunction with the Cabinet Office and National Security Secretariat, initiate the writing of official histories of the Iraq and Afghanistan campaigns and of other conflicts since the end of the Cold War; review how the history function is being undertaken by all three Services and by the Ministry of Defence as a whole; and confirm in the 2015 Defence and Security Review its plans for the preparation and publication of histories and other measures designed to address these deficiencies. This work could usefully call on input and expertise from other Government Departments including the Department for International Development and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office; since the comprehensive approach became a hallmark of the operations in both Iraq and Afghanistan, its lessons should be learnt from and shared across Government as a whole. (Paragraph 76)

Process

20. We see much advantage in the widest consultation on the next National Security Strategy and Defence and Security Review. We have no doubt that the process would be better if Government thinking were available at an early stage to enable structured comment. We have already recommended that the NSS should be published in advance of the DSR. We further recommend that a National Security Green Paper be issued at an early stage in the proceedings to provide a framework against which interested parties may comment. (Paragraph 84)
21. We consider that there are lessons for the MoD to learn from the practice of the French Government in seeking a wide range of input into the reformulation of its Livre Blanc. Given the importance of allies to the implementation of both SDSR 2010 and DSR 2015, it is essential that the UK's key strategic allies are fully engaged in the process from an early stage. (Paragraph 85)

A shadow process and red team challenge

22. Constructive challenge must be part and parcel of national strategy making. We recommend that independent groups be set up as soon as possible to provide a structured "Red Team" challenge to both the National Security Strategy and Defence and Security Review. (Paragraph 87)

Conclusions

23. Our inquiry has focused on the need for a truly strategic approach to the next Defence and Security Review, which integrates the ends of what the UK wants to achieve, with the ways, outlining the full spectrum of capabilities of both hard and soft power required, and the means available. This methodology requires the Government to set out a national strategy in the National Security Strategy, identifying the UK's position in the world and how the UK's national interests and obligations will be upheld in the face of shifting threats and profound geo-political and geo-economic changes. This document should be published giving sufficient time to provide the strategic context for the 2015 Defence and Security Review. (Paragraph 88)
24. There is a lack of understanding amongst the public of what HM Armed Forces should be for, and this represents one of the greatest strategic threats facing the Armed Forces. Public sympathy and support for the Armed Forces is to be welcomed, but it must not obscure or undermine a hard-headed understanding of what they are for. The process of producing the next Defence and Security Review, shaped by the next National Security Strategy, is the opportunity to engage the public in understanding the future of the Armed Forces. Parliament and this Committee, in partnership with the Ministry of Defence, have an important role in debating and explaining the case for defence to the public at large. For this reason, we have made a number of recommendations around the process for preparation of the next Defence and Security Review to ensure that it is inclusive, is informed by full historical analysis, and is subject to robust internal and external challenge. (Paragraph 89)

1 Introduction

Background

1. The Strategic Defence and Security Review published on 19 October 2010 was the first strategic defence review (SDR) to be published in 12 years. The previous Government had planned to produce a SDR after the 2010 General Election, and had published a Green Paper and three supporting papers, in February 2010.

2. One of the Coalition Government's first actions after the 2010 Election was to set up the National Security Council. This brought together key Ministers, officials and military and intelligence chiefs at the heart of government to make the most efficient use of limited resources for security and to oversee the development of the National Security Strategy (NSS). At its first meeting the NSC decided to broaden the strategic defence review to include wider security matters, so that the document became the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR). The setting up of the NSC was widely welcomed, though this Committee expressed some reservations especially about the risk that military input to the SDSR would be diluted;¹ the SDSR became a cross-Government publication led by the Cabinet Office.

3. The National Security Strategy was published on 18 October, the day before publication of the SDSR. The Comprehensive Spending Review, including details of the financial resources to be allocated to security across Government, was published on 20 October. We published reports on *The Strategic Defence and Security Review*,² on 15 September 2010 and on *The Strategic Defence and Security Review and the National Security Strategy* on 21 July 2011.³ The Government's intention remains that the defence and security review should be published five-yearly, with the next iteration in 2015. We welcomed the commitment to updating the NSS and SDSR every five years.⁴ However, we note that publishing the next iteration of the documents immediately after an election will be challenging, particularly if the result of that election is not immediately clear. This timetable underlines the importance of including opposition parties in consultation prior to the election, a point to which we return later in the report.

4. In December 2012 we announced our intention of contributing to the next Defence and Security Review by carrying out an overarching strategic inquiry to examine the purpose and future use of the Armed Forces. In March 2013, we launched an inquiry entitled 'Towards the next Defence and Security Review', covering

- the strategic balance between deterrence, containment, intervention and influence
- the utility of force

¹ First Report of Session 2010–12, HC 345, paragraph 8

² First Report of Session 2010–12, HC 345

³ Sixth Report of Session 2010–12, HC 761

⁴ Sixth Report of Session 2010–12, paragraph 214

- the legitimacy of force, including the political/military interface, and the changing legal environment
- lessons learned from current and recent operations
- the relationship between hard and soft power in terms of influence.

5. This preliminary framework Report considers the nature and purpose of a Defence and Security Review, the principles, personnel and processes involved, the timetable which should be followed and the current state of preparations. We are also, independently of the points in the terms of reference noted above, undertaking four separate case studies into:

- remotely-piloted air systems;
- deterrence in the twenty-first century;
- the place, nature and timing of intervention; and
- the UK Armed Forces and the legal framework for future operations.

These will help to inform our overarching inquiry and we will produce a final report drawing together our findings in connection with our overarching inquiry later in 2014.

6. We have held four oral evidence sessions in connection with this preliminary inquiry. We took evidence on 24 April 2013 from Professor the Lord Hennessy of Nympsfield, Professor Julian Lindley-French and Major-General Mungo Melvin (Rtd), who also acts as an adviser to this Committee. On 4 June, we took evidence from Professor Paul Cornish, Commodore Stephen Jermy and Frank Ledwidge. We took evidence in private on 11 September 2013 from Sir Kim Darroch, the National Security Adviser, and Julian Miller, the Deputy National Security Adviser, and have published a redacted transcript of the session. We also took evidence from the Secretary of State for Defence, the Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP, on 9 October, together with Edward Ferguson, Head of Defence Strategy and Priorities, and Tom McKane, Director General for Security Policy, at the Ministry of Defence. We are grateful to all our witnesses for the frankness with which they responded to our questions and to those who contributed written evidence to the inquiry. We are also grateful for the contribution of our Specialist Advisers and of the staff of the Committee.⁵

How do we define a strategic approach?

7. We have deliberately called this inquiry “Towards the next Defence and Security Review”, rather than “Towards the next Strategic Defence and Security Review”, because in our opinion the previous review was not, despite its title, strategic. We have previously noted that “strategy is understood in many different ways across Government and the military and too often the message and intent becomes blurred”⁶ and we recommended

⁵ The declarations of relevant interests by our Specialist Advisers are recorded in the Committee’s Formal Minutes which are available on the Committee’s website

⁶ Sixth Report of 2010–12, paragraph 214

that “the National Security Council should develop a uniform vocabulary for strategic thinking across Government”.⁷

8. We have defined strategy as “a course of action integrating ends, ways and means to meet policy objectives”. The National Security Strategy described strategy as a “combination” of ends, ways and means.⁸ The Defence Strategy Group, chaired jointly by the Permanent Under Secretary at the MoD and the Chief of Defence Staff, has contrasted strategy with policy, which it defines as

a statement of intent, or a commitment to act. Policy decisions provide strategy makers with the objectives or ‘ends’ to which they must ascribe ‘ways’ and ‘means’.⁹

The Defence Strategy Group also acknowledges the desirability of a clear definition of strategy:

The word ‘strategy’ is variously and often loosely used in government to denote any large-scale, long-term or broad-ranging planning activity – corporate or operational, civilian or military, domestic or international. The lack of a common lexicon within and between Government Departments can be an obstacle both to the formulation of effective strategy, and to our ability to convince an external audience of its effectiveness. Conversely, clarity of definition can help Departments to organise themselves in a way that facilitates closer interaction and understanding with the rest of Whitehall, thus providing better support to Ministers in the formulation of national strategy and, in turn, enhancing the UK’s ability to work with allies and partners to influence and shape the future global strategic context.

We are convinced that establishing common terminology would be of benefit in promoting understanding and clarity of direction across Government.

Was the 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review strategic?

9. Our report on the 2010 SDSR and the NSS noted that the Government had an “overriding strategic aim of reducing the UK’s budget deficit”.¹⁰ We raised a number of concerns about some of the capability decisions in the 2010 SDSR, suggesting that decisions may not have been based on an assessment of the capabilities required for the tasks envisaged.¹¹ We were also concerned that resources might not be available for the realisation of Future Force 2020. Our concerns were based on a belief that the SDSR had failed realistically to integrate the ends to which the Government aspired, with the ways and means that were at its disposal.

⁷ Sixth Report of 2010–12, paragraph 214

⁸ A Strong Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: the National Security Strategy, Cm 7953

⁹ Organising Defence’s Contribution to National Strategy, paragraph 10

¹⁰ Sixth Report of 2010–12, paragraph 215

¹¹ Sixth Report of 2010–12, paragraph 218

10. Professor Lindley-French argued that the 2010 SDSR was a “spreadsheet review”¹² and outlined his concerns at a failure to align resources and commitments. He told us that he had observed frustration amongst allies in NATO

With the UK on the one side making these statements about ambition, and on the other side cutting the means to make that ambition real.¹³

Lord Hennessy believed that the 2010 SDSR had been in essence a series of spending reviews “with a thin patina of strategy”.¹⁴

11. The National Security Council is the main forum for collective discussion of the Government’s objectives for national security and therefore has an important role in maintaining cross-Government focus on security and the operation and updating of the NSS and implementation of the SDSR. The Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy has been critical of the National Security Council’s focus on operational matters and short-term imperatives rather than “considering long term and blue skies topics”, and its failure to make the contribution it should to “enabling Government to work as a co-ordinated whole”.¹⁵ Explaining his role to us, the National Security Adviser acknowledged that

Mostly what we are required to do and bring to the National Security Council is not grand strategy, as you describe it, but self-contained pieces of policy with clear objectives, exit strategies and a consideration of the implications, risks and threats involved.¹⁶

12. We have previously noted that the 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review and the 2010 National Security Strategy were governed by the overriding strategic objective of reducing the UK’s budget deficit. We have found it difficult to divine any other genuinely strategic vision in either document. This is the first of a series of reports that we intend to publish to assist in the preparation of the next Defence and Security Review; we hope that they will both inform and shape the next Review and the next National Security Strategy and help to drive a more strategic approach to security across Government.

13. There is a need for an agreed definition of strategy. Our inquiry has suggested that there is not a clear definition being adhered to within Government. We offer our definition of strategy as “a course of action integrating ends, ways and means to meet policy objectives”, which the Secretary of State has accepted, as one that should be adopted in preparation of the next National Security Strategy and the next Defence and Security Review. We recommend that the Ministry of Defence should work within Government to ensure that this definition is used consistently.

¹² Q2

¹³ Q13

¹⁴ Q1

¹⁵ Second Report of the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy of 2012-13, *The work of the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy in 2012*, HL 115 and HC 984.

¹⁶ Q137

14. We welcomed the establishment of the National Security Council which has given greater operational focus and coordination across Departments. However, we echo the criticism of the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy that the National Security Council is failing to take on the higher strategic role that it might have done in Government.

2 The case for a national strategy

The drivers of SDSR 2010

15. The two biggest factors defining the 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review were the need to balance the defence budget and the need to prioritise operations in Afghanistan. The foreword to the document stated that

The difficult legacy we have inherited has necessitated tough decisions to get our economy back on track. Our national security depends on our economic security and vice versa. So bringing the defence budget back to balance is a vital part of how we tackle the deficit and protect this country's national security.

The Secretary of State informed us that the Department's budgeting assumption was a flat budget in real terms plus a 1% real terms increase per annum on the equipment plan from 2015 through to 2020.¹⁷ He acknowledged that "tough prioritisation decisions" would still be required, particularly in light of the recent additional spending commitment on cyber (which would require reduced spending elsewhere), but he characterised his view, and that of senior officials and military personnel as being that "if we are left alone, in peace, with the budget that we have assumed, we will manage to deliver the output".¹⁸

16. In addition, by 2015, UK Armed Forces should no longer be engaged operationally in Afghanistan. This change, together with the more optimistic budgeting assumptions, opens up both opportunities for the Department to think more strategically about the role of the UK Armed Forces and risks that the end of a protracted military operation may lead some to conclude that the UK should not expect to be engaged in overseas intervention on this scale again, and that the Armed Forces can be scaled back accordingly.

17. Commodore Jermy noted the challenge as operations in Afghanistan draw to a close there would be a need for the Armed Forces to be "recapitalised and balanced".¹⁹ Edward Ferguson acknowledged that

2010 was heavily conditioned by that commitment [Afghanistan]. So we are able and we are doing some early conceptual thinking about what that might mean and how we might want to reposition the Armed Forces post Afghanistan for contingency and wider activities.

18. The 2015 Review should set out the Government's thinking on how the Armed Forces need to be re-balanced following the end of operations in Afghanistan, and address the challenges inherent in regenerating their capability following the end of operations.

¹⁷ Q183

¹⁸ Q183

¹⁹ Q55

Public support for defence spending and for expeditionary operations

19. Whilst it provides an opportunity to think strategically about the UK's place in the world, there is a possibility that the end of operations in Afghanistan, and a reduced public appetite for overseas intervention, will lead the public to question the purpose of the UK's Armed Forces. The Secretary of State did not believe that this thinking yet affected Government decision-making. He downplayed the political challenge of justifying defence spending within Government when the profile of the Armed Forces is reduced after the end of operations in Afghanistan. He believed that

There is a good understanding of the concept of defence across Government [...] It is not only when we are deployed on operations that we are delivering defence effect, but when we are providing deterrence, when we are engaged in capability building, when we are projecting influence and when we are delivering a defence engagement strategy.²⁰

20. However, whilst the understanding of the concept of defence may be currently strong across Government, we have previously raised concerns about public support for defence. In our first report on the 2010 SDSR we questioned whether

given general public opposition to the war in Iraq, and questionable support among the electorate for current operations in Afghanistan (notwithstanding general support for Armed Forces personnel) [...] the lack of general consultation may create a greater sense of disconnection between the decision of Government and the understanding of the people at large on defence issues.²¹

Explaining the case for defence to the public only becomes harder in the light of public scepticism about both the objectives of recent operations and how success in them might be defined. Professor Cornish argued that “Afghanistan and Iraq were presented in some way as the embodiment of our grand strategic mission in the world, and it did not wash.”²² This confusion can only increase the disconnect between the public and Government on defence matters.

21. General Sir Nick Houghton, Chief of the Defence Staff, identified a different threat to continued public support for investment in the Armed Forces and support for military operations. He spoke of the “anomalous” position in which the Armed Forces found themselves:

The armed forces have never been held in higher respect by the nation, but perhaps the purposes towards which we have most recently been put have never been more deeply questioned.[...] I sometimes feel that rather than being understood we are sympathised with. I sometimes feel that we are the object of our nation's charity

²⁰ Q206

²¹ First Report of the Committee, Session 2010–12, HC 345, paragraph 31.

²² Q56

rather than its deep sympathetic understanding with what armed forces are about and their relevance.²³

He did not want the military “to be an object of sympathy and charity” and wanted Armed Forces “that people generally respect, support and understand”. There was a danger that sympathy for the Armed Forces was undermining public understanding of their utility.

22. The Secretary of State strongly made the case for maintaining an expeditionary capability on the grounds that it “is one of the things that distinguishes the UK and one of the things that I think enhances our influence and strategic reach”.²⁴ He drew attention to the volatility of public opinion:

After the Vietnam war, there was a clear disengagement of [US]public opinion from the idea of being an active participant in military operations, but we saw with 9/11 what a single event can do to change the mood and the tone of public opinion. So time is a great healer.²⁵

[...]once we have completed our withdrawal from Afghanistan and completed the restructuring of our forces [...], we will then seek to rebuild public support for—as a last resort—the ability to project expeditionary forces.²⁶

He also suggested that the increasing role for the reserves under the Army 2020 reforms would contribute to “rebuilding the links between the military and civil society”.²⁷

23. Professor Lindley-French argued that politicians needed to take the lead in making the case for the country to take on the international role to which he believed it should aspire, warning that “unless the political class are really engaged in this idea across the political spectrum [...] it will come to nought”. The Secretary of State echoed this point when asked what might be done to rebuild popular support for the notion of expeditionary action, saying:

I am sure there are lots of things that we can do. Public opinion is conditioned by what people hear politicians saying, by what they read in the media and by what they hear commentators saying, so there are plenty of things that we can do.²⁸

24. One of the greatest strategic threats to defence is the disconnect between the Armed Forces and the public caused by a lack of understanding of the utility of military force in the contemporary strategic environment. The Government cannot hope to bridge this divide without looking to explain what it believes the UK’s position in the world could or should be, and the manner in which that is to be delivered. Without a proactive communications strategy, there is a serious risk of a lack of support for defence amongst the public. We ask the Department to review its communications

²³ Evidence from General Sir Nick Houghton on *The Work of the Chief of Defence Staff*, 16 October 2013, HC 740, Q1.

²⁴ Q156

²⁵ Q158

²⁶ Q158

²⁷ Q158

²⁸ Q159.

strategy for the next Defence and Security Review and keep the Committee fully informed of its conclusions. We are convinced that there is an important role for this Committee, and Parliament as a whole, to play in articulating the case for defence to the public at large.

The case for a national strategy?

25. We have highlighted the implications of the end of UK military operations in Afghanistan and the more optimistic budgeting assumptions from 2015 onwards. Mungo Melvin told us that

There is an opportunity [...]to talk openly for the first time in many years about grand strategy, how we see the instruments of national power being used, and to what effect, and then to do some form of strategic balance about what we are trying to achieve; what relevant methods are available, nuclear and non-nuclear, from deterrence and containment to intervention if we want to do that evermore; how we resource properly what is now colloquially called soft power, or influence; and how we address some of the new threats, such as cyber and so on, in more serious terms.²⁹

26. DefenceSynergia, a defence and strategy research group, told us that

With an overarching national strategy providing the highest level of government vision,[...]MoD would then be better positioned to size, scope and equip the armed forces to meet government foreign and domestic policy objectives.³⁰

However, they were unconvinced that the current

National Security Strategy (NSS) is anything more than a higher level tactical doctrine which broadly defines for HM Forces the size, time frame and type of operations they must constrain themselves to without explaining why (the rationale); where (the geopolitical rationale) or what (the threats or interests they must defend).³¹

27. A number of witnesses emphasised that many of the security solutions to national threats were non-military in their nature, and that some threats were best addressed “up-stream”. The Oxford Research Group saw the next SDSR as “a very important opportunity to shift the balance in concrete policy terms towards the tackling of ‘threats at source’”.³²The Campaign Against Arms Trade argued that “even though most of the threats identified by the 2010 National Security Strategy (NSS) are not military in nature, to date the Government’s response has been predominantly grounded in military thinking.”³³ They added that

²⁹ Q15

³⁰ Ev w6

³¹ Ev w4

³² Ev w11

³³ Ev w13

The opportunity presented by the SDSR should be taken to look at all aspects of the UK's security with no preconception that these are military. [...] Putting support for human rights at the heart of the UK's foreign policy will alleviate many of the threats to UK security.³⁴

28. Commodore Jermy emphasised that “wartime operations now are multidimensional”.³⁵ He spoke of “failures of strategic thinking” and “a failure of structural thinking, [...] a failure to go through a process where the objective that you have embarked upon is made clear, where the amount of resources you need to pursue that objective is made clear and where the political framework in which you should operate is made clear”.³⁶ The 2010 SDSR claimed that the UK could avoid strategic shrinkage, despite spending less on defence than in the past, by bringing together all the instruments available to it, not just the military.³⁷ We believe this assertion to be unproven.

29. The MoD's Defence Strategy Group paper, *Organising Defence's contribution to National Strategy*, examines whether, in the absence of a single, existential, threat to the UK such as existed in the “bi-polar” Cold War era, the concept of national (or grand) strategy is still valid in the modern “multi-polar” era with a more diverse range of hostile actors. The paper concludes that “in an increasingly competitive and multi-polar world it is more, rather than less, important that the UK is clear about its own vital interests and enduring objectives, and has a clear and proactive strategy for advancing them over time, using the levers at our disposal”. We agree with this analysis.

30. A key focus of the 2015 Review will be the continuing process of moving the Armed Services towards the 2010 SDSR's stated objectives of the desired Future Force 2020 and the ‘adaptable posture’. We expect our current inquiry into Future Army 2020, on which we will report later in the year, to inform the Government's thinking in preparations for the 2015 Review. We are also intending to undertake an inquiry into Future Force 2020 later in the year.

31. However, what has been missing from the debate so far on Army 2020 has been discussion of the concept of fighting power. The MoD defines fighting power as “the Armed Forces' ability to fight. It consists of a conceptual component (the thought process), a moral component (the ability to get people to fight) and a physical component (the means to fight)”.³⁸ The physical component comprises a number of elements including manpower, equipment and sustainability. To this description could be added the national scientific, engineering and industrial base. Fighting power provides a model that is highly relevant to the application of both hard and soft power in that it places a premium on the conceptual component, which requires an understanding not only of the strategic context and environment, but also an appreciation of how best to influence future partners as well as potential opponents and other parties.

³⁴ Ev w15

³⁵ Q29.

³⁶ Q30 and Q32.

³⁷ MoD press release 19 October 2010.

³⁸ Joint Doctrine Publication 0-01, 4th Edition, dated November 2011

32. The imminent end of operations in Afghanistan provides an opportunity for the Government to think more strategically about the UK's place in the world in shaping the 2015 National Security Strategy and the 2015 Defence and Security Review. We believe that there is a persuasive case for a national strategy to be incorporated in the National Security Strategy, defining what position in the world the UK should adopt as the ends of the strategy and setting out the combination of hard and soft power that represent the ways and means of getting there. Even though the strategy will, in practice, be dynamic to meet changing threats and challenges, the document should make clear the process by which it has been arrived at, confirming the Government's priorities, and contain clear definitions of policy and strategy and how they relate to each other. The National Security Strategy (NSS) should be the subject of a published annual report on its implementation. The NSS should provide the strategic context for the Defence and Security Review.

33. The concept of fighting power provides a useful framework for analysis of the operational effectiveness of the Armed Forces. The 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) pledged that it would not entail a "strategic shrinkage" for the UK. We ask the Ministry of Defence to provide us with an assessment of the fighting power of the Armed Forces both prior to the SDSR 2010 and now, and to outline in the Defence and Security Review 2015, the impact of any changes on that fighting power.

3 Defence and Security Review 2015

The UK's place in the world

34. During this inquiry we have sought to identify the questions that would need to be addressed by a genuinely strategic DSR. Professor Lord Hennessy suggested to us that the next DSR should pass a number of tests, including

a long, deep, illusion-free look at [the UK's] appetite to remain a significant player in the world given its size, wealth, population, economic and technical capacities.

35. We agree that a genuinely strategic DSR requires a vision of what the UK's place in the world should be – the end point of the strategy. Once this end point has been identified, even though it may well change over the course of time, the question of what our Armed Forces are for can be answered. Professor Lindley-French called on the 2015 Review to “look up and out in the world, understand it and understand how, through the review and the NSS, we can seek to influence – with whom and why”.³⁹ He emphasised the need to adopt a mindset that

We are a major economy in the world, and we are a regional power with global interests. We are not a world power, by any means—a global power—but we punch at our weight. The question then becomes: how do we punch at our weight more efficiently and effectively to promote value for money?⁴⁰

However, Professor Cornish argued that “Our grand strategic mission does not need to be said; it is what it is. We are a medium power with an enormous reputation for our advocacy for human rights and as a tolerant liberal democracy”.⁴¹

36. The Secretary of State acknowledged that a clear view of the UK's place in the world was an essential requirement for a SDSR and said that he “would expect the National Security Strategy to reflect that view”.⁴² However, when asked what that place should be, he was clear that the view he articulated was purely his opinion.

My opinion is that the UK is and should remain an outward-looking nation. We have a very large network of interests around the world. Our geography, our history and the nature of our economy—as one of the most, if not the most, open of the large economies, dependent on trade and investment for our livelihood—mean that we simply do not have the option of divorcing ourselves from the affairs of the world. We have to remain engaged in defence of our interests. We have to remain engaged to shape the international agenda. We have to remain engaged to support the international rule of law, upon which so much of our prosperity and security depends. That means being prepared to play a very active role in the world, using all the levers at our disposal, including our permanent seat on the United Nations

³⁹ Q2

⁴⁰ Q13

⁴¹ Q56

⁴² Q149

Security Council and including our Armed Forces, which are among the most capable armed forces in the world.⁴³

37. A vision of the UK's position in the world needs to be articulated in the National Security Strategy as the basis for any consideration of the next Defence and Security Review. As noted above, this requires active communications in which this Committee is ready to play its part. This vision would represent the definition of the ends of the strategy; a truly strategic DSR should outline the ways and means by which those ends could be achieved to provide the integration that is presently lacking.

The changing context for the DSR 2015

Geo-political situation

38. During this inquiry, the evidence we have received has highlighted the implications of the US strategic pivot, or rebalancing, to the Pacific, with its concomitant expectation that Europe should take on greater responsibility for its own security. Professor Lindley-French argued that the UK needed to take the lead in this process:

The Americans will look to Europe to look after its own neighbourhood as they focus more and more on Asia-Pacific. [...]we will then have to make NATO and the EU effective security actors but, without our full engagement in those institutions, I find it hard to believe that they will indeed release the pressure on the Americans, which we need to create so that they can be effective elsewhere.⁴⁴

39. The Secretary of State acknowledged that the US shift in focus to the Pacific would mean that European nations would need to do more for their own defence, and that this would require either an increase in the proportion of GDP spent on defence, which he thought was unlikely in the short term, or progress in ensuring that money spent on defence by European NATO nations was spent more effectively. He also spoke of the implications for what the UK might do in the context of its European strategic relationships, and the implications of this for the future of NATO.

The North Africa, Middle East, Horn of Africa area is certainly an area of focus for bilateral joint operations, particularly with the French, but it is also an area for European NATO to consider as, if you like, a subset of an organisation. As you will be aware, there is a tension within European NATO about the relative focus that there should be on the defence of the NATO homeland against a currently non-existent but potential future threat from Russia versus the creation of expeditionary capabilities to forward defend Europe's interests in areas such as the Middle East and North Africa.⁴⁵

40. The Secretary of State also argued that the UK should strengthen its engagement with countries like Indonesia and Malaysia and "deepen" its strong strategic relationships with

⁴³ Q151

⁴⁴ Q2

⁴⁵ Q220

nations on the Pacific, such as Australia, New Zealand and Canada.⁴⁶ Security cooperation with Japan is also of growing significance. In July 2013 the UK-Japan Defence Equipment Cooperation Framework and Information Security Agreement were signed between the two countries. The Secretary of State told us that Japan had a “significant pool of defence resource”, and was “on the right side of most arguments”.⁴⁷

41. The UK’s strategic relationships have significant implications for the military capability that the country maintains. Professor Lindley-French noted the importance of allies and partners in delivering capability, explaining that “having sufficient power that allies and partners want to work to us is [...] absolutely critical”.⁴⁸ If UK capability is cut below a critical mass, the nation’s ability to leverage influence through its strategic partners would be substantially reduced.

42. Another area of growing strategic interest is the Far North. The retreating sea ice has implications for both the scope for exploitation of the Arctic’s natural resources and for the world economy as shipping lanes are freed up, drastically reducing transport times. We intend to conduct further work during 2014 on the growing strategic importance of the Far North.

43. This short inquiry has only scratched the surface in examining the potential impact of current geo-political developments on the UK and its strategic alliances. However, there can be few developments more fundamental to the UK’s strategic position than the US pivot to the Pacific. The Government’s thinking on the implications of this and other developments for the country’s broader security and for the military capabilities that the country requires is a matter of vital interest for both Parliament and the public. The process of development of the National Security Strategy should be the vehicle for the Government to seek to engage both in this debate.

Changing character of warfare

44. We received evidence that the character of warfare was changing leading to significant changes in the nature of the security threat facing the country. An understanding of these changes needs to be reflected in the next DSR. James P. Farwell and Darby Arakelian drew out the implications of the attack on the Westgate Shopping Centre in Nairobi in September 2013 for global security policy.⁴⁹ They have emphasised the international dimension of the terrorist threat and the extent to which incidents such as the Westgate attack revealed combatants operating amongst non-combatants. They also drew attention to other forms of conflict, from cyber attack to financial, trade and psychological warfare, and, citing the Mexican drug wars, noted the blurring of distinctions between terror and criminal networks. The diverse nature of the threats required a more integrated political, diplomatic, military and law enforcement response.

⁴⁶ Q219

⁴⁷ Q221

⁴⁸ Q2

⁴⁹ Al Shabaab and the new threat we face, Farwell and Arakelian: <http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/al-shabaab-the-new-threat-we-face-9359>

45. The NSS identifies hostile attacks in UK cyber space as one of the highest priority risks to be addressed. The Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure works across Government to counter the cyber threat to critical infrastructure in partnership with both public and private sectors. The UK's national infrastructure is defined by CPNI as: "those facilities, systems, sites and networks necessary for the functioning of the country and the delivery of the essential services upon which daily life in the UK depends".⁵⁰ The national infrastructure is categorised into nine sectors: communications, emergency services, energy, financial services, food, government, health, transport and water. The Secretary of State noted the resilience strategies that could be put in place to address cyber risks, including risks from space weather events as well as from hostile parties,⁵¹ as well as the work that CPNI was doing assessing the vulnerabilities of utilities and other services and identifying defensive strategies.⁵² The private sector has a key role in this respect.

46. The NSS 2010 identifies and prioritises security risks from a range of sources, including from other nations and non-state actors as well as those that are naturally occurring. The threat of cyber attack, that can come from an increasing population of technologically able individuals, and other asymmetric threats, including terrorist activity, raise the increasing prospect that a nation may be unable clearly to identify the perpetrator of an attack. The absence of a clearly identifiable enemy has very significant implications for the concept of deterrence in security policy.

47. As well as the changing nature of the threat, the Oxford Research Group argued that there had been a shift in the character of warfare in the twenty-first century driven by new weapons systems, including "increased use of armed drones", which they believed had

given rise to concerns that a shift towards "war-lite" leaves room for decreased accountability of states for their actions in conflict, lower thresholds of military engagement and greater scope for controversial action.⁵³

We will explore some of the questions raised by this new technology further in our inquiry into Remotely Piloted Aerial Systems, on which we intend to report later in the year.

48. There is a particular challenge for the Government in responding to natural risks and threats that may not be capable of being deterred, either because their provenance is unknown or the actors are irrational. We will explore the changing role of the concept of deterrence in security in our inquiry into Deterrence in the 21st Century, on which we intend to report later in the year.

The changing role of the private sector

49. We mentioned above the role of the private sector in relation to the nation's critical infrastructure, in both formulating and implementing defensive capabilities and in developing resilience strategies. There are a number of other ways in which the private sector is fundamental to any national security strategy, and these need to be reflected in

⁵⁰ <http://www.cpni.gov.uk/about/cni/#sthash.hcNr44h4.dpuf>

⁵¹ Q232

⁵² Q234

⁵³ Ev w12

both the next DSR and the next NSS. For example, it is estimated that commercial businesses have provided 45% of the operational manpower, in terms of both headcount and input costs, for the UK's military operations since 2000.⁵⁴ The UK's military capability can therefore not be defined solely by reference to the capability of the nation's Armed Forces. The UK is also increasingly reliant on industry for modification of equipment and the provision of surge capabilities. The next DSR should take account of the significant role played by industry and the role of the on-shore industrial base. The increasing reliance on reserve forces inherent in the Army 2020 reforms will be covered in our inquiry on that subject later this year and highlights another dimension of the relationship between public and private sector in UK security.

50. The fact that a number of the asymmetric security threats to the UK, such as from terrorism or cyber attack, may not be capable of being deterred in all circumstances requires the Government to think more strategically about the resilience of the country's critical infrastructure and recovery following a successful attack. This needs to inform the next NSS and DSR and an assessment must be made of the proportion of resources dedicated to these functions.

51. The list of changing factors identified in this interim inquiry gives only a flavour of the full range of those that will need to be taken into account in framing the next NSS and DSR. We acknowledge that some factors affecting Government strategic thinking cannot be put in the public domain, but, if the public is to be brought on board, the Government must do more to set out the rationale behind its strategic thinking and make a commitment to allocate the necessary resources to give it substance.

Identification of priorities and threats

52. The 2010 National Security Strategy identifies and prioritises the risks to security, taking account of both likelihood and impact in its judgment of the level of priority to be given to each risk. The next iteration of the NSS will reflect any changes in the categorisation of risk by the Government.

53. Commodore Jermy noted some of the major strategic developments that could lead to the deployment of UK forces, including crisis in the international economic system leading to security instability.⁵⁵ He also noted that "it is plausible that we could be facing severe energy shortages over the next 10 to 20 to 30 years. That is likely [...] to lead to significant stresses and strains within international society".⁵⁶ He identified the fundamentals of UK security as its territorial boundaries and Overseas Territories and "supplies of food, energy and commodities".⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Henrik Heidenkamp, John Louth and Trevor Taylor, *The Defence Industrial Ecosystem – Delivering Security in an Uncertain World*, RUSI Whitehall Report 2-11

⁵⁵ Q41

⁵⁶ Q43

⁵⁷ Q53

54. Tom McKane, Director General for Security Policy at the MoD, informed us that the MoD was continuously reassessing risk—“it is really central to our business”.⁵⁸ The Secretary of State outlined the management of security risk as follows

The way I see this working is that we are collecting continuously, through our intelligence networks and by other means, a hopperful of things that might change our strategic thinking—inputs to the strategic review process. As we come to do the NSS, we will process them. Some of them need a little bit of time—when you first receive them, you think that you must react, but when you look at them again a month later, you think sometimes, “I’m glad I didn’t react immediately”, after setting them in a broader context. There is a continuous stream of reporting and information—some open source, some classified—which builds a picture of friends, risks and threats, and that will inform the next iteration of the National Security Strategy.⁵⁹

55. Edward Ferguson also outlined the role of the Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre in producing its Global Strategic Trends document every five years; this provided a horizon-scanning, 30 year perspective:

So as well as that quite short-term, responsive and reactive process through intelligence and through monitoring of countries at risk of instability, essentially, we also have a much longer-term lookout, which allows us to monitor where longer-term trends—climate change, demographic expansion and all those sorts of things—might lead us, which from a defence perspective is obviously important, because the timelines on many of our capabilities are some way away and we need to ensure that our future force structures will remain relevant to future challenges, as well as to the more imminent ones.

56. Quoting Professor Sir Michael Howard, Professor Cornish warned that

No matter how clearly one thinks, it is impossible to anticipate precisely the character of future conflict. The key is not to be so far off the mark that it becomes impossible to adjust once that character is revealed.⁶⁰

A Comprehensive Spending Review

57. The National Security Adviser told us that

There is a certain minimum around defence of the realm and the protection of Britain’s clear and vital national interest that you have to fund if you are going to be a serious Government. Then there are the optional things about your expeditionary capacity and suchlike, which you do beyond that. You need to know what the funds are and how much you can finance before you take decisions about what you are going to do.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Q222

⁵⁹ Q226

⁶⁰ Q65

⁶¹ Q105

Professor Lindley-French had warned us that defence spending was increasingly seen by governments as discretionary, and that, instead of the NATO target of spending a minimum 2% of GDP on defence, the level was now at 1.52% across NATO excluding the US, and only 1.36% across the EU.⁶²

58. We asked the Secretary of State what would happen if the MoD's budgeting assumptions were not met. He explained that:

if the equipment plan real-terms increase doesn't occur, the equipment plan will be squeezed by 1% per annum over five years, so at the end of it we will have an equipment plan that is 5% smaller than we would ideally have liked. [...] In my judgment, if the amount of money available for the defence budget decreased significantly, we would reach the end of the process by which we can simply take salami slices off. We would have to ask some serious structural questions about the type of forces that we were able to maintain.⁶³

We note the Secretary of State's argument that the defence budget cannot be "salami sliced" further, and that serious structural questions would be asked about the future shape of the Armed Forces. Further "salami slicing" would be likely to have a disproportionate effect on the fighting power of the Armed Forces and significant budget-driven structural change would be likely to have substantially greater effect.

59. We raised concerns in our report on the last SDSR that there might be a discrepancy between the ambitions outlined and the resources available to fulfil them. If the expected real-terms increase in funding from 2015 were not to be made available, the Defence and Security Review would have to make clear that strategic ambition would have to be curtailed, and explain how that would be achieved. There is an inescapable link between budget and the capacity to deliver a strategic ambition which must be recognised and acknowledged in any DSR process.

60. A failure to meet the Ministry of Defence's budgetary assumptions could lead to a disproportionate decline in the Armed Forces' fighting power, which would have a significant impact on the UK's strategic ambition.

61. There is a danger of defence becoming a matter of discretionary spending. We note that the National Security Adviser referred to expeditionary capability as "optional". To a degree, the NSA is correct. However, discretionary decisions about the expeditionary capability that the UK retains must be based on proper strategic decision making about the UK's place in the world and not simply flow from the "horse-trading" that surrounds the CSR process.

Sequencing of the NSS, CSR and DSR

62. The relationship between the 2010 National Security Strategy and the 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review is described in the foreword to the former in these terms:

⁶² Q15

⁶³ Qq184 and 185

This Strategy is about gearing Britain up for this new age of uncertainty—weighing up the threats we face, and preparing to deal with them. But a strategy is of little value without the tools to implement it, so alongside this National Security Strategy we will tomorrow publish a Strategic Defence and Security Review. This will describe how we will equip our Armed Forces, our police and intelligence agencies to tackle current and future threats as effectively as they dealt with those of the past.

63. Professor Cornish told us that he would expect the NSS and the SDSR to be “considered in parallel—conjoined twins”.⁶⁴ He explained that “you cannot have strategy as plan without a consideration of strategy as available resources. You have to have the two discussions in parallel”.⁶⁵ The NSS articulated the strategic ends and the SDSR outlined the ways and means: “if they are not connected—if not within the day, then certainly within a month or so—and if they have not gone through some sort of common discussion, that will be a manifest error”.⁶⁶ Commodore Jermy agreed that the development of the two should “be conjoined, but logically the National Security Strategy should lead. It is the higher document and therefore it should be the one that directs the broad shape [...] of the Strategic Defence Review”.⁶⁷

64. Asked whether the next review would be ends-based rather than means-based, the Secretary of State replied that it must be both:

what comes first—the budget envelope or the capability requirement? It’s a bit like saying to a man outside a car showroom, “Decide which car you like and we’ll look at the budget afterwards.” It doesn’t make any sense to go into the Ferrari showroom if you’ve only got a budget for a Volkswagen. You have to do both together to be doing anything sensible and useful, so I would expect to address the two issues in tandem. We need a broad sense of the resource envelope so that we can set a National Security Strategy. Once we have gone down that process, there needs to be a refining of the precise level of resources that would be needed.⁶⁸

65. The Secretary of State noted that the timing sequence would be determined by the Cabinet Office and the Treasury and outlined an iterative process for setting the NSS, SDSR and the CSR telling us

you cannot have a sensible NSS process without a broad order of magnitude resource availability envelope. From that NSS, you could produce potential alternative outcomes, which might then inform a CSR process that defined more precisely the resource that was available.⁶⁹

66. While we accept that the three documents should be developed in parallel, we believe that the National Security Strategy should be published first. As we have argued,

⁶⁴ Q46

⁶⁵ Q47

⁶⁶ Q64

⁶⁷ Q48

⁶⁸ Q196

⁶⁹ Q200

the NSS should outline a vision of the UK's role in the world that should not be driven purely by a consideration of the resources available.

67. The NSS, together with the CSR, setting out respectively the “ends” and the “means” should logically precede the DSR outlining the “ways” of meeting the security objectives within the resources available. The allocation of resources will be based on national spending priorities set to meet the nation's security needs. Once the national strategy has been articulated in the NSS, the process of agreeing the ways and the means is therefore an iterative one. Getting the balance right between the CSR and the DSR is more important than strict adherence to a particular timetable.

4 Preparations for the next DSR

Strategic skills

68. The Public Administration Select Committee has criticised the levels of skills in strategic thinking across Whitehall and called for a capability review of strategic thinking capacity in Whitehall.⁷⁰ Frank Ledwidge spoke of the need to ensure that real expertise informed the work of the NSC, arguing that “that means that the National Security Council [...] opens itself up to real expertise. For example, on Syria, I am wondering how many serious academics have been asked in to discuss policy there—to give briefings and lectures and to write papers. The answer, I suspect, is none at all”.⁷¹ He was also critical of the strategic training provided at higher command staff colleges, suggesting that it did not encourage challenge. He compared it to “a theological college: you go in and are given the answers, and then you are told what the questions are”.⁷²

69. Edward Ferguson noted that he, in addition to a number of staff in the Cabinet Office and the National Security Secretariat, had undertaken the masters course in strategy at the LSE.⁷³ In addition, a number of military staff had completed the advanced command and staff course, which included an element in strategic training. We believe that these efforts are welcome but not enough to enhance strategic capability.

70. We call on the MOD to provide us with an update on education and skills training in strategy offered to senior officers and officials, both within the Defence Academy and at other institutions.

Accurate and timely historical analysis

71. Mungo Melvin drew our attention to an institutional failure in the MoD and Government properly to draw together strategic lessons from previous operations. He told us that

The narratives that should have been written and the detailed analysis that should have been done have not been done. This is a strategic gap. It meant that when our forces went to Iraq in 2003 and asked for the lessons learnt report and the deep analysis of the Gulf War in 1991, they went to the Army Historical Branch [...] and found that the work had not been done.⁷⁴

He emphasised the importance of historical lessons as a basis for challenge in preparing the next SDSR, and regretted that many of the internal lesson reports from Iraq and Afghanistan would not be made public.⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Public Administration Committee, Strategic thinking in Government: without National Strategy can viable Government strategy emerge?, paragraph 66.

⁷¹ Q60

⁷² Q35

⁷³ Q245

⁷⁴ Q4

⁷⁵ Q21

72. The Ministry of Defence told us that

Each of the Services has its own Historical Branch. Joint Forces Command is able to call on the services of the most relevant Historical Branch or, if required, all three. As part of the Defence Transformation programme, work was undertaken to examine whether the three Historical Branches remained fit for purpose or whether there was a case for amalgamating them into one unit. It was concluded that the current arrangements remain effective, and recommended a few minor amendments to the Army Historical Branch, which are currently being reviewed. There are no plans for a joint Armed Forces Historical Research Centre or organisation. In addition, the Defence Studies Department of King's College London, which is an integral part of the Defence Academy's JSCSC, can also provide historical support to the Department and to Joint Forces Command (including DCDC). As an example, the Defence Studies Department includes the Corbett Centre for Maritime Policy Studies; its publishing output aims to promote the understanding of maritime history and policy.⁷⁶

73. We understand that the Army Historical Branch is in fact part of the Ministry of Defence's Corporate Memory function, and is not part of the Army's General Staff, in contrast with the naval and air historical branches that continue to support their Services directly. We also understand that recommendations have been made in the past to establish an Army Historical Research Centre at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, exploiting the academic expertise on site but these have not been acted upon.

74. Professor Cornish argued that there was an enormous amount more that could be done to gather the lessons of history and that the Army Historical Branch was not doing all that it could. Frank Ledwidge spoke of the case for "mainstreaming history into the way we make strategy".⁷⁷ We understand that since the Second World War only two campaign histories have been published (on Korea and the Falklands) and there have been no official accounts of military operations associated with other campaigns including Northern Ireland, the First Gulf War (1990–91) or the Balkans (1992 onwards), nor has anything been published on the 'grand strategy' associated with these conflicts and campaigns. Thus there is an enormous deficit of official historical research and analysis that contrasts poorly with the huge efforts made after the Second World War to document both the civilian and military contributions to the overall war effort, and to capture the principal strategic lessons learned.

75. It is important that the events are recorded and the strategic lessons are analysed from both the Iraq and Afghanistan campaigns. We accept that the Chilcot Inquiry may address the former, but the latter is surely equally important. It may well be that the Ministry of Defence and the Cabinet Office have this matter in hand, but we have received no evidence to suggest that this is the case. It is important that the history function within the Ministry of Defence is being performed satisfactorily and that it is being used systematically to support strategy making.

⁷⁶ Ev w3

⁷⁷ Q59

76. We recommend that the Ministry of Defence, in close conjunction with the Cabinet Office and National Security Secretariat, initiate the writing of official histories of the Iraq and Afghanistan campaigns and of other conflicts since the end of the Cold War; review how the history function is being undertaken by all three Services and by the Ministry of Defence as a whole; and confirm in the 2015 Defence and Security Review its plans for the preparation and publication of histories and other measures designed to address these deficiencies. This work could usefully call on input and expertise from other Government Departments including the Department for International Development and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office; since the comprehensive approach became a hallmark of the operations in both Iraq and Afghanistan, its lessons should be learnt from and shared across Government as a whole.

Process

77. The National Security Adviser told us that there was “no precise timetable” for the production of the NSS,⁷⁸ and that focus was currently on implementation of the 2010 SDR rather than on preparation for DSR 2015.⁷⁹ The Oxford Research Group called on us to do all we could to encourage the Government to “prioritise the updating of the NSS over the period of 2013–14 so that this document can genuinely inform the 2015 SDR and give it a strong strategic rationale”.⁸⁰ We support this view.

78. The Ministry of Defence informed us that

Initial preparatory work towards the next National Security Strategy (NSS) and Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) is already underway across Whitehall. Although at an early stage, this includes identification and analysis of the key questions that may need to be addressed in 2015, based upon an examination of what has changed in the strategic context, and of any lessons learned, since 2010. This will enable consideration of whether any shifts in policy, approach or capabilities may be required in order to protect and promote HMG’s national security interests. This work is being led by the Cabinet Office, including through the cross-government National Security Strategy Network, and falls under the auspices of the National Security Council.

Professor Hennessy noted that the Cabinet Office was “firmly in the lead” on the SDR but that the MoD was further ahead than other Departments in preparing its contribution.⁸¹

79. Edward Ferguson explained further the input of the Defence Strategy Group in working on preparations for SDR 2015

“Organising Defence’s Contribution to National Strategy” [...] set out how we try to—the DSG is really where this happens—fuse together the corporate strategy function that the PUS owns with the military strategy function that the Chief of the Defence Staff owns, along with the politico-military strategy function, which is the

⁷⁸ Q126

⁷⁹ Q104

⁸⁰ Ev w7

⁸¹ Q17

exertion of influence that is jointly owned between them, into something called defence strategy. That comes together in that group, which they jointly chair. That is important, because it is a forum where we can do the fusion of ends, ways and means, and it brings together the people who are capable of doing that. The discussions there have worked pretty well.⁸²

80. Witnesses emphasised the importance of consultation and an open approach to taking this work forward. We asked MoD what plans there were for consultation and Edward Ferguson replied:

the broader cross-Government approach—the engagement approach—is yet to be determined. In the Ministry of Defence and within the early preparatory work that we have been talking about, we have been doing quite a lot of outreach and external engagement. We have run a number of conferences—most recently, at the Royal College of Defence Studies, with about 80 experts from industry, academia and other areas coming to talk about the implications of technology change, for example. [...] We have been trying to make sure that we bring in a cross-section of views, but again, this is really just the in-house Ministry of Defence work.⁸³

In our first report on the SDSR 2010, we raised concerns that the “inclusion of broadly defined security concerns within the review does [...] risk the dilution of the defence contribution”.⁸⁴

81. The previous Government published a Green Paper focused on defence in February 2010. The Deputy National Security Adviser told us that no decision had yet been made as to whether there would be a Green Paper produced this time.⁸⁵ The Secretary of State noted that decisions on the process for incorporating views from outside Government, including the inclusion of views from other political parties, had not yet been defined, and that this was a matter on which the Cabinet Office would be taking the lead.⁸⁶ The decision as to whether or not a Green Paper was produced would be for the Prime Minister to decide.⁸⁷

82. An important theme in this inquiry has been the importance of the UK’s strategic relationships, not just in relation to the UK’s global posture but in relation to the delivery of capability. DefenceSynergia noted that

A fundamental assumption in both NSS and SDSR continues to be that most operations will be conducted with allies.⁸⁸

83. We asked the Secretary of State about the degree of co-operation with the US and other allies in the process of drawing up the NSS and the DSR. Edward Ferguson told us that he had strong links with the office of the US Secretary of Defence for Strategy and a strong

⁸² Q238

⁸³ Q140

⁸⁴ First Report of Session 2010–12, HC 345, paragraph 8

⁸⁵ Q142

⁸⁶ Q239.

⁸⁷ Q240

⁸⁸ Ev 5

relationship with the Délégation aux Affaires Stratégiques in France, which had a central role in strategic development in France.⁸⁹ The Secretary of State added that

If we are going to work closely with allies in future—principally the US and France—it is clearly vital that we have a similar strategic view of the world. As you will know, the British ambassador to France participated in the French *Livre Blanc* process, and we discovered, not to our surprise but to our great pleasure, that the French strategic analysis is almost identical to our own, which bodes extremely well for our ability to co-operate in future to develop joint approaches to challenges in the world and joint force responses.⁹⁰

84. We see much advantage in the widest consultation on the next National Security Strategy and Defence and Security Review. We have no doubt that the process would be better if Government thinking were available at an early stage to enable structured comment. We have already recommended that the NSS should be published in advance of the DSR. We further recommend that a National Security Green Paper be issued at an early stage in the proceedings to provide a framework against which interested parties may comment.

85. We consider that there are lessons for the MoD to learn from the practice of the French Government in seeking a wide range of input into the reformulation of its *Livre Blanc*. Given the importance of allies to the implementation of both SDSR 2010 and DSR 2015, it is essential that the UK's key strategic allies are fully engaged in the process from an early stage.

A shadow process and red team challenge

86. Professor Lindley-French made the case for a “shadow SDSR” process run by external experts and a similar process for the NSS.⁹¹ Commodore Jermy suggested setting up a “red team” to provide external challenge, reporting to the NSC and to this Committee.⁹² Edward Ferguson maintained that the DCDC had taken on the “red teaming” function; he emphasised that the Ministry of Defence was endeavouring to build challenge into the process of drawing up the SDSR and had been working to improve “red teaming” training amongst head office staff.

87. Constructive challenge must be part and parcel of national strategy making. We recommend that independent groups be set up as soon as possible to provide a structured “Red Team” challenge to both the National Security Strategy and Defence and Security Review.

⁸⁹ Q247

⁹⁰ Q247

⁹¹ Q17

⁹² Q65

5 Conclusions

88. Our inquiry has focused on the need for a truly strategic approach to the next Defence and Security Review, which integrates the ends of what the UK wants to achieve, with the ways, outlining the full spectrum of capabilities of both hard and soft power required, and the means available. This methodology requires the Government to set out a national strategy in the National Security Strategy, identifying the UK's position in the world and how the UK's national interests and obligations will be upheld in the face of shifting threats and profound geo-political and geo-economic changes. This document should be published giving sufficient time to provide the strategic context for the 2015 Defence and Security Review.

89. There is a lack of understanding amongst the public of what HM Armed Forces should be for, and this represents one of the greatest strategic threats facing the Armed Forces. Public sympathy and support for the Armed Forces is to be welcomed, but it must not obscure or undermine a hard-headed understanding of what they are for. The process of producing the next Defence and Security Review, shaped by the next National Security Strategy, is the opportunity to engage the public in understanding the future of the Armed Forces. Parliament and this Committee, in partnership with the Ministry of Defence, have an important role in debating and explaining the case for defence to the public at large. For this reason, we have made a number of recommendations around the process for preparation of the next Defence and Security Review to ensure that it is inclusive, is informed by full historical analysis, and is subject to robust internal and external challenge.

Formal Minutes

Wednesday 18 December 2013

Members present:

Mr James Arbuthnot, in the Chair

Mr Julian Brazier
Mr James Gray
Mr Dai Havard
Adam Holloway

Sir Bob Russell
Bob Stewart
Derek Twigg

Draft Report (*Towards the next Defence and Security Review: Part One*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 89 read and agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Seventh Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

[Adjourned till Wednesday 8 January 2014 at 2.00 pm]

Witnesses

	<i>Page</i>
Wednesday 24 April 2013	
Professor the Lord Hennessy of Nympsfield, Professor Julian Lindley-French and Major-General Mungo Melvin (Rtd)	Ev 1
Tuesday 4 June 2013	
Professor Paul Cornish, Commodore Stephen Jermy and Frank Ledwidge,	Ev 14
Wednesday 11 September 2013	
Sir Kim Darroch KCMG, National Security Adviser, and Julian Miller, Deputy National Security Adviser, Cabinet Office	Ev 26
Wednesday 9 October 2013	
Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP, Secretary of State for Defence, Edward Ferguson, Head of Defence, Strategy and Priorities, Ministry of Defence, and Tom McKane, Director General for Security Policy, Ministry of Defence	Ev 39

List of written evidence

(published in Volume II on the Committee's website www.parliament.uk/defcom)

1	Ministry of Defence	Ev w1
2	DefenceSynergia	Ev w4
3	Oxford Research Group	Ev w7
4	Campaign Against Arms Trade	Ev w13
5	Drone Wars UK	Ev w16
6	Paul Rogers, Professor of Peace Studies, University of Bradford	Ev w23
7	Admiral Sir John Woodward GBE KCB	Ev w26
8	National Security Adviser, Cabinet Office	Ev w54
9	Lord Hennessy of Nympsfield, FBA, Attlee Professor of Contemporary British History, Queen Mary, University of London	Ev w55
10	Commodore Steven Jermy RN	Ev w56

List of Reports from the Committee in Session 2013–14

The reference number of the Government's response to each Report is printed in brackets after the HC printing number.

Session 2013–14

First Report	MoD Supplementary Estimate 2012–13	HC 291 (HC 644)
Second Report	Ministry of Defence Main Estimates 2013-14	HC 517 (HC 670)
Third Report and First Joint Report	Scrutiny of Arms Exports and Arms Control (2013): Scrutiny of the Government's UK Strategic Export Controls Annual Report 2011 published in July 2012, the Government's Quarterly Reports from October 2011 to September 2012, and the Government's policies on arms exports and international arms control issues	HC 205 (Cm 8707)
Fourth Report	The Armed Forces Covenant in Action? Part 3: Educating the Children of Service Personnel	HC 586 (HC 771)
Fifth Report	The Armed Forces Covenant in Action? Part 4: Education of Service Personnel	HC 185 (HC 759)
Sixth Report	The Defence Implications of Possible Scottish Independence	HC 198 (HC 839)

Oral evidence

Taken before the Defence Committee on Wednesday 24 April 2013

Members present:

Mr James Arbuthnot (Chair)

Mr Julian Brazier
Mr Dai Havard
Mrs Madeleine Moon
Penny Mordaunt

Sandra Osborne
Sir Bob Russell
Ms Gisela Stuart

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: **Professor the Lord Hennessy of Nympsfield, Professor Julian Lindley-French, and Major-General Mungo Melvin (Rtd)**, gave evidence.

Q1 Chair: Good morning. This is the first evidence session on our strategic inquiry, “Towards the Next Defence and Security Review.” We welcome your evidence and are enormously looking forward to this evidence session. Some of the foremost strategic thinkers in the country are in front of us this morning. We intend to carry out this evidence session differently from normal. We intend to ask you a pretty broad question and then set you running as a sort of brains trust to chat among yourselves and to a certain extent with us. If we feel that there is a particular strand that some of our obsessions might move you towards, please follow that strand.

It is very much for you to set the structure of the morning. I spoke to you earlier this morning, Professor Lindley-French, and you said the problem might be stopping you. From our point of view, that is fine. General Melvin, we would like to say welcome to you in your capacity as a witness rather than as a specialist adviser to this Committee. Lord Hennessy, thank you very much indeed for coming to help us in this inquiry. You have all written extensively about the issues that we face. This is going to be very much your show. You have seen the terms of reference. We are trying to work towards a strategic defence and security review that will be soundly based, stand the test of time and give the UK the defence tools that it will need. How do we do that?

Professor Hennessy: For the first time ever in the sequence of defence reviews since the war—by my calculations it is the 12th—we know when it is coming and we know it is going to be part of a drumbeat, and it is going to be allied with national security strategy documents. All of this is terribly interesting and important in itself, but it raises the requirement, because there can be no alibi for its being as inadequate as the last one. I have some sympathy with the framers of the last one, because it was essentially five desperate spending reviews with a thin patina of strategy. This time there is no excuse. One of the reasons there is no excuse, Chairman, if you will allow me to say, is because you were on the case very early.

I have some sympathy, however, with the framers of the SDSR because there are no iron laws of history, but there are non-ferrous metal laws and one of them

is that all the defence reviews have been overtaken by events remarkably rapidly, however good the intelligence input and the horizon scanning, and I think nearly all of them, although I have not done the numbers, have been underfunded. What was promised as a settlement never had sufficient financial resource behind it.

The reason I am sympathetic, and always will be, about the people who are charged to do this is because of what my great friend and mentor, Michael Quinlan, wrote not long before he died. He did not publish it, but his family have allowed me to use it and I call it Quinlan’s law. I will finish my opening remarks with what Michael wrote in December 2008: “A theorem: In matters of military contingency, the expected, precisely because it is expected, is not to be expected. Rationale: What we expect, we plan and provide for; what we plan and provide for, we thereby deter; what we deter does not happen. What does happen is what we did not deter, because we did not plan and provide for it, because we did not expect it.” Michael’s very powerful shade will be behind the framers of this document.

I have also said to my chums in the Ministry of Defence, in Quinlan’s shadow as it were, that what it would be really helpful to have this time for Parliament and the public is an opening essay of about 2,000 words of the quality Michael Quinlan prepared for the 1980 defence White Paper on nuclear deterrence and his performances before this Committee in its first two years of existence. This 2,000-word essay should set out what a country like ours with a past like ours can expect sensibly to do in the world without making ourselves look ridiculous or overextending ourselves.

This has always been a problem for the Brits. I dug up the other day by accident something Palmerston said, in our apogee really, in the House of Commons in 1848. His speech in the Chamber that day was famous because he said, “We have no eternal allies, and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual”. What he also said was that the UK—or England, as he called it then—needs “to be the champion of justice and right: pursuing that course with moderation and prudence,” but without “becoming the Quixote of the world”. I still think that

24 April 2013 Professor the Lord Hennessy of Nympsfield, Professor Julian Lindley-French and Major-General Mungo Melvin (Rtd)

is absolutely crucial. I am one of those people who wants us to do good and difficult things in the world if we can with our allies, but we have always had an “instinct to intervene”, in Douglas Hurd’s phrase, beyond our capacities. So these are the shades for any group that is involved in SDSR pre-thinking, including this Committee.

The final thought is that what I would really like this Committee to do, if you don’t think it is a disrespectful suggestion, is to come up with a 2,000-word essay on Britain’s place in the world that would set the tone and the pitch as part of your Report.

Chair: Can you please bear in mind that if we do, it may well be based on what you say this morning?

Q2 Sir Bob Russell: My understanding is that the Ten Commandments did not need 2,000 words.

Professor Hennessy: The sermon on the mount is 175 words, no caveats. If it had been written by Whitehall it would have said, “Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God, always bearing in mind the need to maintain the effectiveness of the British strategic nuclear deterrent.” If the MOD or Whitehall had written the sermon on the mount, not one of us would be Christians. But I have not come here to preach. That is just an aside.

Professor Lindley-French: Thank you all. It is lovely to be here. Thank you, Chairman. When I was asked to come here I was asked to look at this from the point of view of a Dutch taxpayer living in the middle of the eurozone and giving to some extent a perspective on why Britain having ambition to maintain strategic leadership of some variety matters, particularly on the continent right now. I can tell you, it really does matter. I believe that we are only in the crumple zone of the eurozone crisis, speaking to my Dutch counterparts. It is very clear that we are going to have at least a decade of very deep turbulence in the eurozone, which will lead to a whole range of changed circumstances for the continent but also for the UK.

When I was coming here I thought about the question that Peter framed so eloquently: why must Britain retain an ambition to be influential? I think it is critical that SDSR 2015, which for obvious reasons was a spreadsheet review—let us be clear about that: it was a spreadsheet review—now has to focus on influence and understanding: influence in terms of how we influence the environment in such a way as to prevent conflict, and if necessary to bring conflict to a rapid end. That includes with partners and through institutions and all those instruments that Britain has traditionally employed to gain leverage, but also from the point of view that, respecting Peter’s remarks about constraint, the UK is still a strategic brand.

Wherever I go in the world, our armed forces in particular still have that branding. Without overegging it, we are very clearly in reality one of the top five economies in the world, and that will probably remain. I say top five because if you look at the likes of Brazil, China and India, we routinely exaggerate their front-line economic strengths. We fail to analyse their intense internal contradictions. Given the turbulence in this world and the change that is, indeed,

taking place, whether we like it or not we will be called upon to generate influence, in all its forms.

The first mental requirement for the review is to grip that reality and simply accept that 2010 was a necessary benchmark, but that in 2015 we have to look up and out in the world, understand it and understand how, through the review and the NSS, we can seek to influence—with whom and why. But, of course, to do that, we have to look down and dirty into the services all the time to drive down value for money.

To conclude my remarks, I came up with 10 headlines why the review must be ambitious, the first of which is political balance in Europe. From speaking to German colleagues, it is very clear that the role of the UK armed forces—for political balance to Germany’s emerging economic power—is critical. The more powerful Germany becomes economically in Europe, the less military she will become—for obvious reasons—and that is why the relationship with France is particularly important to maintain political balance. My second headline is influence over Washington. I am not suggesting that we should be looking to go into Asia-Pacific with the Americans but, being part of an influential group in Washington, I get the same message over and over again. The Americans will look to Europe to look after its own neighbourhood as they focus more and more on Asia-Pacific. We have a pretty rough neighbourhood, which means that we will necessarily be in the lead of many security aspects of that. It also means that we will then have to make NATO and the EU effective security actors but, without our full engagement in those institutions, I find it hard to believe that they will indeed release the pressure on the Americans, which we need to create so that they can be effective elsewhere.

My third point is about reinforcing the west as an idea. Much of the world still believes in the values of the west and aspires to the values of the west. If we are seen simply as having a balance-sheet view of our security influence, the west itself will start to weaken and fail because we are a cornerstone state of the west. The fourth issue is that strategy itself is important. The truly powerful do not need strategy. It is countries like the UK that need to think cleverly about concepts and applications of influence, and how we do that will probably be a benchmark for others.

I was speaking to a Dutch officer on Exercise Joint Warrior at sea last week. Most of the time I was seasick, but spent some of the time being able to have conversations! It was an interesting experience. The officer said a fascinating thing: that the Dutch Navy and the Dutch marines would not exist but for their British counterparts. Given that we can never have enough to achieve everything we have to achieve across the piece, the role of allies and partners is absolutely critical, but having sufficient power that allies and partners want to work to us is also absolutely critical, and that means enabling the strategic brand, particularly that which our armed forces still represent.

What our armed forces do in terms of their deployability offers you, our political leaders, flexibility and discretion through crises, which the

24 April 2013 Professor the Lord Hennessy of Nympsfield, Professor Julian Lindley-French and Major-General Mungo Melvin (Rtd)

friction in the world will clearly generate. That capacity is probably unmatched by almost any other state except for the Americans, and that is a hugely important premium. We have the ability to make choices. I have a problem with moving automatically from campaigning to contingency because it has a black and white quality to it, as though somehow it is all a monochrome switch question. Deterrence, for example, is not just about nuclear deterrence; it is about deterrence across the security piece, of which the military is a part, to have credibility in preventing crises. Again, that goes to the brand, the aspiration and the ambition that we set out for ourselves for the review in 2015.

Sixthly, you cannot build the resilience of society, which we have to build, unless you have the flipside of expeditionary capability. They are two sides of the same coin. If we are going to build the kind of expeditionary influence which I think is critical to the review, we must also have an holistic view of resiliency of the society that it is indeed defending. Remember, this review is genuinely about life post-Afghanistan; and I would say, looking at matters not as the historian that Peter is, but a more humble historian, that this is probably the first moment in 100 years that we have had to make true strategic judgment choices.

For a long time, much of our strategic judgment has been about how to find the middle ground between the Americans at one end and the French or the Germans at the other. The Germans are mired in a eurozone crisis and the French are facing a fiscal cliff. The *loi de programmation*, which is about to come out, will seem quite modest, but in fact, over the next five years, there will be very deep cuts, and the Americans are rebalancing. We have to fill that vacuum. As Hugh Strachan said, strategy must fill vacuums; it cannot take place in a vacuum, but it must fill vacuums.

Finally, I underline the opportunity that this review represents, and the opportunity for this Committee to shape what could be one of the most important defence reviews for 40 or 50 years, given the moment that we are at. I am grateful, Chairman, that we have the opportunity to kick off this whole process with the idea that the review is about looking up, looking out and driving forward the opportunity that this country has to regenerate influence in the wake of Afghanistan.

Major-General Melvin: I share with Lord Hennessy some sympathy for the writers of the National Security Strategy and the Strategic Defence and Security Review with all its failings, but we need to understand how on earth the UK—whether it is the MOD or cross-Government—has got itself into such a situation. In my last couple of years in Defence, I was writing about strategy, both within the Royal College of Defence Studies—I am glad to report that the great Michael Quinlan quote got to page 3 of the booklet “Strategic Thinking”—and, more seriously, while working for the Chief of the Defence Staff in the report, “Enhancing Strategic Capability”. My team and I were absolutely shocked in the autumn of 2010, on the eve of the review, and then at the beginning of

2011 how low the strategic thinking had dipped within the MOD and across Government. To give you a simple illustration, there was no uniformed officer in the MOD above the rank of naval captain, army colonel, or group captain with strategy even in his job title. That was a rough description, but there was nobody doing strategy in the MOD. Lots of people were doing ‘Defence strategy’, trying to balance the books. There were hundreds if not thousands of people involved in the minutiae of operations, but very few were looking more than two or three months out in a strategic sense.

It is my contention that before we can get to the SDSR, we must review where we are in terms of whether we have the strategic thinking right, so that institutionally and individually those who are charged with the SDSR, or the new national security strategy, are truly going to think strategically in a way that Lord Hennessy and Professor Lindley-French have argued. I appreciate that the ability to estimate, to do that very difficult balance between ends, ways and means—what we are trying to achieve, how we can achieve it and are there the resources available—is linked fundamentally to strategic education that does not stop when an individual leaves the staff college. This is a process that needs continually to be rehearsed by senior officials, across Government and senior military. It is a combined effort increasingly with allies. What we have seen in recent years is a focus on our training and education programmes that rightly have to be done at the tactical and operational level, but a deficit in strategic exercising. We must remember that during the Cold War, the then Prime Minister herself was involved in the exercises such as Wintex, and we have got out of the habit of doing that across the board in the UK.

Q3 Chair: When was the last time that Ministers themselves were involved in a military exercise such as the one you are talking about?

Major-General Melvin: I defer to Lord Hennessy, but from memory, I do not think we have done it since the cold war.

Professor Hennessy: Nothing on that scale. Ministers were always kept away from Wintex. There were CCTV films done where people would simulate the prime ministerial role and the war cabinet, but Mrs Thatcher, to her great credit, insisted on doing a command and control exercise of her own one Saturday morning, to the chagrin of one or two of her colleagues who had to turn up, and took it to the point of nuclear release. It was an interesting scenario—I won’t bore you with what the scenario was. Well, if you ask me, I will.

Ministers were always kept separate from Wintex, but they were intimately involved because they saw the CCTV. There are only two areas in which they are intimately involved now. One is on the nuclear side; the Prime Minister obviously knows the retaliation drills and has to write the last resort letters and all that for the inner safe of each Trident boat. The two or three alternative decision takers, if he is wiped out by a bolt from the blue or unavailable for any reason,

24 April 2013 Professor the Lord Hennessy of Nympsfield, Professor Julian Lindley-French and Major-General Mungo Melvin (Rtd)

are inducted into these dreadful drills—dreadful in the sense of awesome.

The other example I can think of that is current, though I am not an insider on this, is, what do you do if there is a 9/11 contingency forming up here? A civil aircraft from the Middle East or North Africa won't talk to air traffic control and the Typhoons are scrambled from Coningsby and the fuelling planes go up. Four or five, I think, other Ministers—usually four, I think—apart from the Prime Minister, go through the drill about when you have to take the decision, if you want it to crash before it gets inside the M25. Those are the only two I know about, but there has been nothing on that scale. I think the last Wintex was 1988. They are all declassified, well into the early '80s, and are fascinating—absolutely chilling. They come out of the Committee of Imperial Defence tradition. The first war book was ready for 1913.

Q4 Chair: But it would be shocking to think that military officers need exercises and politicians do not.

Major-General Melvin: I tried to make the point, Mr Chairman, that this has to be done with Ministers, senior military and officials. With long experience, as all of us on this bench have in strategic education, you cannot assume that people have all the strategic skills at their fingertips. It needs education and practice. The war games and so on sound like a very old-fashioned thing, but it is still a very valid method.

My I add two final points to my introductory comments? We have to be fair and recognise that in the past couple of years within the Ministry of Defence, considerable progress has been made. Under the current Chief of the Defence Staff, there is much clearer strategic focus in the MOD, and we must give full credit for that, but I would raise a question. I think that it is still very fragile and I draw the Committee's attention to how permanent those strategic improvements have been. It would be very pertinent to draw attention to that, because there is a worry among some people that all the reforms that are slowly making an impact could all be cast away again. The final point I want to make is that all of this will be to no avail until the Government and the MOD for the very first time take seriously drawing strategic lessons together. It is shocking to say that we have no official history, apart from the Korean War and the Falklands War, since World War Two. The narratives that should have been written and the detailed analysis that should have been done have not been done. This is a strategic gap. It meant that when our forces went to Iraq in 2003 and asked for the lessons learnt report and the deep analysis of the Gulf War in 1991, they went to the Army Historical Branch—in name only—and found that the work had not been done. The lack of focus is very worrying.

Professor Lindley-French: I think there are two specific requirements that the review needs to consider. One is the role of the National Security Council, its relevant weight and its ability to drive that kind of synergy with other Government Departments. When I look at most of the military tasks, I cannot understand exercising without other Government

Departments being actively involved. You need a synergising element. It strikes me that, although the NSC is obviously just a Cabinet Committee, it needs to be given more weight to drive together all the tools of national influence. That includes exercising, so that we are working up all national means.

The second is a direct reinforcement of Mungo's point about the nature of exercising. I have looked at NATO exercising and British exercising. I have been involved in several. There is no developmental process; each exercise just about takes place in a vacuum. None of the real lessons learnt are transferred into best practice. We should really have a development programme from now forward with which we do not test the things we know work, as too many exercises do, but test the things that fail. We should draw those lessons out and have a mechanism for transferring them across the forces and beyond. Last week on Joint Warrior, I asked the command group, "What will you do with the lessons from this exercise? Will they go, for example, to 16 Air Assault Brigade?" I couldn't understand, for example, why we were doing a massive exercise—perhaps Europe's, if not the world's, biggest maritime amphibious exercise this year—where we were projecting a marine force up to 50 miles inland without properly considering its military-strategic context. It all looked a bit like Arnhem to me, frankly. I was wondering what would happen if things went wrong. My question was, "Where was 16 Air Assault Brigade?" Because they would bring a mass to reinforce the theatre entry being opened up by the Commando Group. That needs to be worked up and, above all, a real development programme is needed to properly inform Force 2020 and beyond.

The problem is even worse in NATO. That is why the next British DSACEUR is a hugely important appointment. Specifically, all the High Readiness Forces (Land), which are the centre of gravity of NATO, have to have an exercise programme that we influence and is part of a genuine development process. Why now? Because my sense is that we have a certain corporate memory from operations over the past decade or so. But because we lack the institutions to capture corporate memory, we could lose that very quickly and, as a consequence, we will lose the ability to force generate coalitions and thereafter effective command and control.

The UK is a critical repository of that corporate memory because our lessons—and I have written several reports on this on the performance of headquarters—are relevant to our key allies. Allies are more important to us than they are to the United States, frankly. The lessons the Americans draw are often very different and inapplicable to smaller allies. So, unless we take the lead in really producing a scientific method of capturing knowledge—the key to this—I am afraid it will be lost. We will lose a key lever in best practice over the next decade or so.

Q5 Mr Havard: May I go back to the business of exercises and so on? I have been looking at a document that you will be familiar with, General. It is the defence strategy group document that was

24 April 2013 Professor the Lord Hennessy of Nympsfield, Professor Julian Lindley-French and Major-General Mungo Melvin (Rtd)

published in January last year, I think. It talks about trying to set out an architecture for the MOD, how best to respond and deal with this. It talks implicitly about a power that comes from the fact that there is going to be a regular review and this is an outline form of process. It says, "This, therefore, gives the opportunity for regular reviews, updating thinking at sensible intervals." It talks about incremental improvements. It also talks implicitly about—while the MOD should be doing this—how this works with the NSS.

There is talk about the NSC but my concern about this all along is that it tends to collapse—and we collapse because we are the Defence Committee—into looking at how the MOD organises itself in the process. These cross-Government issues get a little bit lost. If it is meant to be a defence and security strategy, it is that "and security" nexus bit that is the difficult bit. It is not just about how the MOD organises.

As I understand it, the exercises in the past have been for MOD people. Ministers get together and projects go on and they do all of that stuff. That is fine. But you seem to be talking about something that can, on an exercise basis, bring together collaborative arrangements across. Are you? What about other Departments? If you are going to build capacity in the NSC to do the NSS.

Major-General Melvin: Fundamentally, in grand strategic terms we must always remember that the military is but one of several instruments of national power. Therefore, in today's security environment it makes little sense to have an exercise or education programme that solely corresponds to the planning and application of the military instrument. Therefore, I support what Professor Lindley-French has said, that we need to take this into the National Security Council arena. The questions one has to ask are: "What skills do the people in the NSC secretariat have? What education have they had? What is their exercise programme?" We need to encourage that. To be fair, a lot of people would agree with you. In the MOD and in other Departments they will say, "We are far too busy running hand to mouth with what we are doing currently." There is an issue of their resources and capability, but we are not going to make any progress, in my view, unless we address this on a cross-Government basis.

Q6 Mr Havard: But this paper talks as well about how relationships develop and how you must have all the players involved. It makes the point about policy versus strategy, mentioning ends and means, and how people understand the process. Politicians have got to be involved with practitioners.

Professor Hennessy: Mr Havard, you have put your finger on a very considerable need. I am a fan of the National Security Council, it has made things better and it is an idea whose time had come. However, now is the moment to look at the inputs into it—following your theme directly—because for the first time we have a super-Cabinet committee, which is really the old Committee of Imperial Defence with better IT, although it would have been tactless to call it that these days. It covers, for the first time ever, the entire

spectrum. The Overseas and Defence Committee and the NSID under Labour did not do this to the same extent. It covers the front line, with 'C's people in the field and submarines doing clever things in dangerous areas, bringing back the bacon as it were, right through to the last line of defence, the Trident submarine out on patrol in the north Atlantic as we meet. In between there is politico-military, diplomacy, soft power—the BBC, British Council and so on—and all the agencies.

I think it is time to have one of those "capability reviews"—I do not know if they are still called that; they were in the Labour days—of all the agencies and departments and professions, including the horizon scanning; there has been a very interesting review on that on the side, which I might want to mention if you think it useful. It would be a capability review of all the inputs to the NSC and the official committee that shadows it, and the secretariat in the Cabinet Office that services it, to see if they have adapted themselves, as they need to, to this new, more integrated, across-the-spectrum approach to our national security. That would be timely, because we have had the NSC meeting since May 2010, plenty of time and stuff on which to go.

Professor Lindley-French: May I offer a provocative element?

Chair: Please do; this is your purpose.

Professor Lindley-French: Quite. My wife says that as well. I fully agree with Peter and Mungo that this is a moment when we can make a radical difference, a bit like when we made our armed forces professional. It is a moment to be radical. Sitting in the Netherlands and talking to European leaders, as I do, there is a sense that however well we organise this, there is, however, a missing ingredient, which is whether there is sufficient uniformity of belief in this place that Britain should aspire to that role. However well you organise the institutions of state towards the influence I believe Britain should aspire to, unless the political class are really engaged in this idea across the political spectrum—this is not a party political view—it will come to nought.

In a sense I throw the question back to you, having heard our initial remarks and my point about this being as much opportunity as challenge. Do you think the British political class are up to filling the strategic vacuum that Britain is being invited to fill?

Chair: The problem with that question is that we are the choir, to which you are preaching.

Q7 Penny Mordaunt: I want to follow on from that. In the last Strategic Defence and Security Reviews the political imperative was the budget—sorting out the scramble of programmes—and it was done swiftly, behind closed doors, and presented as "this is what we are up to." This time there will be more debate before the event. Certainly with any defence debate in Parliament there is always a massive consensus that we should stop doing things, we do not want to send troops anywhere, and there is a shallow—I do not mean that in a derogatory sense—view of what our influence is and could be. Do you see the process being influenced by that, or do you think it will still

24 April 2013 Professor the Lord Hennessy of Nympsfield, Professor Julian Lindley-French and Major-General Mungo Melvin (Rtd)

be taking place behind closed doors? What do you think the dangers are if there is not the ambition to do what you are articulating amongst parliamentarians?

Professor Lindley-French: It is very clear what those dangers are; we have seen them already in the last two or three years: a growth in tribalism among service chiefs as they fight for small amounts of money, and a competition between the Foreign Office and the Department for International Development and the MOD over the way we do security. Unless it is driven from the top, and there is a clear political vision and firm political guidance, the bureaucracy will do what it always has and fight for its turf. I do not gain a sense, either as a member of the strategic advisory panel of the CDS as we all are—

Professor Hennessy: I should declare an interest, in that we are all members. But are here as individual eccentrics.

Professor Lindley-French: Absolutely. We are all members of that panel. After observing abroad what is happening in my country, I get no sense that sufficient political capital has been injected into the process to ensure that there is that kind of synergy.

Professor Hennessy: May I just give a quick thought, as a parliamentarian from the other end? Winston Churchill liked to use this phrase—Roy Jenkins used it, too—about the need to rise to the level of events. Parliamentarians collectively need to rise to this one, because it is so crucial. I have great respect for your House, but it is harder for your Chamber because of the age spectrum, which is much younger. *[Interruption.]* I am only here to cheer everyone up.

The House of Lords is a warehouse for previous political generations. A lot of them have long experience—some of them from World War Two—which is heaven for a political historian like me, because you get to have lunch with your exhibits.

Professor Lindley-French: You are an exhibit yourself, Peter.

Professor Hennessy: That is very kind. It means that they are dripping with knowledge, and here it is hard because of the nature of political generations coming through. When I first reported Westminster in the mid-'70s, both Chambers were full of people who had done national service. It was not just a male thing, because although there was a relatively small number of women MPs then—there still are, relatively—they had been on the home front and grown up in the shadow of war.

We were also very much the first generation to grow up in the shadow of the bomb. You might call us children of the uranium age. The cold war was on and was a great concentrator of minds and we all had a sense of it. You did not need a degree in theoretical physics to know what the mushroom clouds over Hiroshima and Nagasaki meant or that a hydrogen bomb was 1,000 times more powerful than those atomic bombs. You almost absorbed a certain kind of strategy through your pores, and all of that has changed.

You, in the Commons, are by definition the people who are among the most interested and highly knowledgeable about it, and you know the problem of getting the wider conspectus of opinion lined up better

than I. It is a first order question—Julian is right—about whether we want to continue punching heavier than our weight, or whichever metaphor you want to use. It is deep within us as a country. We are not an opting-out-of-the-world country. We have always had a great problem with institutions that we did not invent. NATO existed “to keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down”, as General Ismay rather tactlessly put it. No one has been able to find an equivalent of that for our membership of the EU, but that was the invention of clever, Catholic, left-wing, French bureaucrats, and the Brits have got severe problems with at least three of the five of those categories. We still have an impulse to be a big player in the world, don't we?

Chair: We now have a determination to get involved in this conversation from Julian, Madeleine and Bob.

Q8 Mr Brazier: I have two questions. Before coming back to Professor Lindley-French, can I ask Mungo Melvin about his very strong points on the loss of history and the loss of doctrine in the process? A number of books have pointed out that America had this problem and overcame it; we have not. Would you agree that as part of that, one of the things we have to address is the short amount of time for which people are occupying senior military slots? Addressing that will not solve the problem on its own, but we are in a preposterous situation where people are unaware of what happened even two or three years before, because they are swapping over so quickly in top positions. Do you think that the Levene reform, saying that senior posts have to be held for four to five years, is, while not a sufficient condition, necessary to make progress?

Major-General Melvin: I think continuity is provided both by individuals and institutions. You are right that one of the recommendations of the Defence Reform Review was to give senior officials and senior military a longer time in post. That has been recognised, but I do not have any up-to-date statistics to see whether that has happened in practice, so that is a concern.

One of the ways that you provide continuity between individuals is by having the right institutional memory. I am sorry to report that the MOD's rather Orwellian-sounding corporate memory is nothing of the sort. It does not provide a corporate memory. If I can speak with an academic research hat on, we know far more about the decisions made in World War Two than we will ever find out about decisions made in the MOD over Iraq or Afghanistan, because many of them were not properly documented or presented in a formal way. I hesitate to predict what we may or may not get out of various reviews, but there are problems institutionally, as well as with individuals.

The fact that we do not have a proper history programme—it sounds rather boring to mention this—is quite a shocking gap. We have sent young men and women into combat without equipping them properly with knowledge about the countries they are going to, and without knowledge of what happened last time. Shockingly, in 2006, officers went to Helmand province completely unaware that the battle of

24 April 2013 Professor the Lord Hennessy of Nympsfield, Professor Julian Lindley-French and Major-General Mungo Melvin (Rtd)

Maiwand in the Second Afghan War took place on the very same ground. That is appalling.

Q9 Mr Brazier: That is reinforced still further, as an RAF officer said to me the other day, by the movement from physical paper to electronic things. As a result, you cannot even reconstruct things from copies of documents from a few years ago, because they have all gone.

I hope colleagues will forgive me—I do not mean to hog things—but I want to develop this point a bit further. Professor Lindley-French, the answer to your question, I am certain, is no, but we have to try to change things, and this process can be one of the ways of doing that. One thing that particularly concerns me, which seems to sit side by side with the question you put to us, is that there is an unhealthy focus in the armed forces—particularly the two more capital-intensive forces, the Navy and the Air Force—on the sexier and higher-end element of what they do. From the point of view of the Great British public, who are concerned about the NHS and all the other things my constituents are concerned about—planning and a million other things—expeditionary warfare is very low, to put it mildly, down the list of the things that interest them, after two unpopular wars.

The way they seem to sell these things in America is by working on things such as resilience, being prominent on anti-terror issues and all the rest of it. There is a real danger—the recent loss of the SAR contract to civilian contractors is a bad instance of this—that the Armed Forces are, at a time when the big debate you are talking about is not happening and the issues are not being addressed, progressively seeing an erosion of the very levers that will help to keep the wider British public involved in the debate.

Professor Lindley-French: Absolutely. If I may, I have to give a quick caveat to Peter's point about the nuclear age. I used to rather object to the fact that it was my home town, Sheffield, which always seemed to get nuked on the BBC as an example of what might happen.

On your question about public support, it is an issue of leadership again. My sense is that there is a belief in the British military, as we have seen with Help for Heroes, across much of the mainstream of British society. We are not trying to become a pocket superpower; we have to be clear about that. We are not trying to be America on a slightly smaller scale. We are not focusing on the top 20% of right-of-arc conflict; but at the same time, there is the issue of capabilities. I think specifically of the two carriers, and of carrier-enabled power projection. The two ships will be more than assets; they are actually a magnet for influence. Unless we have those kinds of assets, with that branding and that flag, we will not be able to lead the kind of coalitions we will need to lead because the Americans will be so busy. We are the only ones, with the French, who can lead these kinds of coalitions. As ever, there is a balance to strike.

The real price that worries me is to do with the aligning of resources and commitments. We know that, while things may be resource driven, the commitments are unlikely to go away; we have seen

that even since 2010, with Libya, Mali and elsewhere. All right, we are withdrawing from Afghanistan, but there is a lot of friction in this world. If you, as a class, do not properly grip the implications of this, all you are doing is passing risk down the command chain to the Armed Forces and, in particular, to the individual members of the Armed Forces. They are the ones who will end up trying to bridge the gap between failed strategy and policy and investment in the field. It is not simply a semantic question; it is a very real question, which will have an impact on all our deployed personnel elsewhere.

Q10 Mrs Moon: There are two things that join up together eventually in my questions. I sit on the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, so I hear what you talk about, in terms of British leadership, in every meeting I go to; I see it in action. Unfortunately, I think there is a huge gap between what the NATO Parliamentary Assembly members are engaged with and the understanding of it back here in the UK. We have agreed to have a debate in the Chamber so that we can start exploring that issue. I am increasingly aware that any future defence and security review must also be a review of NATO's capability and where we sit within that, as well as the use of bilaterals and trilaterals, and an awareness of skills and capability gaps. How do we ensure that the Government are doing that thinking and taking that work forward now?

My response to my own question, and I would welcome your comments about it, is that last year the Chairman of the Committee and I went to the French defence university. I have to say that it blew my mind away and I am looking forward to going this year, hopefully. In that year, they were looking at naval power. They pulled together academics, the three forces and journalists, and they invited NATO colleagues. There were three days of debate around French naval power, its past and where it should be going. We never engage to that extent with wider people in the defence world. Is it beyond our capability to do that? Are we too inward-looking, and—let us keep it with us—is the Ministry of Defence a self-licking lollipop that can never share?

Professor Hennessy: There are gleams of light in our world. The Development Concepts and Doctrine Centre, in the Defence Academy at Shrivenham, does a good bit of what you have just described.

Q11 Mrs Moon: Closed.

Professor Hennessy: Yes. Openness is quite tricky, really; I understand all that. However, I certainly think that we as a country, with our tradition, should be able to do this. Maybe I am sounding Pollyanna-ish about it. Ours is the country that produced Sir Halford Mackinder, who invented the concept of geopolitics, and Sir Basil Liddell Hart, and in our own time Professor Sir Michael Howard. Surely it is not beyond our wit to so arrange these things, but Shrivenham and the DCDC do very good work on all this, and I think they need to be congratulated on all that. However, the wider conversation is absolutely crucial, including Parliament's input, as we have said.

24 April 2013 Professor the Lord Hennessy of Nympsfield, Professor Julian Lindley-French and Major-General Mungo Melvin (Rtd)

May I just come back with a thought on the one bit that surely is manageable? It is in Mungo's excellent strategy paper; I don't know if it has been declassified for you. It is an absolute must. Mungo looked at the history of previous attempts at defence reviews, the previous 11, didn't you?

Major-General Melvin: Including the last one.

Professor Hennessy: And I had a little go at it in my book, *Distilling the Frenzy*.

Q12 Chair: We have had a look.

Professor Hennessy: I am gratified. It would be a good idea if the knowledge of what the previous reviews said, and what happened to them, was more widely known. It is an exercise in necessary humility for anybody engaged in the SDSR or in the wider conversation. The first one is quite extraordinary; it was neither announced nor published. It emerged 31 years later in a file marked "Royal Marine Bands" in the National Archives. Being interested in the Marines and all that, I got it out as a press preview, as the youth from *The Times* who read those files. It was from the admirals to the Harwood review. It said, "It is inconceivable that the Royal Marine Corps should be made part of the Army", and that it should be effectively disbanded in its form. You would have thought that the argument would have been about amphibious warfare. Oh no; the argument was that the Royal Marine Corps provide the bands for the entire naval service. I thought, "What is this review?" And here was the very first of our post-war defence reviews. Those were the days; you could commission one and have it done, but neither announce it nor publish it. No doubt some people hanker for those days.

However, as I say, the previous 11 reviews are worth looking at, and that would be an aid to raising the game this time; at least I think it would. Again, that is within everybody's powers. If you can get Mungo's document into the public domain—he is too gentlemanly to suggest this, but I can suggest it on his behalf—it would be an excellent start.

Professor Lindley-French: Can I just add a point, in answer to your very, very good questions on NATO?

Chair: Can I stop you and ask you to come back on that issue, because Sir Bob Russell has a question on the Floor of the Chamber and he needs to get in now?

Q13 Sir Bob Russell: Thank you, Chair, and my apologies to the three witnesses. I need to go and say my prayers, so that I can reserve a seat for Prime Minister's questions. You have just given the best reason yet to support my view that we should not be cutting any further the bands of Her Majesty's Armed Forces.

Professor Hennessy: Hear, hear.

Sir Bob Russell: Clearly, as the Defence Committee, we are looking from the defence perspective—that is stating the obvious—and I recognise that our battle will be to try to stop any further defence cuts. I also recognise that as a nation it could be said that we are punching above our weight. I think that we have got to try to sell our defence needs, requirements and capabilities on a wider agenda than purely defence.

Stating the obvious, when it comes to energy resources and food resources, we are not self-sufficient as a nation, and I would suggest that in the future they will be potential areas of conflict. The United Kingdom needs, therefore, to be in a position where it can defend the home front by defending our overseas requirements.

Just as an aside, 20 years ago, at the collapse of the Soviet Union, I do not think that everyone assumed that Russia would re-emerge as quickly and powerfully as it did in such a relatively short time. In addition, we must not forget the powder keg of the Middle East. I think those are all reasons why we have got to convince the Treasury and colleagues in other Departments that when we are talking about military defence, it is not just men and women in uniform; it is the national interest in its widest sense.

Professor Lindley-French: First of all, any more defence cuts under the spending review would, to my mind, send a disastrous signal to the continent, and to the Dutch in particular. The Dutch are the last small-medium European country willing to give an all-arms approach a go. This is not criticising Berlin, but Berlin, because of history, has a much more constabulary policing view of the role of the Armed Forces, and the Dutch are being pulled towards that. If we indicate now that we are undercutting even the limited growth that we accepted for defence under the 2010 Defence Review, the political impact would be very great indeed. The second point I want to make is that I want to kill the phrase, "We're punching above our weight."

Sir Bob Russell: Sorry.

Professor Lindley-French: It is well said, Sir, but we are not. We are a major economy in the world, and we are a regional power with global interests. We are not a world power, by any means—a global power—but we punch at our weight. The question then becomes: how do we punch at our weight more efficiently and effectively to promote value for money?

Sir Bob Russell: I happily stand corrected, and I will use that term in future.

Professor Lindley-French: Thank you. I appreciate that, and it is important because of the mindset. If we put aside the punching above our weight thing and recognise that we are a top-10 player in the world, and the world is going to come visiting, then we have got to be ready for it. This review is at the very heart of that. In a sense, it brings me back to the institutions point of NATO. The state for whom institutions are most critical is this one, because institutions are key influence levers.

Let me give you an example of the gap between our declared policy and our behaviour. The German-Netherlands Corps, which I know well, had several British officers in. About a week after we had made the statement in SDSR 2010 that we were going to reinvest in the alliance as a key element in our national influence policy, somebody in the MOD decided that they had to pull those British officers out of the German-Netherlands Corps headquarters. The Dutch and the Germans said, "Right, we will pull the Dutch and German officers out of the ARRC". In a

24 April 2013 Professor the Lord Hennessy of Nympsfield, Professor Julian Lindley-French and Major-General Mungo Melvin (Rtd)

sense, what is happening is that we are declaring policy at one level, and somebody lower down the food chain is taking a spreadsheet action at another level, so we are sending conflicting signals. I am sure, Mrs Moon, that they are the messages that you are getting back from NATO.

I was in NATO headquarters two weeks ago, and there was frustration with the UK on the one side making these statements about ambition, and on the other side cutting the means to make that ambition real. When I talk about aligning resources and commitments, it is really aligning ambition with resources and commitments, so that we are indeed investing in those institutions, and not killing them through short-termism.

Professor Hennessy: What would perhaps help—going to the wider theme of getting wider public attention on these questions—is this. Two and a half years ago, when the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy was asking certain questions about this, my friend Alan Judd and I did a threat assessment—Alan is an ex-insider in a way that I am not—which I published in *Distilling the Frenzy*, of external and internal threats. Home and abroad are indistinguishable in terms of threats these days, as we all know. I will not itemise what the threat diagram looked like, although I put it in the book, but I have to say that in my judgment it is more than 2% of GDP on defence a year. With the threats that this country is facing and the capacities that we have got to keep in being, it is at least 2.5% of GDP, even if Bernard Gray can work miracles at Abbey Wood overnight and the Peter Levene reforms produce all the effects that we hope for.

I think that you are a member of the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy, Mr Arbuthnot, aren't you? Going back to that point about these questions being across so many different Committees, it might be an idea if, on behalf of Parliament, you commissioned your own threat assessment of what we are likely to face. Again, the DCDC people are very helpful; they do that 40-year forward look, as they did before the last SDSR. Hardly anybody took any notice of it on the outside. I think they did on the inside, but the press did not take any notice of it because it was not classified. I have a cunning plan. I have said to them this time, "What you need is to put Top Secret on it, with a code word and strapline, and get somebody to leave it on a towpath in the traditional manner. Then the press will take notice of it." If the umbrella committee, if you can call it that—the national security one that you sit on, Chair—were to commission a threat assessment on all our behalves, it would be very, very interesting. People can lock their minds more easily on threat assessments, I think, than they can on the bits that impinge on them—the bigger picture.

Chair: Thank you for my homework.

Q14 Ms Stuart: Lord Hennessy, that was the perfect opening.

Chair: Yes, we haven't yet got beyond the first question.

Ms Stuart: What I wanted is your help in allowing us to do the political narrative. The difficulty with this place is that, unlike any of you, we have this rather irritating thing every four or five years, which means that we have to get re-elected. Not just in this country—I talk to colleagues across Europe—defence spending is neither an election winner nor an election loser. That in itself ought to have an enormous liberating effect on us politicians, because it ought to allow us to think far more creatively. Unlike potholes, wheelie bins and hedges not being cut, it does not lose or gain us votes.

Professor Hennessy: Unless it is the question of the bomb. If we have a bomb election—

Q15 Ms Stuart: That is why I would like not to talk about the bomb. But again, nobody is going to switch their vote over the bomb; they have already made up their mind.

Chair: At some stage I would like to talk about the bomb.

Ms Stuart: Getting on, you were talking about the absence of historians. Mervyn King said that the one thing he would have liked in the Bank of England was an economic historian. It is a British disease: unlike the continentals, who think that there is a search for the right answer in which we need to engage, we do not think that there is a right answer. We think that there is a right action in response to something that is happening that we cannot really influence. Let us not jump over our history. You used this phrase, "the capture of the corporate memory." As an institution, Parliament—the Clerks and others—is enormously good at having a collective memory that rarely gets itself into the Chamber or across things. If we want to break through the FCO, MOD and DFID artificial line of how we protect ourselves from the rest of the world, other than the commissioning you mentioned, how can we get that corporate memory out into the public debate in a way that, for us poor people who have to get re-elected, will actually help?

Professor Hennessy: It is very interesting. I have never stood for office at all, so I am full of admiration for those of you who are brave enough to do that. However, in terms of dealing with the wider public on the question of our place in the world and our past, John Buchan, in his memoir—John Buchan of *The Thirty-Nine Steps*—said, "In the circle in which we live, we can only see a fraction of the curve." People are very interested in the several curves on which they live and how far they have got and where they might lead to. You find historical association meetings, which I go and talk to, or these extraordinary literary festivals, to which the Radio 4 audience turns up in vast numbers, and they are deeply interested in this question of how we got where we are.

Everybody carries their own sense of history and biography and family history with them, but they feel it very strongly more widely. There is a real appetite for it. Provided that my profession does not lapse into jargon and become like social science, which only talks to itself, and we stick to Max Bygraves' requirement—that great historian—and say, "I wanna tell you a story", you can actually grip people's

24 April 2013 Professor the Lord Hennessy of Nympsfield, Professor Julian Lindley-French and Major-General Mungo Melvin (Rtd)

imagination in the round; there is a great appetite for it.

Certainly, your point about the collective memory in your Chamber, and indeed in the one in which I sit, is well made. People have a very considerable knowledge of how we got to where we are, but the way that debates are structured and the nature of partisanship in political life means that it is extremely difficult to do that; if history does appear, it is quite often turned into bits of ordnance, as a bullet to fire at the heads of others. You struggle for your interpretation of the past to be the prevailing one, because it is your own version of Whig history—you do not, I know, but a lot of people do. The necessary historical context, which is crucial to political understanding, and for which there is a really great appetite in this country, can be distorted, can't it? If that is the point that you are making, which I think it is, I agree with you.

Professor Lindley-French: Would it not be reinforced in the next four years with all the commemorations of World War One? In a sense, there will be a public awareness through mass media that perhaps there is not normally the case. That would be a huge opportunity to make the case of where Britain goes next. It is, after all, 100 years ago, so it is a centennial of grand strategy that is coming up. I would certainly make the case that as much is made as possible of the coming out of Afghanistan—the “what next?”—and the centennial of World War One, which will raise a lot of these issues.

My main concern on this is not a political one per se; it is what I call discretionary drift. Increasingly, defence expenditure is seen as discretionary spending. I see that clearly on the continent, where while NATO has its 2% minimum GDP target, spending is now in fact 1.52% excluding the US, and 1.36% across the EU. The Dutch are at 0.8% and probably about to cancel Joint Strike Fighter.

As a political class, you have got to make sure that you hold the Government's feet to the fire. In fact, you need to “red team” Government all the way through. You are very good at writing papers in response to reviews, but, with respect, I would suggest that you are less good at acting as a red team throughout the process to hold Government to account for performance. That is crucial through these processes. Otherwise, given the pressures that you rightly identified to get re-elected, defence becomes discretionary; it is creeping discretion, to the point where there is suddenly an emergency, and then we are back in 1936 or 1937 and it is too late.

Major-General Melvin: If I may very briefly pick that up. One or two of you have mentioned the SDSR and National Security Strategy being done under very fast, rushed conditions behind closed doors. As Lord Hennessy mentioned, we know the SDSR and National Security Strategy are going to be done in 2015 so there appears a huge opportunity to get some serious thinking done on the grand strategic level beforehand.

We can go back to the Strategic Defence Review in 1998, for example, where there was at least an independent expert panel being used. This Committee

could do an enormous job by either running that itself, or flagging it up to the National Security Council apparatus that you cannot expect senior people, and officials particularly, to do a very good job if they are not stimulated and held to account by expert panellists who have got no institutional axe to grind, whether they are from the MOD, FCO or any other Department.

There is an opportunity not for any sort of intellectual or academic grandstanding, but for some really deep analysis—along the lines that the other members of this panel have mentioned—to talk openly for the first time in many years about grand strategy, how we see the instruments of national power being used, and to what effect, and then to do some form of strategic balance about what we are trying to achieve; what relevant methods are available, nuclear and non-nuclear, from deterrence and containment to intervention if we want to do that anymore; how we resource properly what is now colloquially called soft power, or influence; and how we address some of the new threats, such as cyber and so on, in more serious terms. That can be done well before 2015 and it would really sharpen attention in the MOD and the NSC if they had a very authoritative reference document which they had to respond to, so I think that we can front-load this process.

May I add one final point where we must give credit? In the FCO they have rediscovered history. The chief historian at the FCO, [Professor] Patrick Salmon, has been brought out of obscurity in the cellar and is almost sitting next to Mr Hague. It is the only Department, to my knowledge, that has a vibrant research and history programme. That is an example that should be taken across Government. The MOD needs to be, in my view, severely held to account on that issue and needs to address—without embarrassing anybody here—why it got rid of institutions within the MOD such as the Conflict Studies Research Centre and the Advanced Research [and Assessment] Group, which were asking all these big questions and, again, were cut; these were very short-term financial cuts. We cannot do an SDSR without the brain.

Q16 Chair: Well, for the first time there is a Foreign Secretary who is a historian. That may be valuable. Now before I call on—

Professor Hennessy: Douglas Hurd was a historian; let's be fair.

Chair: Yes.

Professor Hennessy: Douglas Hurd is a very accomplished historian, if you don't mind my saying so.

Chair: That is fair and true. Now, before I call on Dai Havard and Julian Brazier, let me point out that we will finish this session at 11.50 am. That means we have 15 minutes left. It was extremely generous and helpful of you to suggest the things that we need to do—a 2,000-word essay suggesting a red team for the National Security Council in advance of 2015—but before we finish, I will want you each to have one major suggestion as to what we as a Committee can do to make the SDSR better. We will come on to that

24 April 2013 Professor the Lord Hennessy of Nympsfield, Professor Julian Lindley-French and Major-General Mungo Melvin (Rtd)

at about 11.45 am, so we have a few minutes left and I want to ask a question as well as Dai and Julian.

Q17 Mr Havard: We have some questions here that were written down. Should an SDSR start with policy, needs or resources? Where should it start? What are the intellectual tools and capacities within Government that help to do it? Who should be involved in that process? Should it be a broader one? James and I were in Paris the other day. I am referring to the *Livre Blanc*. Our ambassador is sitting on that Committee. The French have a very different view about who they involve in the process, as Madeleine was saying. My fear is that you have the Cabinet Office, or the thought police, the Foreign Office, the Home Office and the MOD, all of which need to collaborate, and others—Government Departments, business, I would suggest, and other people—in an NSC and all the rest of it and in this review. They will all be doing their own individual assessments of where they are going to be placed in that particular fight, it seems to me. What should we be saying about how that is sequenced across Government, as well as who is involved in the process, and which end do you start with? At the moment, it seems to me they will collapse back into a spreadsheet analysis again.

Professor Hennessy: The last one was the first time that the Cabinet Office was in the lead, and it was firmly in the lead. One of my sadnesses in life is that the Ministry of Defence, for which I have always had a very high regard, is not held in great esteem in other Departments. That is getting better. I gather there was a Cabinet Office/Francis Maude review of management reforms in the light of the Peter Levene report that was very encouraging. I have not seen it, but you might want to ask for it; I hear it is interesting. The MOD is not highly regarded currently. I have been writing about it on and off since the mid-1970s and I regret to say that it isn't.

The Cabinet Office is going to be in the lead this time, but I think—I am not sure—the MOD is further ahead than anybody else at the moment in preparing papers. One of the things that it would be very interesting to know fairly quickly—I don't know it—is how many Departments are involved. It is a bit of a spectrum that is involved in the NSC, but it will matter more for some than others. I am talking about the degree to which they have units that are at work now on their ingredients for the SDSR, because it has not been pulled together yet. It would be quite nice if the cartography could be mapped by this Committee as it goes along—who is doing what and how far on they are. It would fit very well with the test, which we are going to come to in a minute, that you will apply to that process. It would be nice to have that knowledge, which we do not have at the moment. Previously, all the other defence reviews were done with other departmental input, with the MOD being the lead Department, but it wasn't last time and it won't be this time.

Professor Lindley-French: I would suggest that there needs to be a shadow SDSR process of external experts preparing a report, and then you hold the official report against that report to see how others on

the outside would produce a British SDSR. I have to say I would also do the same thing for the National Security Council. We marked the card of the MOD very severely, and rightly so. I do not get the sense that we mark the card of the FCO and DFID quite so hard. Their homework needs to be marked within the broader context. That brings me to my final point in this section: I think we need a Security Minister to head up the National Security Council who is a Cabinet-level Minister, with that kind of weight, to help drive synergy across Government.

Chair: We have suggested something similar.

Q18 Mr Brazier: I strongly agree. I will come back to the point that Madeleine and Gisela touched on. The Nobel prize winner, Daniel Kahneman, in his latest bestseller, argues from all the tests he has done across psychology with highly intelligent audiences that, even faced with absolutely overwhelming evidence, they will not accept uncomfortable truths. He has experiment after experiment to show this. His latest book is *Thinking, fast and slow*. Without paraphrasing him, the bottom-level question I would like to ask is, how do we get a wider degree of involvement in wider society so we can get some of the symbolic or representative ideas out there, with people's involvement, and can build a base where people will accept the conclusions? At the moment, we are in danger of losing all of this. My experience on the doorstep is that there is no appetite out there for things that we all strongly believe in.

Professor Lindley-French: My sense that the whole force concept and the role of the reserve forces is perhaps the door into that. Having created a very professional force which is somewhat detached from society, the reserve force will help reattach the force to society. That may involve some reinjection of cadets in school units, and that kind of thing, to re-embed the military back in society. In a sense, we are almost stepping back into that process already.

Chair: I think we would like to see that for the 10%.

Professor Lindley-French: Yes, quite right.

Q19 Mrs Moon: I want to see greater political relationships between reserve forces and cadet forces. I have to tell you that it is an absolute nightmare trying to get into a local cadet force; despite my quite clear interest in defence, I still have not managed to get into any of my cadet forces. It is absolutely amazing—never, ever—and I am fed up of talking about it.

Professor Lindley-French: Extraordinary.

Professor Hennessy: Can I come in on that? Do you not think it is a disgrace that MOD officials and military people can't talk to parliamentarians without specific authorisation?

Mrs Moon: It is an absolute disgrace.

Professor Hennessy: We are all Crown servants in different forms. We are all meant to be on the same side. We all have our own, pretty strong, version of patriotism. For that restriction to be in place is outrageous.

Chair: The answer to your question is yes, absolutely. You are understating the issue.

24 April 2013 Professor the Lord Hennessy of Nympsfield, Professor Julian Lindley-French and Major-General Mungo Melvin (Rtd)

Q20 Mrs Moon: I want to pick up some of what Julian has talked about, in terms of people not being willing to look at unpalatable truths. One of the things that is said is that we are always fighting the last war. Julian and I had a conversation about an episode where someone who had been involved in Iraq was in denial about what actually happened there, and we talked about how you get an honest appraisal of our own strengths and weaknesses, so that we can project that forward to look at where we need to be. I caveat that with needing to be aware of where we are in NATO, and so on, but I do think we are missing an important element if we do not look honestly at where we failed, where the skills gaps were, where the capability gaps were, and where we need to toughen up and build our capacity too. There is almost a feeling that it is disloyal to suggest that we don't do everything wonderfully. I was in the Netherlands the week before last, talking to the Dutch military. It was an absolutely wonderful experience. I found them so open about their failings that it was jaw-dropping. One thing I must say is that they got rid of their maritime patrol capability in 2005.

Professor Lindley-French: I was coming to that.

Q21 Mrs Moon: I said to them, "Do you regret doing that? How stupid a decision was it?". They replied, "An outrageously stupid decision". I have yet to hear anybody in the MOD be that honest.

Professor Lindley-French: I would add that on Joint Warrior last week I was sitting on HMS Bulwark. In front of me was the exercise, and it had "MPA: paper". I asked, "In reality you don't have an MPA, so what does that mean?". "The threat is much higher".

Professor Hennessy: That is maritime patrol aircraft?

Professor Lindley-French: Yes. We have to plug that gap very quickly.

Chair: That was at the top of our demand list.

Major-General Melvin: This comes back to this point about strategic education and thinking. Institutionally—I have been on the inside as well and now I am looking from the outside—taking Madeleine Moon's point, people do not understand that the ultimate loyalty is to challenge constructively, for your nation's sake. It is a sad fact that quite a lot of internal lesson reports from the MOD on Iraq and Afghanistan will never see the light of day, because, internally, people have tried to challenge what has gone on. I believe that it is very important to challenge, and to try to open up some of that learning in the next SDSR. Otherwise, it is not that history will necessarily repeat itself, but rather we will be destined to keep on making similar mistakes again and again. I think that is an important point: we have to rebuild the institution and we need individuals who are prepared to challenge constructively within that institution.

Professor Hennessy: It is very difficult to get officials, in uniform and out, in the Crown service to speak truth unto power. The only reason we have our tradition of Crown service is to enable that to happen. I am getting very preachy today, but I think it is the first-order duty of people to speak truth unto power. Even if in some cases you have to do it in private

because of the nature of it, you have to encourage that. You do not hear a lot of those sounds any more across Whitehall, I regret to say.

Q22 Chair: It is now 11.46, and in order to get on to your final lessons I am going to ask my question. However, since you have given us homework, I would like to give you homework. Would you each please write to me about this: "Nuclear deterrence: does it work any more?" It seems to me that if what you are defending against is a ballistic missile from another state, it is easy to know against whom you are retaliating. If instead what you are defending against is a nuclear bomb, clandestinely put in a container, sailed around the world and ending up in Southampton, which explodes, against whom do you retaliate? And if you do not know against whom you are retaliating, does deterrence as such work any more? That is your homework, and it will be marked. Now, please would you give us your final suggestions as to what we as a Committee can do to best help this SDSR?

Professor Hennessy: Just a few quick thoughts. Perhaps fairly soon you could produce half a dozen tests that you will apply to the process that is under way to test its quality as it goes along. What are the six Defence Committee tests that you will apply to test not only the final product, but also across the piece, all the Departments and agencies that are feeding into it? Above all, you might want to quote Carl Sagan, the great cosmologist, to them. He talked about human beings having a terrible tendency to mistake hopes for facts.

I will not go through them now, but I applied my own tests to the previous 11 defence reviews retrospectively in distilling the frenzy. One of the ways I did it was to look at the absolute musts, the indispensable, and ask what is the defence of the realm or the core of it, come hell or high water and whatever the rest of the world is doing. I went right through to the other end, where it is a case of "Wouldn't it be nice to do it, if we had the people, the kit and the money?". That was the way I approached it. If fairly soon the Defence Committee had half a dozen tests that everyone was aware of, and you stuck to that, I think it might help raise the level of the game that we were talking about earlier. I certainly hope so.

Q23 Chair: All right. My next piece of homework for you is to write out those half a dozen tests. Thank you. Professor Lindley-French?

Professor Lindley-French: Chairman, I would invite the Committee first of all to stop the many stupid contradictions at the heart of defence in this country. Last week, I was on Joint Warrior with Dutch politicians, and you had not been invited apparently—I find that very bizarre indeed. You need to be much higher profile at big defence events.

Secondly, you are not hard enough on the forces themselves. The Joint Forces Command is a start, but we need to go much deeper into jointness, and you need to ensure that the forces do so—tradition is important to a point, but we are going to have to change the way in which the military does business

24 April 2013 Professor the Lord Hennessy of Nympsfield, Professor Julian Lindley-French and Major-General Mungo Melvin (Rtd)

radically in the next decade or so. At the same time, we recognise that we have to rely more on our people, and yet we make it harder for them to stay by changing tax and pension laws, so that they cannot stay beyond the age of 40 because they will be priced out of the civilian job market or too old. In a sense, Defence cannot have it both ways: you cannot demand that harmony rules are set at, say, RN standards of 220 days or so a year, and then make it hard for experienced people to stay because the tax and pension changes in their contracts mean that they leave in large numbers. To me, that is a stupid contradiction. Finally, invest in new strategic relationships: France is a strategic partner; the US is changing, but we need to reinvest in that relationship too; and to look for new partners, the likes of Australia and others worldwide with whom we have now worked over the past 10 years in Afghanistan. My final statement is that of Professor Paul Cornish, who said that all strategy must be purposive. I believe that this strategy review must be strategic and must have purpose; it simply cannot be another spreadsheet. **Major-General Melvin:** I think we would do the whole of this Government a huge service if the

Committee were able to set out some of the language, grammar and syntax of the new review. To pick up the points made by other members of the panel, the Committee should set out a framework of analysis, neatly under the acronym of TADS: Threats; our Allies; across Departments; within the Services, and the people enmeshed in our Society. Unless we address those five interlocking circles of analysis, we will not produce an appropriate framework for any analysis of security, let alone defence. I would also come back to my earlier points, that we cannot expect to do strategic estimation without strategic education and strategic learning. The points made today about the need to learn and challenge are absolutely fundamental, otherwise we will be destined to repeat the mistakes of the previous National Security Strategy and the SDSR.

Chair: Thank you, all of you, enormously, for one of the most fascinating evidence sessions that I have ever been involved in. We were looking forward to it, and we were right to.

Before the Committee rises, we will go into private session to discuss this for a few moments.

Tuesday 4 June 2013

Members present:

Mr James Arbuthnot (Chair)

Mr Julian Brazier	Penny Mordaunt
Thomas Docherty	Sandra Osborne
Mr Jeffrey M. Donaldson	Sir Bob Russell
Mr Dai Havard	Bob Stewart
Mr Adam Holloway	Ms Gisela Stuart

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: **Professor Paul Cornish, Commodore Steven Jermy and Frank Ledwidge** gave evidence.

Q24 Chair: Welcome to this part of our inquiry entitled “Towards the next Defence and Security Review”. I welcome all three of you. This is our second evidence session, and I dare say that you have already had sight of the evidence that was given at our previous session. This is one of those unusual sessions when we hope that discussion and conversation will flow pretty freely. You are expected, if this is okay, to comment on each other’s comments, as well as to engage in a discussion and conversation with the Committee, rather than being pinned to the floor to answer lots of questions. For the record, will you please introduce yourselves? Mr Ledwidge, would you like to begin?

Frank Ledwidge: My name is Frank Ledwidge. I am a former barrister. I served military tours in Bosnia, in Kosovo and in Iraq, as part of the Iraq Survey Group, and subsequent to that, I was justice adviser to the PRT in Helmand and a stabilisation officer in Libya. I also wrote a couple of books.

Professor Cornish: I am Paul Cornish, professor of strategic studies at the university of Exeter. Formerly, I was at Chatham House, at King’s College London, in the Foreign Office, in the British Army, at Cambridge university and at Bath university.

Commodore Jermy: I am Steve Jermy. I was a naval officer. I served in the Falklands war and in Bosnia and Kosovo, did tours to Iraq and then finally was in Afghanistan. I was the PSO to the Chief of the Defence Staff and wrote a book on strategy.

Q25 Chair: You have seen our terms of reference and the evidence that we have had so far. You know what we want to do. Is there anything that you would like to begin by saying—any of you? Who would like to begin? Mr Ledwidge?

Frank Ledwidge: I don’t mind kicking off, Chair. Concerning the last session—needless to say, it was a very interesting and distinguished discussion—a few matters arose out of it that are worth commenting on. The first was raised by General Melvin concerning the importance of being aware of the environments in which we work—specifically, the historical environments. The second matter, intimately connected with that, is that I think one has to say that the session went by without reference, except in passing—I think it is likely we will correct that today, at least initially—to the recent and, I would contend, disastrous decade of military activities in Iraq and Afghanistan. I would suggest that those points are

intimately connected: a failure to appreciate the environments in which we work—the importance of doing so—and the results of not doing so.

Q26 Chair: Would you add Libya to that?

Frank Ledwidge: Yes.

Q27 Chair: In your book, *Losing Small Wars*, on the things that we ought to do, you concentrated fairly heavily on the issue of the education of senior officers.

Frank Ledwidge: Indeed. We have, I think, the potential now, over the next two decades, of a golden generation of young and middle-ranking officers with combat experience coming up the ranks. These are intensely aware people. These young men and women, some of whom have now gone through four wars, in the most intense circumstances, are people who are ripe for the kind of treatment that certainly I would suggest, and I am not alone in that, which is the kind of education that the US army invests in for its very senior officers. I am talking about education outside the wire, as it were, in the kind of place that Professor Cornish works in, for example, conducting research, and not necessarily in military matters. Possibly the greatest advocate of this is General Petraeus, who has spoken and written very powerfully about the effect that his graduate education—his time at Princeton—had on him and the impact it had on such successes that he achieved in Iraq and, I would suggest to a lesser extent, but none the less, in Afghanistan over the past few years. It is very much a lesson we need to pick up if we are to exploit what I would call the potential golden generation of military officers.

Q28 Mr Holloway: Off the back of that, do you think that there is a problem in the existing cohort of very senior officers who have talked up these wars over the past decade?

Frank Ledwidge: In their defence, or perhaps mitigation, these senior officers had their upbringing in the cold war, when perhaps awareness of the environments—historical, cultural and other environments—in which we work was not as critically important. Most of these guys—they are all men—have spent their entire careers inside what General Petraeus calls the cloister. As a result of that, I would suggest, and have suggested, that their parameters—their left and right of arc—are perhaps a little bit narrower than yours or those of many of the other people sitting in this room. We see the results of that.

4 June 2013 Professor Paul Cornish, Commodore Steven Jermy and Frank Ledwidge

There is also what I argue is a key factor: being trammelled by traditional British military culture, particularly and specifically the “cracking on” culture, which suggests that if we carry on, just press on and make one more push, everything will be all right. That is simply not good enough and does not work.

Chair: This is a rich seam that we can mine this afternoon.

Commodore Jermy: Could I add to that? I think we ought not to limit it to military minds. We need civil service, diplomat and political minds to be educated in exactly the same way, with the strategic-level strategies made not just by military people, but by broad teams. Looking back, I realised, probably in the middle of Afghanistan, that we were not doing it very well. Indeed, that was why I wrote the book.

I think there are two parts to it as well. I think there is an educative process to be done on strategic thinking and the formulation of strategy. You can get better at it; there is no doubt. The second is culture—understanding the culture of the places that we are operating in. I think we have failed as a nation, and as a military and as diplomats, really to understand these nations that we have been operating in. That is part and parcel of why we have been unsuccessful.

Q29 Sir Bob Russell: Would your group of experts and knowledgeable people include those engaged in humanitarian work, peacekeeping and so on?

Commodore Jermy: Absolutely. In Kabul, we had diplomats, civil servants and DFID personnel. Wartime operations now are multidimensional. The idea that somehow we can solve this by just educating the military mind is wrong. All the minds need to be educated, and they need to be able to operate and think strategically at this level.

Q30 Chair: May I pick up on that as well? What you are saying is so evidently true that there must be some very major reason why it has not been happening. What would you say that reason is? In my experience, the difficulty of persuading politicians to devote the time to take part in a military exercise, for example, or any form of training exercise, is huge. What can we do to change that?

Commodore Jermy: I think Bernard Jenkin is on the same track in the Public Administration Committee. I have stood in front of them as well and made the same point. I think the only thing we can do is just to keep pressing on it. It seems to me obvious that the failures of the past 10 years have been failures of strategic thinking, not just failures of the military, although we do bear part of the responsibility for failure. I think that we just need to keep pressing on at this. I must say it is extremely frustrating, having been pressing on it at least since 2010, not to have seen much progress.

Q31 Ms Stuart: Is not all this due to the fact that not just the British nation, but a large number of nations since 1989, no longer have a clear sense of what this is all about? Therefore they get terribly confused in their role in the world and what their function is, and they end up doing a bit of everything, but not very much of anything, and become terribly reactive.

Commodore Jermy: Do you mean in terms of a coalition operation or in terms of Britain and how we operate?

Q32 Ms Stuart: In terms of what you or Mr Ledwidge say. What is this nation going to do with this golden generation? How does UK plc use the strategic thinking? You go to Afghanistan and you have three different foreign policies, depending on whether you talk to the MOD or DFID. All have been terribly busy, but are they nation-building? Are they dealing with women’s rights? Are they dealing with drugs? There is a confusion of purpose of what the nation stands for and therefore what its defence would look like. Is that at the core?

Commodore Jermy: Perhaps I can answer the question in a slightly strange way. I think it is a failure of structural thinking, by which I mean a failure to go through a process where the objective that you have embarked upon is made clear, where the amount of resources you need to pursue that objective is made clear and where the political framework in which you should operate is made clear. Because we have not done that at the start, we have set off hoping for the best.

Values are probably more your area than mine, although I feel strongly about them. If we are embarking on military operations, it is having that early thinking done, and done well, that will make the difference. It is quite a straightforward thing to do.

Q33 Ms Stuart: To turn it on its head, who does it right? Give me a country you would say we should look to because it is doing it right.

Commodore Jermy: I think Australia does pretty well. People talk about us punching above our weight; the Australians think we punch below our weight. They think the amount of effort we put in does not actually get the results we probably ought to achieve. I see them as quite focused—they are probably more focused than we are.

Chair: And Mr Ledwidge says that punching above your weight is a stupid thing to do.

I now have Bob Stewart, then Adam Holloway, Julian Brazier and Thomas Docherty. We will eventually get to you, Professor Cornish, I promise.

Q34 Bob Stewart: My question follows the Chairman’s point. I am gobsmacked if you say that people have not been given sufficient background and training in the environment in which they are operating. What the hell have we been doing? Why is that the case? We have all these staff colleges; we have great men sitting in these places. Why has this happened?

The collective view of all of us seems to be that something has gone wrong and that we have not really understood the environment in which we have thrown our armed forces. I think that is bloody disgraceful, frankly. What I can’t understand is why people such as yourselves and ourselves, and people such as generals, admirals and air marshals, haven’t made a damn sight more of it, because we have been sending our young men and women into operational theatres totally unprotected, based on what we are discussing at the

4 June 2013 Professor Paul Cornish, Commodore Steven Jermy and Frank Ledwidge

moment. That is a disgrace. Why has that happened? I am putting a bit of passion into what the Chairman said, because he is much more measured than I am. I don't understand why that is happening. You are the academics now, so why have we not got this right?

Commodore Jermy: I think it would have been forgivable when we started off in Afghanistan. I can't see that we would not have got engaged in Afghanistan; it was almost impossible politically not to do so. It started to go wrong after Iraq, and then it is much less forgivable from about 2005 onwards. What we did not do was learn the lessons, and we all have that on our consciences today. I include myself in that. We did not learn the lessons and we need to learn them now. I take the strong view that we should not engage in more military operations in such circumstances until we have learned those lessons.

Frank Ledwidge: And until we have set up the structures to apply those lessons. Just over 100 years ago, we had the Haldane reforms, which as everyone knows were occasioned by the Boer war and the disasters therein. There was a real set-to to discuss the mistakes made in the Boer war, which were considerable, to set those behind us, and to move on and do something about it. Kipling wrote a poem about it, which some of you may have heard. It talks about being a business nation and understanding that we learned something of a lesson and that we should apply that. Now is the time to do that, as Steve says. It is nice and very gratifying to hear your passion about this, Colonel Stewart. One hopes that it translates now into some form of recommendation that can be actioned by our strategic community.

Q35 Bob Stewart: But isn't this strategy all to do with the higher command staff colleges, such as RCDS? What the hell have they been doing? That is their job, isn't it?

Frank Ledwidge: They are closed. I think it was you, Ms Stuart, on the last occasion, or perhaps Mrs Moon, who mentioned that staff college—the whole constellation of staff education—is a closed environment. It is a bit like a theological college: you go in and are given the answers, and then you are told what the questions are. That is no way to educate senior leaders, in whatever environment. It is not how you educate business leaders—it is not how you educate academics, even—but it is unfortunately how we educate senior military officers.

Q36 Mr Holloway: Isn't there a wider cultural problem? I remember when the Committee was on a trip to Helmand, and a guy in the Foreign Office briefed us, and then I was in Kabul independently a few weeks later and that guy came up to me in a bar and said, "Adam, I'm really sorry about that briefing I gave you a few weeks ago. The problem is you just don't get promoted if you tell the truth." That is terrifying. We have lost 444 kids and killed tens of thousands of Afghans.

Frank Ledwidge: I wonder if I might be forgiven for offering a small vignette. I was talking to a junior infantry officer last week, whose platoon had lost half their number to serious injury or death. I asked him what he felt it was all about, and he gave a robust

two-word answer. So I said, "Did you achieve anything?" The answer was, "No." I asked him how that account translated into, "We are making constant progress, and if we press on, the insurgency is at a tipping point," and all that. He said the message gets progressively diluted as it moves up the chain. At company level, it is, "We are taking a lot of damage but we are moving on." The damage is removed at battalion level. When you get up to brigade everything is fine. By the time it is up to ISAF—well, I was told by a very recent ISAF chief of staff that we are winning the war. The lack of institutional honesty and moral courage on the part of our senior military officers is a sight and a hearing to behold.

Q37 Mr Holloway: But how are they being promoted?

Chair: I think that this is unfair, and that Professor Cornish should be allowed to join in. I will call on Julian Brazier and Thomas Docherty after we have heard a little bit from Professor Cornish.

Professor Cornish: Thank you, Chair. I rather think we are beginning to confuse the first discussion, which seemed to me to be a little bit about education, training and so on, with what you might call strategic communications. I would have to disagree with my colleague Frank Ledwidge as far as the moral courage of our senior officers is concerned.

A point on education and training: let us not despair. There is actually quite a lot of it going on. As someone who taught in the Defence Academy some years ago, I would not necessarily accept that it is a closed shop, or a cult, or something of that sort. There was in fact an extremely good discussion at a conference at Wilton Park two weeks ago, I think—I am sure the papers will be available and will be of very great use to you—looking at the education and the training, and the balance between those two ideas of NATO armed forces. A lot of very useful material was discussed at that meeting. I agree entirely with Frank that our troops, with the enormous level of experience they have acquired over the past several years, have a great deal to offer. And they do expect a great deal as well; they expect to be part of a serious organisation that, more to the point, listens to them and wants to learn from their experience. That is enormously important.

If I may chuck in a couple of other quick points before we go on, the "cracking on" culture is actually a very important part of military life. I would certainly agree that it is not sufficient in all respects. However, if we were to insist on educating our young officers, our men and women, to the point that they were not able to crack on—to the point at which they felt that the minute bullets started to fly they had to open their knapsack and pull out their copy of Plato—that would be something to regret. I would also say that failure in all these things cannot ever be excluded, so I would urge us to avoid the counsel of perfection. This is, after all, warfare and strategy, and these things are all about managing what goes wrong.

Chair: Thank you.

Q38 Mr Brazier: I have two very quick points. Would everybody agree that the forming of the

4 June 2013 Professor Paul Cornish, Commodore Steven Jermy and Frank Ledwidge

National Security Council must be a worthwhile step forward in terms of putting things together? Do people have views on the current MOD policy of not allowing contact between the senior military and politicians? It seems to me that that rather runs against the trend of what you want.

Chair: I will ask you for an answer to both those questions, please, and nods will not suffice, because they do not get recorded by *Hansard*.

Professor Cornish: I am happy to start. I think that establishing the National Security Council and the National Security Adviser—I have written about this—was an enormously important and useful step forward. I have also described it as work in progress, and I think it remains that. There is a very important and sophisticated debate going on right now about how it is to be developed. Should the NSA become a political appointee, for example? That is one issue that is under discussion, as you will know very well, Mr Brazier. There are also arguments about the size of the NSC and whether it can be given more staff to do more work. I think it is an enormously important and welcome step forward. In my conversations with senior military officers, the relationship or otherwise with politicians does crop up every now and then. My understanding is that although there is to be no formal contact with politicians, there is plenty of informal contact, so I imagine things are fine.

Chair: Can I disabuse you of that? There is not nearly as much as there should be.

Q39 Mr Brazier: I want to come on to a slightly longer point that plays into the immediate debate we have been having between our witnesses. I by chance read your book, Mr Ledwidge, which I found both fascinating and remarkably depressing, at the same time as I was doing some research on the American war of independence. The parallel is that there was, in both cases, an absolutely overwhelming power facing what appeared to be an easily beaten and inferior enemy. We have never been as powerful as we were at that point in the 18th century; we were extraordinary. If I could just throw in a point, rather than asking a question, I would love to have your comment on it. The most depressing conversation I have had since then was with a very bright colonel who had recently commanded a regiment in Afghanistan—I will not say which part of the Army, because I do not want to risk identifying him. He had also been a combat officer in Iraq, and the conversation was mostly about Iraq. He was basically telling me that we must not see Iraq as a disaster and that the Army, in the envelope of what it had been given to do, had done very well. I pursued one particular Ledwidge theme, which was the catastrophic misunderstanding of the Iraqi police force and the consequences of that. Possibly unaware of the role that that had played in Cyprus and in Malaya, one of which was successful and one very unsuccessful, he looked me in the eye—a serving colonel with all this combat experience, and clearly a high flier—and said, “Oh, but we have got to take the police force as they are. That is a given.” At that point, for the first time in my political career, I genuinely felt, “I do not want to have any more part in this conversation. I just do not believe this.” And I walked away. I just put

that in as an observation that you might like to comment on.

Commodore Jermy: Let me comment, but first I will say one very quick thing about the National Security Council. I do not think that the NSC should be supported by amateurs, by which I mean civil servants who are not trained in strategy. I think that is quite wrong, and I think it is still the case, or it certainly was when I last heard, although it may have improved. What we must not do in something so important is have people who are essentially all-round civil servants who have just been appointed to those posts. They must be properly trained.

Turning to Iraq and the police, let us face it: at the tactical and operational level, all our people have done extremely well. I am in no doubt about that. It is as we get slightly higher that things start to go wrong. What I think went wrong in Iraq, and I still think it was a wrong decision, was the lack of clarity of political objective about what we were trying to achieve. Ultimately, it seems to me that by the time we got to 2005 the key thing was the American relationship, and frankly we renege on that objective. As far as I am concerned—

Q40 Mr Brazier: What relationship?

Commodore Jermy: The American relationship. Why did we go into Iraq? We went into Iraq essentially for reasons of the strategic relationship with the Americans, it seems to me, and then we renege on that relationship by pulling out early. The lesson I drew from that is that you need to be very clear about what the objective is. Whether or not you agree that it was the right objective, if it was the objective that you went in for, that is what you should judge your strategy and decision making against. I do not think that we did that, because we really pulled out at a time when we were not actually doing disastrously. We therefore gave up on the key objective that we sought to pursue in that particular campaign.

Frank Ledwidge: It is a gloss, really, on what Commodore Jermy has just said concerning the relationship between the military and the political strategy. He mentioned Malaya. There is an interesting vignette there. When General Templer was appointed as commander general and civilian overseer of the Malaya campaign in 1952, the first thing he did was send a memo to the Colonial Secretary, Lyttelton, demanding clear political guidance as to what the end state was, so that he could form his strategy accordingly. By return, he received that guidance from the Prime Minister, through the Colonial Secretary, outlining what the end state was to be in Malaya. Templer then said, “I now know how I will shape my strategy in the campaign.” To me that is an object lesson and a paradigm of how matters should be pursued. The kind of ramshackle set-up that we have now would make Field Marshal Alanbrooke revolve in his grave, he being an exemplar of how to conduct the military strategic relationship—or template, for that matter.

Professor Cornish: Chair, you asked us to disagree with each another, so I am going to disagree with my friend Steve Jermy now. I do not think you can describe civil servants as being amateurs simply by

4 June 2013 Professor Paul Cornish, Commodore Steven Jermy and Frank Ledwidge

virtue of the fact that they are civil servants. If we are talking about strategy at the national level, surely you must combine politics, policy and those who are responsible for the delivery of effect through the levers of power. I think we can make the argument that there might be a case for more strategic specialists in the National Security Council, but we cannot expect not to have, as it were, unqualified civil servants. They absolutely have to be there. This has to involve civil control of the armed forces at all levels.

Q41 Thomas Docherty: The Defence Committee has just got back from the United States, where we were very helpfully given a whole bunch of stuff to read over our recess. In the DOD strategic guidance from 2012, they in effect say that they are going to transition what they call their defence enterprise from today's war to preparing for future challenges. In effect, they say, "We are not going to fight another enduring Afghan-style operation." If I were to ask you to assess the MOD, do you think it has either that thinking or at least some sort of thinking about what it wants to transition towards in Future Force 2020?

Professor Cornish: My sense is that what the MOD is most concerned with at the moment is trying to find a point of balance among the three services below which it will not go, at least not until the next spending review. My sense is that that is the prime concern at the moment rather than, if you like, the higher levels of strategic thought and expectation, which one would imagine ought to come through the deliberation of the NSS and SDSR over the next year and a half or so. I might be wrong—I simply might not be in the right conversations—but that is what I hear being the main preoccupation at the moment: the cuts, rather than future operations, and future operational levels, quite apart from the removal from Afghanistan in fairly quick order.

Commodore Jermy: I apologise if I have given the wrong impression about civil servants. What I was talking about was people trained to think strategically, whether they are civil servants or diplomats. My sense is the same as Paul's, which is that the MOD is focused on the current and on balancing the books and extracting in good order from Afghanistan. That is the right thing to do. But there is a terrific opportunity, so the fact that we are having this debate is a good thing. You will have seen from the paper I wrote that I have concerns about the future. The concerns are less to do with terrorism and more to do with some fairly big strategic things going on out there. Climate change is an issue. It is sexy, but it is not the one that immediately concerns me. I am more interested in national security and the consequences in the international economic system that are likely to lead, or could plausibly lead, to reasons for us to deploy British armed forces on operations that we would not have envisaged perhaps three or four years ago—stability operations and those sorts of things.

Q42 Mr Brazier: Where?

Commodore Jermy: It is difficult to say. If you ask whether I could imagine us being invited as part of NATO to put a stabilisation force into Greece or

Portugal, I could envisage us being invited to do that, and I am not entirely sure what our answer would be.

Q43 Chair: I noticed in your paper that you moved from international terrorism to the threats from climate change and economic instability but with no reference to nuclear proliferation. Is there any reason for that?

Commodore Jermy: No, one would be concerned about nuclear proliferation, but it does not seem to me to be the most imminent issue. The most imminent issues seem to be within international economics and in energy security. I work in the energy business now and the idea that we are going to be saved by fracking or shale is a mistake as far as I can see. It is plausible that we could be facing severe energy shortages over the next 10 to 20 to 30 years. That is likely, it seems to me, to lead to significant stresses and strains within international society. It would be useful for the MOD and others to think through those sorts of things as they look forward into the future.

Q44 Thomas Docherty: I would not dispute that. That is where the MOD is as well. But why is it an either/or for the MOD? While its main body of work is thinking, rightly, about how we get out of Dodge and balance the books, there is a substantive section of the MOD and the Cabinet Office thinking about 2020. I am not a great organiser and I have a tendency to put things off. It sounds as if the MOD is in a culture of putting things off till it is less difficult to do.

Professor Cornish: The Army has produced its Army 2020 report, so by no means am I suggesting that nothing is going on, but the notion that they are looking hard at types of deployment in the near future is probably too much to expect at the moment. I think Afghanistan is the main concern, quite rightly, as are the cuts. We also need to bear in mind that something important has happened. Some years ago the Ministry of Defence would have produced its outlook on the world and it would have included something like a national security strategy that was, in a sense, the MOD telling the rest of Government what it thought foreign policy ought to be. Then the Foreign Office came along and said, "That's not your business; that's our business." And then the whole thing came to a halt. Ever since 2010 we have had a different system. We have the NSS and the SDSR, as you all know, which is why we are all here. Therefore, what we must expect the MOD to be doing—obviously it is working in the background with its strategy unit and so on, as we all know—is slotting into that longer term, more ordered process. I think that is what is happening.

Q45 Thomas Docherty: It is not a process the UK invented. This is the US process which they have done for 40 years—having an NSS and a QDR in their case. They don't do it like that. They had the NSS in 2010 but then they do the QDR at the same time. Then they produce these reports every couple of years that set out how that is implemented. We don't seem to be doing that, Professor Cornish. What we seem to be doing is this: there was a 2010 process; we will do nothing. We will get to 2015 and we will do it again. And then we will do 2020. It is a stop-start process.

4 June 2013 Professor Paul Cornish, Commodore Steven Jermy and Frank Ledwidge

Professor Cornish: We have done it once and it could have been done a lot better that time. As I said, it is work in progress. I would hope that it is going to get better next time round and by the time we have done it 40 times we will be pretty good at it, I would hope.

Q46 Chair: Would you expect the next National Security Strategy to be considered in parallel with the next Strategic Defence and Security Review or before it? When do you think it should begin?

Professor Cornish: I think it should begin now, and I would hope and expect that the two things were being considered in parallel—conjoined twins.

Q47 Chair: Well, as I understand it, it may be some time before the next consideration of the National Security Strategy properly begins. Would that be a concern to you?

Professor Cornish: It would, because the understanding I have developed over the years of strategy is that you cannot have strategy as plan without a consideration of strategy as available resources. You have to have the two discussions in parallel. To the extent that national strategy involves the Ministry of Defence as the provider of a certain type of resource, I would say that it has to be involved in that discussion as it develops. It seems to me to be self-evident.

Q48 Mr Havard: This is the guts of it. The objective reality is that it is not. The description would appear to allow it to happen, but it is not happening; it is still happening in the old, traditional way that you describe. We are a reactive Committee, largely. We are trying to be proactive in the sense of contributing to a discussion in advance to help to shape it and to avoid some of the problem of security being over here and defence and international development being over there—the interconnection problem and the defence and security review. We did not have a defence and security review. We effectively had a defence review and a security review, separate from one another, but published a day, or something, after one another.

Thomas's description of what we saw in the United States is very interesting, however the quintennial review is being written in the expectation that it will not happen—that it will be a document that is ignored—because the realpolitik within the United States between State, DOD, the Congress and the President and so on will override the descriptive analysis. It may be very, very good, but the realpolitik will disturb it and will not allow it to happen.

You say that there are discussions happening to try to resolve some of these things. You say that there is a discussion happening about what should take place in terms of how the MOD should position itself, but I do not see those discussions and no one else, it seems, outside the cloisters in which they are having the discussions see those discussions. How do we break through this circle to have a more coherent and comprehensive discussion? How can we help to promote that, other than just have a public discussion like this that says, “J'accuse. You are not doing it and you ought to be.”?

Commodore Jermy: The obvious way to do it is for it to happen under the leadership of the National Security Council. I completely agree with Paul that these two things need to be conjoined, but logically the National Security Strategy should lead. It is the higher document and therefore it should be the one that directs the broad shape, if you like, of the Strategic Defence Review. To my mind, if it were to be in a system that I had designed, I would want the National Security Strategy to lead and for us to deduce from it the broad terms of reference for the Strategic Defence Review, and for that then to be analysed through. That would be the logical way to do it, because you would then be doing it on the basis of a national security policy, rather than guessing what the National Security Strategy will be and then re-engineering the strategy or vice versa. The logical way to do it would be that way, but I accept that, as Paul has said, the national security process is work in progress. Certainly, the logical way to do it is very clear.

Q49 Chair: Mr Ledwidge, for the record, you are nodding.

Frank Ledwidge: Yes. I entirely agree; it is common sense.

Q50 Mr Havard: Can I put something to you? General Sir David is saying that the strategic focus has shifted, and it probably has—I think it has. It shifted some time ago and we are running to catch up with it. We are trying to scramble out of Afghanistan, but then we have the Prime Minister going round Mali with the French Prime Minister making all sorts of strange comments about how we will help to do things for the future. The “strategic focus” is an interesting phrase; apparently, it means that we are now more concerned about what is going to be happening in a security discussion about where North Africa, the Middle East and all of that is. Is that what the defence and security review is? Is that the sort of foreign policy underpinning approach of how we ought to organise our armed forces to collaborate in activities in those areas, on the basis of a Libya-type operation? Where does that come? Where do we have the debate about what you want people to do?

Commodore Jermy: It is a foreign policy debate.

Q51 Mr Havard: Exactly, so what do the Ministry of Defence do?

Commodore Jermy: The Ministry of Defence ought to be following with foreign policy. It is not always—I worked in Policy Planning and we wrote the 2003 defence review in an integrated way with the Foreign Office, so it is possible to do it. But I have to say that I do not know how the national security process is working, so I would not be the person to tell you whether it is happening or not. But, logically, you start with a broad foreign policy. That is how George Kennan did it in 1947: he set out the main parts of the American foreign policy; the containment strategy followed and so we played out over the next 30 or 40 years of the Cold War. That is logically how it will happen; it is quite straightforward intellectually.

4 June 2013 Professor Paul Cornish, Commodore Steven Jermy and Frank Ledwidge

Q52 Ms Stuart: But that works only if you have a clearly defined enemy, which is what we had until about 1989.

Commodore Jermy: Not necessarily true.

Q53 Ms Stuart: Let me quickly finish this. In the case of the United Kingdom, the enemy could be internal: it could be the fuel strike, because the Government has failed to understand how its private industry structures work; it could be the 7/7 bombings; it could be bird flu. The minute that we decide to deploy our standing troops away from these islands is a foreign policy decision. But the fact that our waterways need to be protected is not a foreign policy decision; it is an existential question.

Looking ahead—I would like to get a sense of this—can you define the nature of the enemy in grades of which the UK has no choice but to face that enemy? The next is a choice: it was very interesting when you talked about Greece and Portugal—and you may end up being extraordinarily prescient—but whether we do that or not would be a choice. Whereas, if it is a 7/7 bombing, it is not; we have to do something.

Commodore Jermy: That is a great question. The issue is not enemy—I hate that word, which we use it mistakenly a lot—but threat, which is a different word. The most important thing is to understand the fundamental parts of British security. To me, they are relatively straightforward.

There are territorial boundaries and the security of Britain and our Overseas Territories, and there are our supplies of food, energy and commodities. That is the starting point. To my mind, that is the third party, fire and theft and you must protect those things at all costs, because otherwise you may not survive as a nation.

Then you can start to build on top of that and decide whether you want to do more altruistic or foreign policy related things. But, ultimately, if you cannot provide the security of those things—at the moment, for example, we do not have a Nimrod force so we cannot patrol our economic zones—you are stepping into danger, I am afraid. My starting point would be third party, fire and theft. Then, when I had covered those bases, I would think about what else I needed to protect the security and defence of the country.

Professor Cornish: If I may come to Ms Stuart's question in a slightly roundabout way, and, first of all, respond to Mr Havard's question about the MoD positioning, in my understanding, the MoD is always positioning itself for this sort of discussion, in its strategy and elsewhere. I would say that, as far as its activity at the moment is concerned, it is probably pre-positioning itself in the expectation that next year there is going to be a big study, with a big document coming out of it.

That all makes sense if it is going to proceed along the lines promised in 2010. If it is not going to proceed along those lines, the whole thing is a nonsense—I would go as strong as that. If the NSS is to be produced with no cognisance of what is going on at the MoD, or after the SDSR, we will have completely lost the point that was made in 2010.

If I come to strategic focus, where we are going to be looking next or where is the next threat, enemy or

whatever, we stand here to make another error: as well as a process error, we stand to make a category error as far as the SDSR 2015 is concerned. The risk now is that we turn this entire exercise into what the Germans call *feindbildpolitik*; an exercise of threats or challenge chasing, rather than being more confident, more outward-looking and more forward-thinking.

That is why, instead of thinking about the grand strategic narrative over the next couple of years, we need to be thinking more about doing what the NSS promised us in 2010, which is to make foreign security and defence policy based on risk. That, for me, would be the answer.

Q54 Mr Brazier: My question comes in right behind Gisela's. The Ashanti campaign in the 19th century started with exactly the right process. The three relevant Secretaries of State sat around the table with Garnet Wolseley, who was going to command the campaign, and agreed a clear objective and the resource that they needed and they went and did it. That was set, however, against a background of a country that was clear about its mission in the world and about how the campaign fitted into that. My problem, which is really a restatement of Gisela's question, is that we have so broken public confidence in what we are about in the world that the last poll I saw on various possible expeditionary outcomes suggested that there would be no public support for any of them except for evacuating British citizens. That was the sole exception.

Let us suppose that we do all these things—all of us here would agree with your risk-based approach and we are certainly all supporters of the NSC—how do we rebuild public support and confidence? How do we bring the country in? At the moment, the country is not committed.

If you will forgive me, I have one last anecdote, but it is highly relevant. I once sat at a dinner at which every single person at the table had a connection with the armed forces, and the conclusion at the end of it was—

Chair: I am concerned about anecdotes.

Mr Brazier: I'm sorry, Chair, but it does make the point. The one thing that they were all saying was that the one good thing to come out of the defence cuts will be that we will not be sending any more young men off to get their legs blown off in places such as Afghanistan and Iraq. How do we get the public involved again?

Frank Ledwidge: I must take slight issue with Mr Brazier, at least in the spirit of what he is saying. I share the public scepticism about expeditionary warfare. We have had now two clear failures and one—I am thinking of Libya—that is very much in the balance and looking towards the negative. It is highly understandable that members of the public are concerned. The trouble is that if you set up your military with what Professor Paul Rogers calls a "two-ship Navy" with those two ships equipped to conduct and support expeditionary warfare, that is what is you will look to do, rather than—I suppose this is a question of definition—looking at what threats face us and how to oppose them, as Ms Stuart has said.

4 June 2013 Professor Paul Cornish, Commodore Steven Jermy and Frank Ledwidge

As you know, I contend that Afghanistan was a campaign that arose out of determinism. We had this big Army. We needed to use it and to do something. We are expeditionary warriors, so let's go and do that. We cannot have that happen again. We see now in Syria that if the British and French turn up on Syrian borders, the first thing that the Syrians think about is the Sykes-Picot agreement and they start counting their spoons. We simply cannot afford to get involved again in any of these ill-defined campaigns that are laudable in objective, but impossible in execution. We stand at risk of doing so if we set ourselves up as expeditionary warriors, rather than defenders of the realm.

Professor Cornish: If I can interject, since I am sitting at the same table as my colleague Frank, I really would want to dissociate myself from the notion that we went into Afghanistan simply because we had an Army that needed something to do.

Frank Ledwidge: I don't say simply, Paul. That was merely one driver for it.

Professor Cornish: That is to reduce it too unfairly.

Q55 Mr Holloway: In the context of Afghanistan, that is certainly the view of one very senior British diplomat. In reference to what Frank said and in support of you, I remember one of the brigadiers who commanded in Helmand saying before he went that the problem is that the only tool we have is a hammer and hammers tend to look for nails.

Commodore Jermy: We can look back, but the key thing is not to beat ourselves up too much over Afghanistan or Iraq. These things have happened and we must learn from them. That is the critical thing. It seems to me that we need to get the British armed forces back in good order. There is not the public appetite, but they do need to be recapitalised and balanced. It is difficult to predict what will happen in future, but there are certain areas where we know that we would have to be engaged. The continent of Europe is an obvious example, but so too is the Gulf. We need to think these things through and start to look at those areas of the world where if there were risks—to use Paul's phrase—developing, we would need to do something. We need to think through how we would do that, whatever the public reaction. There are certain circumstances, however, where it is obvious that things need to be done. That includes our overseas territories, and we need to be ready to do these things.

The other place is the gulf of Suez. If the Suez canal were to be closed for some reason, it would be an area where if others thought they had to get engaged, so might we. We need to think about these key strategic areas, because there will be occasions, notwithstanding the lack of public appetite, where we will need to do things abroad, and we must be prepared to do so.

Q56 Chair: Have you each said as much as you would want to say about how we learn lessons, about whether we are capable of doing proper strategic analysis and about whether we keep proper historical records or proper near-historical records of the decisions that have been made and the reasons for

them? Is there anything more that you would like to say about any of that?

Professor Cornish: I would love to say more about some of that.

Chair: Please do.

Professor Cornish: I will, but before doing so I will quickly respond to Mr Brazier's question. There is, if I can use the word, a sort of schizophrenia in public opinion as far as defence matters are concerned. There is immense and gratifying support for the armed forces, which is both touching and important, and we all welcome it. There is, however, a complete lack of support for what is considered to be the political strategic mission—or, if you must use the term, grand strategic mission; and my explanation, for what it is worth, is that Afghanistan and Iraq were presented in some way as the embodiment of our grand strategic mission in the world, and it did not wash. I do not think that the public expects that and it was an error to present it at that level. Our grand strategic mission does not need to be said; it is what it is. We are a medium power with an enormous reputation for our advocacy for human rights and, as a tolerant liberal democracy, we have all of that. I do not think we need to present these expeditionary operations in such a way.

As far as history goes, there is masses more to be done. It is criminal that it is being allowed to slip. The Army Historical Branch is not doing everything it could and should do to gather lessons. We need to think about programmes such as oral history collections of experience and lessons from all the people coming back from these operations. There is an enormous amount more that should be done and it could be done very cheaply.

Commodore Jermy: If I could throw in another—Major-General Mungo Melvin is here as well—we ran something called the defence operational audit process. I cannot remember its exact name, but it was a very good thing. It looked independently at what was going on and I think we could do the same at a high level in Government. I know that when we made the decision to switch the main effort from Iraq to Afghanistan, we did so without any foreign policy analysis. I know that for sure because I was part and parcel to the paper that was written to make the decision. I want to go back through that decision and work out why we did it that way.

You need some sort of process that sits independently of Government and politics and can look at these things in a rolling way, in the same way as we looked at things in Defence. The DOC was a good thing, because it started to surface things. For example, 16 Air Assault Brigade were audited and the audit said, "They have not got the stuff that they said they had." The message had got rarefied and by the time it reached the top of Defence, it said everything was fine, but the brigade were actually in poor shape. The DOC was terrific. We would benefit from having something at a higher level that looked at how we do the process independently of Government. That would allow us to surface some of the mistakes we have made, or learn from them. It would almost be like how the National Audit Office does it, I suppose, but in an operational, strategic way.

4 June 2013 Professor Paul Cornish, Commodore Steven Jermy and Frank Ledwidge

Q57 Sir Bob Russell: I am glad Professor Cornish mentioned the support the British people have for Her Majesty's armed forces, because we have had about an hour of doom and gloom from the three gentlemen here. It is almost as if they are embracing the concept that Her Majesty's armed forces should be downsized, and we should be a mediocre country that indulges in oral history. I thought Her Majesty's armed forces were worth more than that. Can we have a bit of upbeat enthusiasm, as you would expect from our military commanders, if not from those doing the theory?

Professor Cornish: I promise you, I am not consumed by doom and gloom. I did not say mediocre; I said medium. We were once a great power, we went through a phase of being a declining great power, and we are now a medium power. We have the opportunity to be a really important and useful medium power, but we must not pretend we are anything other than that.

Commodore Jermy: I am optimistic about the future. We have made mistakes, but we have got out of them. We are extracting in good order from Afghanistan, which is the right thing to do. There will be stuff to do, so we need a solid British armed forces, which needs to be balanced between the three services, and needs to be reactive and ready to go. I strongly believe that we need to keep the forces at their current size as a minimum. There is a lot to do out there, and they need to be prepared and recapitalised. It is not that I am against the military; quite the reverse. I am very confident in them at the operational and tactical levels, but we have lessons to learn at the strategic level.

Q58 Sir Bob Russell: Your body language does not indicate that.

Commodore Jermy: I can just tell you what I think, but having served and been to war for this country, I am strongly in support of it, but there is some recapitalisation and thinking to be done at the strategic level.

Sir Bob Russell: I do not doubt the past. The body language for now and the future is what concerns me.

Q59 Chair: Mr Ledwidge?

Frank Ledwidge: I would like to associate myself with both the language and the body language of my colleagues. Many of us in this room are veterans of war—certainly all of us at this table. We love and support our armed forces, and love and support our country. We want our country, however, to be seen rightly as—I won't even use the term—a positive force in world affairs. However, we need to trammel that with realism.

If I might return to the question concerning history, General Melvin in the last session—he did not put it this way, but I will—spoke of mainstreaming history into the way we make strategy. That is how things were done, of course, in the days of the Committee of Imperial Defence, which consisted of deeply learned people making operational and strategic decisions in a deeply learned way. Complexions change when things are looked at through that lens.

This is perhaps a preachy point, but I will make it none the less. There are results at the front end from not doing that. I will give you two instances. When I

deployed to Libya as a stabilisation officer—by the way, I am not having a go at the people who sent me; I am very grateful for the opportunity and it was a great honour and a privilege—I was given no briefing. None of us was given briefings on the history and background of the place into which we were to go. We had to rely on ringing up friends who perhaps had been journalists there. It was a rather second-line thing.

I contrast that with the way commercial enterprises conduct their deployments. They will conduct a deep political economy analysis without any preconceptions, and they will brief their people closely on that, so everybody involved is closely aware of the situation to which they are deployed. That is the kind of service we should offer our Armed Forces. If that is the kind of service commercial companies offer their contractors, we owe our people nothing less than that. That means having a deep historical context, and making sure that we analyse the situation properly. Syria is a case in point.

Q60 Mr Havard: Can I press you on how we do all this? In America they have the National University and this, that and the other. You spoke about DOC reports. I remember sitting on this Committee and asking for a view, or some visibility, of what was coming out of those DOC reports. I could be in Afghanistan speaking to the people who were contributing to the report, and yet I could see a report at the end of the day—or actually, I did not see a report at the end of the day because I was told it was secret. So you have a public debate about a secret document you are not allowed to read.

The point I want to make is, where is all this going to take place? Are we to recommend that there should be a national defence university structure that has all these bodies in it, to acquire the information and the knowledge you describe and to give the briefings you want to give? What are we supposed to say about what the structure should look like? At the moment, even when information exists, it is not in a public debate that can inform that discussion properly.

Frank Ledwidge: It is not so much the setting up of structures; it is the suffusing of the structures that exist with networks that are open. Practically, that means that the National Security Council, for example, opens itself up to real expertise. For example, on Syria, I am wondering how many serious academics have been asked in to discuss policy there—to give briefings and lectures and to write papers. The answer, I suspect, is none at all.

Professor Cornish: That's not strictly true.

Q61 Chair: Professor Cornish, have you been called in?

Professor Cornish: No, but my colleagues at the university of Exeter have, if you will forgive the plug.

Mr Brazier: A quick point of fact: in a meeting of Conservative MPs—it was a private meeting, but this is a public fact—William Hague stressed the importance of the new historical branch that he has re-established in the Foreign Office precisely to do this—to get in academics across the thing. Syria was an example that came up.

4 June 2013 Professor Paul Cornish, Commodore Steven Jermy and Frank Ledwidge

Chair: Maybe some lessons are being learned.

Mr Holloway: Just to support that, recently, since Afghanistan, they have been much, much more receptive to getting in the real experts—people who have known the place for 30 years—than they ever were before.

Q62 Ms Stuart: That great military strategist Mike Tyson said that you have a plan until someone punches you in the face. In terms of your presentation so far, it is really a question of stopping talking about enemies and starting to talk about threats. Fine. Then you start talking about your first move, but after that you need to look at resilience. I am trying to get to the point of how well we are prepared for the unexpected—the punch in the face. Do we need to do more on that?

Professor Cornish: It is almost impossible to answer that question, because of course by definition we do not know what the unexpected is. I am not being glib, but—

Q63 Ms Stuart: No, but if you are looking at resilience, you do know what you are looking at. Commodore Jermy talked about the Suez canal: if you close the Suez canal, I cannot remember the figure, but you add 60 or 90 days in terms of shipping. If you look at UK plc, what have we got 60 days' worth of supplies in? Other than coal, I think it's nothing. So you can plan for resilience after that first punch.

Professor Cornish: You can plan for resilience for the things you expect, but clearly you cannot plan to be resilient for the things you do not expect. You therefore have to be able to adapt and adjust as necessary. I made the argument for risk. The point I would make is that risk is not a world view that crystallises in front of you—

Ms Stuart: No—

Professor Cornish: Forgive me, I am not traducing what you are saying. What I am trying to say is that risk, as far as I see it, is a dynamic process. You have to be constantly reviewing your world outlook and adjusting as necessary. You therefore need to be able to have some means available, whether economic, military or whatever, that can similarly be adjusted to fit. For example, for the armed forces you may say that next time around, let us make sure that we have a broad mix of capabilities that are very high end—as they say—in terms of combat aircraft, and very low end in terms of—I don't know—a number of ships that are not necessarily fully packed with gadgets but can do all sorts of lower-end things. That is the sort of thing I am arguing for.

Commodore Jermy: To follow on from your point, I think that you are exactly right. The way that you can go after it is through scenarios. For example, if you imagine the idea of Maslow's hierarchy of national needs, at the bottom there will be things that are actually essential to us—we come back to food, energy and commodities. That is where I would start. It would be very straightforward, I think. Well, not straightforward; it would take time, but could you imagine constructing scenarios where the Suez canal closed and we were able to work through the implications, and therefore the implications for

defence and other parts of British society? I am sure that we could.

I am sure that we could do the same with certain issues going on in the Gulf if it were to be closed. Indeed, not only am I sure that we could, I am sure that we should. To my mind it is a very good way of trying to understand, and do some risk mitigation. I am not sure whether this is going on in the National Security Council, but if not, it probably should be. As you go up the hierarchy of national security needs, there are other things that may be less important to you, but at the bottom are those things that are essential to the welfare and survival of our people. Down there is where I would start and do my scenarios.

Q64 Chair: There will be votes in the House at 4 o'clock, in 15 minutes. Because I am not entirely sure how many votes there will be, I think that we should expect to finish then.

To the extent that you feel you want to, I should like you to say what you think we should do as a Committee to help the strategic defence and security review to be as good as possible. What questions should we be asking? Of whom should we be asking them, and how might each of you be able to contribute to our report, perhaps by providing some written analysis or papers for our report, into what we should recommend to the Government? Over to you, Professor Cornish.

Professor Cornish: Gosh, that's difficult. When I jotted down a few quick notes in preparation for today, you will be alarmed to hear that I ended up with an eight-page paper. If it would be of any use, I should like to turn it into English and send it back to you as a discussion of the whole risk point.

Chair: That would be hugely appreciated. Thank you.

Professor Cornish: Of whom should we ask the questions, and what questions? The key thing has to go back to Mr Havard's question about the NSS and the SDSR relationship, and if they are not connected. There was a moment before the 2010 publications when they were going to be coming out as one document. We don't need that. Clearly, we had two documents that were ends, and then ways and means and so on, but if they are not connected—if not within the day, then certainly within a month or so—and if they have not gone through some sort of common discussion, that will be a manifest error. It would be to turn the whole process back on its head and would negate all this. I even got excited about the NSS, the NSA and the SDSR. I regard them as a huge step forward, so I would be personally miffed if it did not happen.

Thinking back to the 1998 strategic defence review, there was a good deal of public or expert evidence gathering, and it was a really useful exercise. Those comments and papers are on the record, and give a good glimpse of the deliberations that went on. If, for whatever reason, that is not going to happen within the NSC, the Ministry of Defence or the Cabinet Office more broadly, I would applaud you, Chairman, and your Committee if you were able to do something of that sort yourselves. I am confident that people

would show an awful lot of interest in giving you their thoughts on the SDSR and the NSS.

Q65 Chair: It is because of our experience of the last SDSR that we decided to undertake this inquiry. Your help in getting these discussions out there so that the Government, as well as everyone else, can learn from them would be much appreciated.

Frank Ledwidge: I defer to my colleagues' expertise in respect of the operating systems of our strategic apparatus and architecture—I suppose you could say that is the hardware. My concern is a little bit more about the software at the strategic operational level—the development of our senior officers. I urge you to push the Ministry of Defence particularly, and other Ministries, to ensure that the people who will be making and executing strategy are the kind of people who are equipped to answer the threats that Ms Stuart raised.

In one of his finest essays, Michael Howard said that the next crisis we might have may be the last. That was in the 1970s. We need to have the kind of people who are equipped to answer unexpected events.

Although this is a bit more woolly, it is equally important. I am speaking only to the military, and within the military we need to strengthen the culture of bluntness and honesty at the higher levels, if it does not exist already. How that can be done, I cannot say, or it would be a long discussion if I could. But it needs to be reinforced. I do not think there is too much more I can add.

Professor Cornish: Can I quickly interject a more optimistic quotation from Michael Howard? That is Professor Sir Michael Howard, of course.

Sir Bob Russell: Oh, that one.

Frank Ledwidge: Yes, most certainly that one.

Professor Cornish: What he said comes to the heart of a lot of our discussion: “No matter how clearly one thinks, it is impossible to anticipate precisely the character of future conflict. The key is to not be so far off the mark that it becomes impossible to adjust once that character is revealed.”

Commodore Jermy: Two points from me, but first, I completely support Paul on getting the sequencing of the National Security Strategy and the SDSR correct, and the fact that you are talking about it is terrific. It is great to be here at this conversation and it is great to be part of it. I also want to support Frank's point, which is that it is not just about the military; it is about getting that proper cross-Government co-ordination between the diplomats, the military and DFID.

The two points I would make are that I think there is a role, potentially, for an independent red team who are doing some of the same thinking. I think they should be funded by Government, but actually thinking out there in the future. We need to raise our vision toward the future, because Afghanistan will be gone soon. The idea of a red team who could perhaps do some of this thinking and support, but independently of Government, would be the first point I would make.

Q66 Chair: Do you think that is us?

Commodore Jermy: No, I don't think it is, actually. I think it needs to be dedicated. It is the sort of thing that Paul's team at the university of Exeter might be involved in, so a bunch of academics, probably, policy analysts and military strategists. It does not need to be a huge team, but you are doing some proper, decent long-range strategic thinking.

Q67 Mr Havard: You had ARAG, but that was stood down. Is that the sort of thing, or something beefed up? It would need resources.

Commodore Jermy: Something like that, but with some very, very decent people in it—really good thinkers—because I foresee big issues out there. The idea of a red team of some sort, independent of Government, who can report independently to you and to the National Security Council, would be a good thing to look at in the future.

The second thing is that I think exploring some of the scenarios that are being predicted in the energy environment and economics would be a very good thing for the red team and yourselves to do. Some of the potential scenarios that I can foresee in economics and energy security are of an extremely concerning nature. I am sure we will adapt our way through, because we do, but even so it would be better to do so in a prepared way. In particular, exploring some of these scenarios in a proper scenario analysis would be a very valuable thing for Government to do in the run-up to the next SDSR.

Professor Cornish: May I very quickly say that, fortunately, you do not need to worry about reinventing or reopening the ARAG, because at Exeter we have an excellent red-teaming and scenario-testing facility, which is open for business? Forgive me if that counts as lobbying.

Q68 Chair: You are allowed to advertise. We may have various other questions, but here is one question for you, Mr Ledwidge, while we have still got a few minutes. Do we place too much emphasis on our relationship with the United States?

Frank Ledwidge: I had a conversation with a senior officer some time last year, and I asked him why it was that our Defence Secretary found it necessary to have an officer of a foreign power as a special adviser, namely a United States military intelligence officer. He commended this young man and his abilities. I said that we had plenty of British officers who are at least similarly qualified, and he said, “The reason why this chap is there is to open doors in the Pentagon.” I asked whether 400 British dead was not enough to open doors in the Pentagon, and he said, “You don't know the Pentagon.”

That got me to thinking about this problem. We have deferred much of our strategic thinking, certainly in Afghanistan and Iraq—let us just move that aside—to the United States, particularly since 2003. We sit here in the Wilson room, which is curiously apposite. In 1965, as you all know, Prime Minister Wilson was asked for troops for Vietnam, a far more intense and much larger campaign that some would say was more damaging than the recent Afghan war. Wilson gave instructions to his diplomats that no British soldier was to die in south-east Asia, and that they were to

4 June 2013 Professor Paul Cornish, Commodore Steven Jermy and Frank Ledwidge

come up with suitable arguments. They did, and we kept out of Vietnam. It required some degree of moral courage, but Prime Minister Wilson was up to that.

It is regrettable that we have not looked to our own interests over the last decade, but rather more to other foreign powers. It has been interesting listening to Steve Jermy, over the past hour particularly. He was discussing threats to the United Kingdom, not threats to the international community, not threats to any notional coalition or special relationships, or other such shibboleths. It is my contention that we were mistaken to look to the interests of another power before, I would contend, our own interests, and it is a mistake we should not make again. We must respect our allies. Our closest ally may be the United States, but we have to understand that we can give; we have plenty to give and plenty to receive. That balance has been out of kilter for the past decade.

Q69 Mr Holloway: You raised the question of politicians. To what extent do you think there is a problem about the generations in politics? In Mrs Thatcher's first Cabinet half the people had served in the second world war, many with great distinction, and we had an Archbishop of Canterbury with a Military Cross, whereas today, we have a much narrower political class with very often very little experience before taking these great offices of state. How can we mitigate that? At the moment there does seem, certainly with Iraq and Afghanistan, to have been a problem at the interface between this very inexperienced political class and the senior military officers.

Commodore Jermy: I write about this. There is an immediate answer, which is self-education. There are a lot of very useful tomes out there. I aimed to put all this in a book so that people and politicians could read it. It was for politicians, military people and diplomats, so that they could think through and at least have a structure and introduction to strategic thinking. That is a start, but you have also got to engage as well. It is no good saying that we have not got time because we are all too busy. Politicians at the strategic level need to engage. They need to engage in self-training, so do diplomats and military people; we all do.

Q70 Mr Holloway: Perhaps we also need to widen the political class.

Commodore Jermy: I cannot help on that, I'm afraid.

Professor Cornish: I would say that this should actually be a rather fine thing. I would hope that it could be more of an opportunity than a problem. I like the idea of a civil polity—a liberal, democratic civil polity—that is at ease with itself, and has the capacity, the strategic culture if you want to call it that, to use armed forces from time to time, without necessarily having to be of those armed forces. That, it seems to me, ought to be the goal of the entire exercise: that

perfect balance between civil society and military force, when necessary. I think we should be working towards it.

Q71 Mr Holloway: I was not for a moment suggesting that the qualification for being Prime Minister was experience of a war. I was suggesting that we have a situation now where our political class self-selects at university, and the first thing they have ever run is the country as Prime Minister.

Commodore Jermy: The two things that are necessary at that level are leadership and the capacity to think strategically and to make good strategic judgments. You do not need to have a military background to do that. It is really a question of selection. It then follows that if whoever it is is not making the right decisions, we need to have a system that can remove them and we can replace them with people who will make the right decisions.

Q72 Chair: But do you believe that strategic thinking can be a matter of training as opposed to selection?

Commodore Jermy: I think it can be improved. It needs a good intellect. I learned through the writing of the book, and I am now a much better strategic thinker as a result. I think it can definitely be improved. It helps to have a strategic intellect to start off with, but yes you can absolutely do it. By providing structures to help frame the thinking and checks, it can be done. If you look at the great strategic thinkers, they are usually very literary. They have done a lot of thinking; they are artistic. Moltke the great was a very literary man. They are very widely read people. Churchill was the same, a writer. It can definitely be improved, I am certain.

Professor Cornish: Our conceit at the university of Exeter is that we can do precisely that, so I will also send you a syllabus for our new MA in applied security strategy. Sorry, this goes on.

Chair: You are endlessly persuasive, Professor Cornish; I must come and be an undergraduate.

Q73 Mr Brazier: Just to bring you back to a different area for one last question. Commodore, if we follow your risk-based approach, which I strongly support, is it not pretty likely that we would end up with a much greater maritime focus in our armed forces, including maritime reconnaissance as well as the Navy?

Chair: Could you answer that yes or no?

Commodore Jermy: Yes.

Chair: Members of the Committee will conduct a wash-up session on this in our meeting tomorrow. Thank you to all three of you. This has been a hugely enjoyable inquiry, partly because of the quality of the evidence we have received, so thank you very much indeed.

Wednesday 11 September 2013

Members present:

Mr James Arbuthnot (Chair)

Mr Julian Brazier
Thomas Docherty
Mr Dai Havard
Mr Adam Holloway

Mrs Madeleine Moon
Sir Bob Russell
Ms Gisela Stuart
Derek Twigg

Examination of Witnesses

Resolved, that the Committee should sit in private. The witnesses gave oral evidence. Asterisks denote that part of the oral evidence which, for security reasons, has not been reported at the request of the Cabinet Office and with the agreement of the Committee.

Witnesses: Sir Kim Darroch KCMG, National Security Adviser, and Julian Miller, Deputy National Security Adviser, Cabinet Office, gave evidence.

Q74 Chair: Sir Kim and Mr Miller, thank you very much indeed for coming in front of us. I know that this last couple of weeks has been a rather torrid time and we are grateful to you for coming on a private basis to give us some evidence, which we will then submit to you in the usual way for redaction in case there is anything that needs to be taken out of it before it is published. However, there will be negotiations and discussions between our staff and your staff about that.

This is the final evidence session before we have the Secretary of State in front of us to talk about the next defence and security review. The way that I would like to begin is to talk about the conclusions that the Joint Committee on the national security strategy has recently brought out and to ask you why some things have happened. First, that Committee says the National Security Committee appears to have focused on operational matters and short-term imperatives rather than strategically on long-term and blue-skies topics. Secondly, it is not convinced that the NSC is making the contribution to enabling the Government to work as a co-ordinated whole in the way it should; it questions how much extra value is derived from having the NSC, or whether it has become just another Cabinet committee. Thirdly, it says that major strategic policy changes appear to have been made by individual Government Departments without discussion at the National Security Council, such as Future Reserves 2020, or Army 2020, and that the NSC has not given a steer or considered what the security strategy implications would be. Fourthly, the National Security Council appears to have neglected central questions such as the eurozone crisis, Scottish independence and the US rebalancing to Asia-Pacific. Fifthly, there is no serious evidence yet seen of the Government pressing ahead with planning for the next security strategy or engaging outside people in that process.

So there is a sense, here, that the National Security Council appeared to be a good idea in prospect, but has turned out to be a bit of a disappointment. Why have other people—not you, perhaps—got that impression?

Sir Kim Darroch: Chairman, first, thank you for agreeing to my request to postpone my appearance

here by a week. I was hoping that by the time I appeared the situation on Syria would be clearer and simpler. If anything, it is more complicated and murkier. Nevertheless, it was kind of you to agree to that; I am really grateful.

*** As you noted at the outset, I have brought with me one of my deputy national security advisers, Julian Miller. He is known to some of you; he has a long MoD pedigree and has specific responsibility for defence issues in the National Security Secretariat. If I may, I will turn to him at some points.

I suppose that the short answer to why the JCNSS took that view is that, clearly, it was unconvinced by my evidence to it to the contrary. That is something of a failure on my part. Since then the Chairman of that Committee has been in to talk to the Prime Minister, to go through her concerns on the points in that report. On the back of that, because the Prime Minister is a great believer in the value of the National Security Council and the work that it does, he has agreed to appear before the Committee if we can arrange a date before the end of the year, so it will have the opportunity to put these criticisms to him direct.

I can go through all of them, though I may turn out to be speaking rather too long for the patience of the Committee. The gist of our position is that the National Security Council does a mixture of the operational and the strategic. We believe that we get the mix about right. Of course, you can always debate whether we have done and considered every strategic issue that we could have done; there are only so many hours in the week, so many meetings in the year, and you can't cover everything. On Future Reserves 2020, before I became national security adviser, they discussed the 2010 SDSR extensively. We would argue that these changes introduced by the MOD since then are within that framework and did not need to come back to the full NSC for extended policy discussion, since the basic framework had been agreed; but there was a lot of inter-departmental work and consideration of the changes you referred to.

On the issues that are neglected, it is not as though the Government are neglecting European defence issues. Before the European defence discussion at the December European Council, which is coming up in

11 September 2013 Sir Kim Darroch KCMG and Julian Miller

a few months, there may well be an NSC discussion of those. However, there is another committee that does European business, which has focused on those issues already.

On Scottish independence, there is a huge amount of work going on in Government, although not in the NSC so far.

Q75 Chair: Hold on. You said there is another committee, which implies that the National Security Council is just another committee. Is it? Should it be?

Sir Kim Darroch: No. I don't think it is just another committee. If you look at the way it is set up and its membership, it is unusual if not unique among committees, but there is a European Scrutiny Committee which does European business. So far the National Security Council has not done European issues. In the end the Prime Minister decides what the agenda should be. There are always two or three options for every slot. So far European defence has not made it, but in future it might do so. Is the NSC like every other committee? It is not. The Prime Minister's chairmanship and the nature of its membership makes it unique. European defence has been considered by senior Ministers in the appropriate forum.

Q76 Chair: We were not suggesting that European defence was the key issue. Maybe the eurozone crisis should have been.

Sir Kim Darroch: Again, there was an awful lot of discussion of the eurozone crisis, including in the full Cabinet. Those discussions were prepared in the European Affairs Committee. You could argue that the NSC should have done it, but the Prime Minister took the view that he wanted to use it for other important discussions.

Q77 Mr Havard: You have just picked up the point I was making. It was not European defence, it was whether the changes in the eurozone and with the euro were of such a strategic nature that they needed a response on that basis. You have given your answer. One of the tensions arising is a broader academic-type question about what happened to Cabinet government. Is this a substitute for the Cabinet? Some people would advocate one body for the foreign policy and defence thing, and a similar body for domestic policy. There is a lot of discussion. My question is whether it is dealing with what is seen as strategic, rather than departmentally described or hanging labels around?

Sir Kim Darroch: I think it is the right mix. You could always argue about whether the mix is right, but it is the mix of the operational and the strategic. If you are looking for strategic discussions, in the course of this year we have discussed the long-term nature of the UK's relationship with the emerging powers, all the big emerging economies around the world ***. This is a very strategic issue. I could go on.

Equally you have operational discussions. The National Security Council yesterday met to deal with two operational issues. As you all know, over the course of the previous 24 hours, a Russian-Syrian proposal had emerged for Syrian chemical weapons to be put under international supervision and potentially

taken out of the country or destroyed. *** That is the kind of thing that it does that I think the JCNS would have said was very operational. I think that there is strategy in there as well, but you have to respond to events. It was appropriate to use the NSC if the subject had happened within the previous 24 hours, but we do quite a lot of longer-term stuff as well. As I say, there are always two or three options for each NSC meeting as to the subjects that you cover, and you cannot do everything without it meeting every day.

One last point, if I may, on the connection with the Cabinet. When we did a special NSC in the holiday week, just before you were all pulled back for that debate in Parliament on the Thursday, I did an NSC(O) on the bank holiday Monday—I called in most of Whitehall to prepare it—and we had an NSC on the Wednesday. The NSC did not decide on the British posture on potential involvement in US military action; it prepared a recommendation that went to full Cabinet on Thursday—again, a special Cabinet called back. So, on issues of that importance, you have that sort of relationship. On other issues, the NSC will basically set the agenda, set the strategy or set the course. Sometimes things need to go up to full Cabinet; sometimes they do not.

Q78 Ms Stuart: May I take you back a couple of summers? This follows Dai Havard's question about the eurozone crisis. There was one summer when it looked possible that Greece would default and that we would have masses of British tourists on Greek islands and ATMs would not take their debit cards. The following summer, we had a similar situation in Cyprus. As I understand it, the Bank of England made provisions in Cyprus and at some stage we flew out bank notes. I do not think we did that in the case of Greece. Could you take us through the decision-making process in situations where British citizens would be stranded somewhere? What happened between Greece and Cyprus so that there was a different response? Who finally made the decision that we had to do something?

Sir Kim Darroch: I can answer that to an extent, but this is third hand because I wasn't the policy lead on this—it was being done elsewhere in Cabinet Office, led by my colleague Ivan Rogers, who does European and international economic policy. He has his own structure beneath him, which is a bit smaller than the National Security Secretariat.

I can tell you what was happening as I was watching it. ***

Q79 Ms Stuart: As I understand it, there was a lot of talking, understanding and taking of leads in the case of Greece, but by the time it got to Cyprus, the penny dropped that at some stage someone would have to do something, and we did. Where was that recognition that talking and taking note was not sufficient and that action was required? Was that within years?

Sir Kim Darroch: At no point were we heavily involved in the policy. The papers were being copied to us ***. So we were involved, but we were not leading it. I would not have thought that in the case

11 September 2013 Sir Kim Darroch KCMG and Julian Miller

of Greece we were just talking and there wasn't any action involved, but I am not sufficiently in touch with the detail of that policy process to be able to give you a considered and sensible answer. Rather than just risking it, I probably ought to write to you afterwards.

Q80 Chair: But the answer is not an NSC.

Sir Kim Darroch: It wasn't an NSC lead or a subject to be discussed in the NSC.

Q81 Sir Bob Russell: Sir Kim, in respect of European security, where does Turkey sit within the definition of Europe?

Sir Kim Darroch: It is not a member of the European Union, but it is an important player in a lot of the issues that we deal with. For example, when we are looking at Syria, they are extremely important in that context. In terms of Turkey's military potential, obviously they are a NATO member and they have one of the larger and more effective Armed Forces around Europe, so they are important and we talk to them a lot.

Q82 Sir Bob Russell: I ask because, obviously, greater Turkey is not in Europe. Then we have got northern Cyprus. And within greater Turkey, we have the Kurds. And then the Kurds are also in other countries. I wondered how Turkey, in its entirety, fits as a part of European security.

Sir Kim Darroch: We can talk about the Kurdish issue at great length and, of course, the Kurds overlap several national borders; you find Kurdish populations in Iraq, Turkey, Syria and there may be some in Lebanon—I cannot remember. And there is a separate issue about the Kurds.

In terms of whether we plug in the Turkish angle when we think about security issues in that region, yes we do because they are increasingly big political players, as anyone who watches Turkey will have seen from the amount of exposure and activity you get from Mr Erdogan's Government.

Q83 Sir Bob Russell: So they are more included than excluded.

Sir Kim Darroch: Yes, but we are talking very general concepts here.

Sir Bob Russell: I understand. Thank you.

Q84 Chair: Getting back to the difference between the NSC and other Cabinet Committees, to what extent do you drive things? To what extent do you feel more powerful as the National Security Council than, say, Government Departments? To what extent can you take charge?

Sir Kim Darroch: The National Security Council is a creation of this Government and it is still evolving, so it is not a fixed picture. We do not—and do not have the resources to—do the policy lead. That is what the Foreign Office is for. But we do a huge amount—

Q85 Chair: Should you have the resources?

Sir Kim Darroch: It is a different structure, and if you had a National Security Council that was creating and making a lot of policy, then you would be

disempowering the Department of State that is meant to do the policy.

Chair: Was it not envisaged at the beginning that the National Security Council would grow in power, rather than what seems to have happened: namely that its power has diminished, at least from the expectation?

Sir Kim Darroch: The terms of reference for the NSC state that they “consider matters relating to national security, foreign policy, defence, international relations and development, resilience, energy and resource security”. It is essentially a Committee that provides a forum in which you can get a coherent, cross-Government view about all of those issues and from which you can drive policy delivery, but the lead on policy delivery still sits with the individual Departments. The task of the NSC is to take things forward, whether it is to the Foreign Office or the Ministry of Defence or the Department for International Development.

Has it grown in power or has it diminished? I would be disappointed if you were right in suggesting that it has diminished. It seems to me that most civil servants and a lot of Ministers around the Government would say that the NSC is ever more central to the way we conduct international relations and policy and it is now inconceivable that any serious foreign policy choice or decision would not come through the NSC; partly because the Prime Minister attaches such personal investment to it and ensures that it meets every week, so you have 30-odd meetings a year to get through quite a big agenda. I think it is ever more central to the way the Government conducts its business. It is difficult for me, now, to imagine a Government that did not have a National Security Council pulling things together, tasking out and ensuring that National Security policy is conducted coherently and in a well co-ordinated way.

Q86 Mr Havard: May I go back to a question I half asked? There is an argument that you would then perhaps have something established of a similar nature for economic issues—that this wouldn't necessarily restrict itself. You are the National Security Committee. We have the national security strategy. You are built up as being a security adviser, but the actual Committee and the process you describe is more about co-ordination and liaison; it is not really saying, “Look, out of all these competing things people are saying here, the ones that are really important are this one and that one”. Everybody is making bids that they think are terribly important and everybody is “strategic”—they use that language. When they mean that they need a tactical response to something, they call it a strategy—[Laughter.] Well, they do—in here, anyway. You are supposed to filter these out and say, “Look, never mind that: this is the real position and the things that are really important.” Do you decide things like the construction of the agenda? That might be something to be done for national security—a grand strategy and all the rest—but maybe a similar model is needed for other areas, if all it will then be is a co-ordination process.

Sir Kim Darroch: That is an important question and a big one. There are three points. First, who decides

11 September 2013 Sir Kim Darroch KCMG and Julian Miller

the agenda? Ultimately the Prime Minister decides the agenda but he decides it every quarter on the basis of a piece of advice that I put to him. The process is simple. I chair a meeting of Permanent Secretaries every week. Once a quarter, I ask them what proposals they want to put on the national security agenda for the next three months. We get in a lot more proposals than we have space for. I take a view on what is sensible and what is the right mix of the operational and the strategic. I put that advice to the Prime Minister, and he takes the decision and that agenda is then set.

It will change. We had an extra National Security Council in the last week of August because of the Syria crisis. Sometimes stuff happens and you move something back down the agenda and you bring something else forward, so it does shift around a bit. Essentially we decide at the centre. Secondly, someone just said—it was you or the Chairman—that we just did a bit of co-ordination. I don't want to give the impression that we don't do any policy at all. If you have conflicting views among Departments and you bring them to the National Security Council to try to get a co-ordinated, coherent Government view, it is no secret that I will put a note to the Prime Minister saying, "This is where I think the right balance of policy lies." He may agree with it. He may not agree with it. But he will use that as his brief for the meeting. So we have some policy capability.

Going back to before I joined—Julian can tell you about it—the SDSR was largely written out of the National Security Secretariat. So we do a bit, but it is not primarily our role to create policy across the breadth of the foreign policy spectrum. That answers two out of your three questions. There was another one at the end.

Q87 Mr Havard: ***

Sir Kim Darroch: Yes, that is a fair way of putting it. It is why we try to strike a balance.

Q88 Mr Havard: What do you draw on to do that, then? You don't have very many people.

Sir Kim Darroch: What I draw on in terms of how we draw up the agenda is, as I said, I take the views of the permanent secretaries who sit around the group that I chair, and put advice to the PM. In terms of people—I don't want to imply that I have no people at all. I have 200 and a budget of £19 million.

Q89 Mr Havard: And shrinking?

Sir Kim Darroch: Yes. But we live in austere times. We have to take our share of the hit. That gives me enough to do the sort of occasional policy generation and initiative work that is required of us sometimes. The other thing I would say is that when you get a crisis, we have a surge capacity. *** When we did the SDSR, Julian, you had people drawn in from other places—

Julian Miller: We did.

Sir Kim Darroch: So we have a surge capacity when we need it.

I now remember your last question, which was whether there should be an economic element. I don't want to give the impression that we never touch

economics, because national prosperity is part of the national security remit, and so we do. When we have a discussion, which we have at least once a year, on our relations with the emerging powers, we look at our economic and trade performance in relation to these big economies. We think about how we are doing. If we are doing badly and being way out-performed by, say, France or Germany, then the Prime Minister sets us the task of doing better and we try to find out why we are doing badly. So it is not just about security issues. Given the constraints of time, we can't spend as much time on economic issues as we want. If there is another Committee over there doing European policy, the Prime Minister is reluctant to try to pull that into the NSC as well, although it is his decision in the end.

Chair: I will call Gisela Stuart, and then Julian is going to ask about Libya.

Q90 Ms Stuart: May I just drill down a little bit more on your policy capabilities and the Prime Minister setting the agenda? Let's for the sake of argument say that the Prime Minister looks at this and, from your point of view, you think that nobody is really taking cyber-security sufficiently seriously; nobody is looking at resilience after a first hit. What would be the process of your gently suggesting to No. 10 and the Prime Minister that the way they have set the agenda has not got quite the right priorities, and that there might be something else he might like to look at in greater depth?

Sir Kim Darroch: He is not inaccessible. His office is a few doors along from mine. In the past week and a half—

Q91 Ms Stuart: You are physically in No. 10.

Sir Kim Darroch: No, *** in the Cabinet Office. My office is next to the Cabinet Secretary's office. It is closer in distance than when I worked at No. 10 for a previous Prime Minister.

Secondly, he is very accessible and interested in foreign policy, so it is never a problem to get five minutes when you need to talk stuff through. In fact, I have probably spent hours in his office over the past couple of weeks as the Syria crisis has developed.

Thirdly, I read with great interest some of the evidence you took from people such as Lord Hennessy and Professor Cornish. It is fascinating and valuable stuff; I don't agree with all of it, of course. Lord Hennessy said that civil servants now find it difficult to tell truth unto power. I don't agree with that. ***

Chair: Don't leap over the word "resilience" that Gisela just used, because you are going to come back to it.

Q92 Ms Stuart: I can repeat this because the meeting was on record and Julian Brazier was there as well. John Kerr, whom we all love and admire, put forward the hypothesis that he was the last permanent secretary who understood that you were only in the room with other Ministers. You were with the Secretary of State when he disagreed, and you read him the riot act of saying "You got this wrong", and then you withdrew. He put forward the notion that he was probably part of the last generation of civil

11 September 2013 Sir Kim Darroch KCMG and Julian Miller

servants who without fear or favour or loss of dignity would say, "Prime Minister"—or Secretary of State—"you have got this wrong." In the succeeding 15 years you have had a whole culture of people wishing to please their masters.

Mr Holloway: Iraq and Afghanistan.

Ms Stuart: Indeed. They were saying, "It's fine; it's all going well; it's okay." There was a stream of well-meaning people who presented the truth as they thought their masters wished to see it. Is that still happening? This is where Hennessy comes in. Or has there been a change of civil servant-speak to Ministers?

Sir Kim Darroch: I bow to no one in my admiration of Lord Kerr. He was a mentor to a whole generation of us in the Foreign Office, a great ambassador in Brussels and in Washington, and a great permanent secretary. But I don't think the culture changed when he left. I say again that I see senior civil servants disagreeing with Ministers and saying in not many more words, "You have got this wrong," all the time, every day. I was not involved in Iraq and Afghanistan, so I cannot speak on those, but in the areas I have been involved in—it was European policy, as you know, through the first decade, and I have been National Security Adviser since then—there has been a great deal of open debate, dissent and disagreement.

Chair: In considering this issue, you might like to read the evidence that we took yesterday from the permanent secretary at the Ministry of Defence in relation to one issue: whether he thought the idea of moving towards a GoCo was good or bad. I will give you a bit of homework.

Q93 Mr Brazier: Sir Kim, the Libya crisis is a major worked example which we have been through, so to speak—to say completed would be too optimistic. I gather that, quite rightly, there was an exercise on lessons learnt afterwards. Has that resulted in any particular structural or procedural changes, or not?

Sir Kim Darroch: Not particularly. We have discussed Libya a couple of times in the National Security Council this year, and I have been myself, three or four times, this year, because of the way the situation there was deteriorating. Again, this is before I took over the job, but I don't think we have drawn lessons or made any dramatic changes to the way we handle things as a result of that exercise. Is that right?

Julian Miller: I think that is essentially right. One change that was recommended in the lessons learnt study and that has been implemented is some improvement in the way that a situation is reported into the NSC on a day-by-day basis during a crisis, so there is a better fusion of the intelligence and military inputs than we experienced during the Libya crisis. That is a bit of sharpening of process.

Q94 Mr Brazier: Thank you. How did the Libya sub-committee of the NSC sit alongside COBR? Did it subsume it for the duration?

Sir Kim Darroch: It was before my time.

Julian Miller: My recollection is that it started off very briefly in COBR, when the focus was on the evacuation of UK nationals. As the crisis developed it

then very soon switched across to being the NSC-Libya, which met at ministerial level, as we know, 60-odd times over the duration of the crisis. So it met in COBR mostly—always, I think—but was clearly a policy committee, chaired by the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary or the Deputy Prime Minister, and not the crisis management committee that COBR normally provides.

Q95 Mr Brazier: I am sorry—I am being stupid but I am not sure I quite understand that. When you say it met in COBR, are you talking about the physical location?

Julian Miller: Yes.

Mr Brazier: I do understand, then.

Sir Kim Darroch: Just to add to that, there are COBR meetings which are called, for example, if a British hostage is taken overseas; the Prime Minister or the Foreign Secretary often chairs those, and they consist of all the experts from around Whitehall pulled in quickly—experts in hostage negotiation or whatever. That is what you often see in the newspapers. ***

Q96 Chair: ***

Sir Kim Darroch: ***

Q97 Mr Brazier: May I move on, as we are talking about specific communication facilities, to one aspect of resilience? I think it is fair to say that the Committee was quite impressed with its visit to NMIC, the National Maritime Information Centre, which certainly seemed to me to be an extraordinary example. It brings together 11 or 12 different feeds of data on maritime matters. Why has NMIC been floated off from reporting up to the Cabinet Office? We are an island, after all, so one would think that maritime matters are quite important for resilience, but NMIC seems to have disappeared down to the Home Office.

Julian Miller: I can give you a slightly speculative answer, but I cannot give you a completely authoritative one. The Home Office is responsible for national security and border security. Those issues often involve maritime aspects, so they have a regular interest in the information synthesised by NMIC. On a day-to-day basis, it seems natural that they should be the Department that takes a leading interest in that. I have no doubt that if there was a crisis that involved the nation at a very high level, that information could be channelled into the NSC or COBR as appropriate.

Q98 Mr Brazier: And the next national security strategy will mention that we are an island? The first draft—[*Interruption.*]

This last question is not, strictly speaking, relevant, but it is hard to see to whom it is directly relevant. A study of what went wrong in 2006 has come up again and again. It was central to the breakfast meeting which Gisela mentioned. It was pretty clear that a large part of it came back to four or five key posts in government all changing over within a week or two. Is there anybody responsible for ensuring that we don't suddenly find a lot of key people with related jobs all changing over at the same moment? We discussed this yesterday with the permanent under-secretary, and

11 September 2013 Sir Kim Darroch KCMG and Julian Miller

there is nothing in MOD. Is anyone anywhere in the NSC responsible?

Sir Kim Darroch: The short answer is that no one in the NSC has that specific responsibility. Personally, I have quiet a lot of sympathy with the underlying point about the danger of too rapid a churn of civil servants or indeed military personnel. As a lifelong Foreign Office man—although I have not worked in the Foreign Office building for over a decade—I think that in the last 10 years or so, the Foreign Office got into a habit of churning its top and middle level posts rather too quickly. People were only spending a couple of years in jobs where you should never underestimate the value of experience, expertise and particularly regional experience and expertise.

Chair: That is a slightly different point.

Sir Kim Darroch: It is a slightly different point. My personal view is that we had been getting it wrong. I think both the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary take that view. The Prime Minister has been pushing for people to stay in jobs longer. Where he has direct control, he keeps them for longer. The Foreign Office has to clear all senior ambassador appointments with him, and he occasionally responds that, given the situation in country X, the ambassador needs to stay longer. The tide is changing. It still has a way to go. There is a move within Government to slow down the churn and keep people in key posts for longer. It is something that I encourage. If I ever see someone in what I think is a very important post moving too quickly, then I tell the Prime Minister to see if he can intervene.

Q99 Chair: As I said, that is a slightly different point. There is an issue of how short a time people are in post. There is an issue as to whether four, five or six people change contemporaneously.

Sir Kim Darroch: There is. Speaking for my own Department, the theory is that this should never happen. You should never, for example, change the No. 1 and the No. 2 in a post at the same time. Usually we kept to that rule. Sometimes circumstances overtake you, but in the Foreign Office we had a rule that you would always try to keep some stability in a post. For example, when I left Brussels and in theory my No. 2 was leaving at the same time, he then stayed on for nine months to ensure that didn't happen.

Q100 Mr Brazier: But only officials can do this, because nobody else is going to tell—Ministers cannot be expected to. The key thing that went wrong there was that the Secretary of State changed at the same moment—literally on the same night—as the Chief of the Defence Staff. Several other people had to be changed over at once. Somebody in the permanent staff needs to ensure that if there is political reshuffle, any planned changes of officials are put on temporary hold.

Sir Kim Darroch: Again, there are no rules laid down on this, but there is an understanding that that should happen, if it is possible. If someone's resignation or retirement is not already pre-scheduled, then the Permanent Secretary does try to make that happen.

Chair: I think we have covered that.

Q101 Mr Holloway: I know you do not make policy, but just to give us an idea: how far down do you get involved? For example, would you ever look at radicalisation in prisons or the long-term effects of immigration or things of that order, or is it much more current and pressing things?

Sir Kim Darroch: The way we organise the NSC or the National Security Secretariat, I tend, given my background, to concentrate on the foreign policy agenda. I have three deputy national security advisers, one of whom, Oliver Robbins, is the lead on counter-terrorism, and he certainly does spend quite a lot of time on the radicalisation agenda. For example, he is effectively the secretary of the group the Prime Minister set up on radicalisation after the Woolwich bombing, which met again this week. So, yes we do that within the NSS, and Oliver Robbins is the man who does it. Do I personally do very much work on it? I don't, I'm afraid. I wish I could spend more time on it.

Q102 Mr Holloway: I didn't mean that specific subject, but those sorts of issues.

Sir Kim Darroch: Yes, we do. How much do we drive policy? It is a bit like with the foreign policy agenda—if there is a need for policy to be brought together or to be driven or for a process to be driven, we do that. The policy lead lies with the Home Office, but we get quite involved.

Q103 Mrs Moon: In terms of your discussion about civil service roles and their capacity to speak truth unto power, perhaps you would like to read the views of Chief of Defence Matériel, who thinks that public sector workers are not able to do that because they are too dependent on promotion, and therefore you need people in the private sector who can do it. You might wish to have a look at that.

Sir Kim Darroch: I will.

Q104 Mrs Moon: It is not a view I happen to agree with. I am unclear about how the national security strategy relates to the Strategic Defence Security Review. Can you say a bit about that? Do you play any role in preparing it? If you see a cut in a provision that you think might lead to a loss of capability that might impact on national security, are you able to say, "No, no, we mustn't do that"? Can you talk a bit about your role in that?

Sir Kim Darroch: On how the National Security Strategy and the SDSR fit together, to put it very crudely, the National Security Strategy, which should precede the SDSR, sets the strategic context—the risks and the threats that are out there. The SDSR is about the ways and the means of responding to it. To put it very crudely and simply, that is the way it works.

How are we preparing the next one, if that is the next part of your question? There is a choice to be made about whether you have a long lead-in to the 2015 NSS and SDSR, or whether the focus is on the implementation of the last one with less focus on the next one. We put that question to the Prime Minister, and he wants the focus to be on implementing the 2010 NSS and SDSR. Although he wants us to

 11 September 2013 Sir Kim Darroch KCMG and Julian Miller

prepare for the next one, he does not want that to be the predominant area of work at this stage. So we are doing some work to prepare for it, which will increase in intensity next year, but I cannot pretend to you that there is a lot of preparation already under way for the 2015 SDSR and NSS. It would be dishonest of me to suggest that. There is work going on in the main Government Departments that would be concerned. They are all doing their own preparatory thinking, but we are not at the stage yet of starting to produce first drafts or workshops. That will come next year.

Q105 Mrs Moon: Things seem always to be rolling at the same time, and I am not clear how they impact on each other—I am a bear of very little brain. You have the national security strategy, which is moving all the time; you have the comprehensive spending review; and you have the SDSR. Which has primacy? Which says, “This is the most important, therefore you cannot do that in the comprehensive spending review,” or, “We have got to cut our budget by so much, so you will have to cut our national security strategy”? What has primacy? What leads?

Sir Kim Darroch: Julian can give you an answer in a minute. I was not around for the 2010 exercise, and there may be some lessons from 2010, which Julian was a big part of, that he can draw on. But you have put your finger on something about which it is very difficult, frankly, to give you a clear and satisfactory answer, because you cannot sensibly work out a strategy, and certainly not the ways and means of delivering that strategy—the SDSR—without a clear picture of the resources. There is no point in producing an SDSR without the resources to back up the things you need to do. That is why, in a sense, it is difficult to do too much anticipatory, preparatory work at this stage, because an awful lot rests on the next funding decisions in the 2015 spending review. There is a limit to how much you can do now. I would say that you need to have in your mind an idea of what is funded and where the funds are before you take final decisions on either your strategy or, particularly, the SDSR.

There is a certain minimum around defence of the realm and the protection of Britain’s clear and vital national interest that you have to fund if you are going to be a serious Government. Then there are the optional things about your expeditionary capacity and suchlike, which you do beyond that. You need to know what the funds are and how much you can finance before you take decisions about what you are going to do. That is a very long-winded way of saying—I will let Julian add to it—that you have got to have some clarity on the funding picture before you attempt at least to draft the SDSR, so you can work out the threats and risks out there in the NSS in parallel with your funding debate. All that makes 2015 dependent on—if I may say so, it has to be post-election and it has to be dependent on the Government of the time’s decisions on resources. Julian, you may have something on 2010.

Julian Miller: I have not much to add—the way you described it is exactly right. The three elements had to be developed together so that there was an interaction between the work of the national security strategy, the

SDSR and the CSR. For example, there was a lot of speculation at the beginning of the process about the size of the potential cut in the defence budget, and there was some surprise at the end of the process that it was, perhaps, rather less than some people speculated that it might be. There had been an interchange between the CSR and the options that were developed in the SDSR to consider, if the defence budget were cut further, whether the consequences of that would be acceptable. The balance has to be struck, which is always difficult for Governments: you cannot do one very satisfactorily without considering the other. So the three elements moved forward together and came to a conclusion pretty much at the same point.

Q106 Mrs Moon: I have two questions, to follow up very quickly. First—this follows from Julian’s question—do you think that enough attention was paid to the fact that we are a maritime nation? Was that factored into all three? Was it given enough prominence?

Secondly, given that hindsight is a wonderful thing, do you think we got the balance right?

Julian Miller: I think that the maritime aspect was very thoroughly recognised in the SDSR and in the national security strategy. The contextual bit of the national security strategy to which Kim has referred gave some weight to our role as a trading nation—a nation that needs good interconnections around the world. The maritime element of that is important. Obviously, the deterrent is an aspect of our maritime power that was dealt with and clear decisions were taken there, too. The decisions on the carriers, although controversial, lead to the acquisition by this country of a very major maritime capability in a few years’ time. My sense was that yes, it was adequately taken into account.

Obviously, there was always advocacy by each of the branches of the Armed Forces and by proponents outside Government, and Ministers have to weigh that up. It seemed to me at the time that that was done rationally and reasonably.

On your second question, which I am afraid I have slightly lost—

Mrs Moon: Hindsight is a wonderful thing—

Julian Miller: Hindsight is a wonderful thing—was it done right? It was done reasonably well. Obviously, there was an adjustment a year later, when we worked through the three-month exercise, looking at the cost pressures on the equipment programme and at the simultaneous decision, which Mr Brazier was closely involved with, on the Reserves and the size of the regular Army. That was a significant adjustment after the event. With that proviso, it was carried out in a rational way, given that it is always difficult to balance the competing claims.

Q107 Mrs Moon: Would you say that it was in the interest of our national security to get rid of our maritime surveillance capability, given all that you have said about the importance of our nuclear deterrent and our trading nation status?

Julian Miller: It was considered very carefully and the arguments were weighed up as to how important

11 September 2013 Sir Kim Darroch KCMG and Julian Miller

it was to have that capability to protect the deployment of the nuclear submarines, for example. It was a question, as ever in such cases, of competing priorities. In the end, that was where the judgment was taken. I can only really say that it was fully exposed, the issues were weighed up and that was the conclusion that was reached.

Q108 Thomas Docherty: I don't want to rehearse the arguments about 2010—we are going forward. In 2010, the running order in October was Monday NSS, Tuesday SDSR, Wednesday CSR. Some people suggest that that is not the way it should be done. Do you think that that is the correct running order for the next one, whether it be 2015 or 2016? In fact, it might take both years. Not only what is the right order, but what is the right gap between the three reviews?

Sir Kim Darroch: You can argue it any way. This is a personal opinion and it will depend on the Government of the day. First, I would not do it over three consecutive days, if that is how it was. Secondly, the first thing that should appear is the national security strategy, because that sets the strategy context and identifies the threats and risks. That is the foundation upon which everything else should be run. You have to be clear about the funding base, so I would say that the CSR should come next, because then you are clear what resources are available to meet the threats, risks and opportunities. From that, you work on the next SDSR. First, you understand what you need to deliver the basics of our fundamental national security—protect the homeland and so on—and then you look at how much is left for the additions. That is a personal view.

Q109 Thomas Docherty: In terms of the gap, if it is not over one, two and three days, what kind of gap should there be between the three of them?

Sir Kim Darroch: This is a bit of a bureaucrat's answer, but you can be working on the NSS well before 2015. It can then be produced relatively quickly—unless a new Government comes in and wants to change it fundamentally—because we ought to have an analytical base, and that is not dependent on political choice or whatever; it is what we think the strategic context is. The spending review is basically going to be run by the Treasury in the normal way, and they can do it quite quickly, but it usually takes a few months. We can do a certain amount of work on the SDSR in advance, and we will, but I think that that should necessarily follow a little time after the spending review comes out. If you know where you are going from the outset, or if the Government knows the answer on the spending review before it goes through the process, maybe you can do a certain amount. But if you have to wait until the figures are announced and you know the budgets for the Ministry of Defence and the Foreign Office, and what the aid budget is, you would maybe need a little while. That would be my take.

Thomas Docherty: That's helpful. Thank you.

Q110 Chair: And you would expect all this to happen very shortly after the next general election?

Sir Kim Darroch: I think it should. I think that, whatever the political context, it should be a priority for the next Government.

Q111 Thomas Docherty: The problem with that is that I am guessing it is based on the assumption that the Opposition are being allowed into the building before the general election.

Chair: Which would be the normal case.

Thomas Docherty: Perhaps in previous times. If the Secretary of State is not willing to provide—this is a private meeting; it is not compulsory to attend—or continues not to play with the Opposition, you cannot get a lot of this done before the general election.

Sir Kim Darroch: It is a matter for the Cabinet Secretary to tell you the precise process, but I have been involved in the past and normally what happens, at least for senior officials, is that you get a letter round from the Cabinet Secretary empowering or allowing permanent secretaries to talk to Opposition shadow Cabinet Ministers about the range of challenges that they might face if they were in Government in a few months' time. That is a standard process, as you said, Chairman, which has happened, as far as I know, with all previous Governments. Involving the Secretary of State is a different question. As a civil servant, I know I have been involved in those contacts in the past.

Q112 Chair: But with something as normally bipartisan and as essential to the national security as the formulation of a national security strategy, would you not agree that the longer that process, the better?

Sir Kim Darroch: Within reason. I should have said—sorry, there is one further thought I should add on the last point—that the Leader of the Opposition has attended a National Security Council. He has also been in perhaps half a dozen times for briefings, on privy council terms, about issues that are before the National Security Council—most recently on Syria—so there is a procedure that has happened already in terms of talking to him and the shadow Foreign Secretary about national security issues.

Chair: It didn't seem to do the trick.

Mr Holloway: It did.

Sir Kim Darroch: To answer your question, Chairman, yes, we need to do it properly. I do not think we should be taking years, but we need to do it properly.

Q114 Chair: You generally accept that first we need to assess the threat out there and then we need to work out the extent to which we are able to afford to deal with that threat.

Sir Kim Darroch: You have to be able to afford it if you are serious about dealing with the direct threats to our national security and to homeland security. What I meant by the optional bit is how much resources you have to put into, for example, the kind of expeditionary capacity that the last SDSR encouraged our Armed Forces to develop. How much do you want to be involved in future Syrias and Afghanistans or whatever?

Q115 Chair: The next SDSR will deal that, will it?

11 September 2013 Sir Kim Darroch KCMG and Julian Miller

Sir Kim Darroch: It will have to address it.

Q116 Mr Havard: One of the criticisms that we as a Committee made about the last one was that what seemed to be missing was any clarity about the foreign policy underpinning for what appeared to be an exercise about matériel and whether you could afford it on the day, and alongside it came a security strategy. What will happen next time? Where is that underpinning of your intention?

Sir Kim Darroch: There is no doubt that we would have liked more time—in a perfect world—to have done the last SDSR. I was not involved in it. Given that the Government embarked on it with quite a restrictive timetable, it was, I thought, a good piece of work in the time available. We hope to have a better prepared basis for it next time and more time to prepare for it.

Q117 Mr Holloway: The point is often made about lack of coherence. We often do not have a long-term view of where we want to be. Take the Middle East and the extraordinary disparities in our policies towards different countries. It does not feel very joined up. Who, if anyone, is responsible for that sort of thinking?

Sir Kim Darroch: The Foreign Office has the policy lead on the Middle East. They have a very good Middle East division that would be responsible for it. They also have a planning staff who think more strategically—to overuse that word—and conceptually. I am not sure I accept that there is not enough strategic thinking going on. At any one time, I have half a dozen pieces of paper in my in-tray that are headed “strategy”. Some of them are very good; some, you might say, are in need of further work. There is a lot of strategy around in Government.

The problem with strategy is that stuff happens. One of your own witnesses said something about the difficulty of seeing into the future and plotting a strategy that is relevant even six months after you have written it. It is a difficult business, but there is no lack of effort or attention going into it. I have people in my own National Security Secretariat who are, at least in terms of acquiring the qualifications, experts in strategy, who have done the LSE masters course in strategy and that kind of thing. So there is no lack of expertise around; it is just that strategies have to deal with stuff that changes—there is the phrase, “no military plan survives the first shot of battle”. If you look, for example, at what has happened just in the last few weeks on Syria, from the first phone call from the American President on whether we would participate in military action and those twists and turns, I promise you that, at every stage of that, we have had in our minds a concept of exit strategies and where we want to be and whatever, but stuff all changes.

Q118 Mr Holloway: But that was outrage, not strategy. That was born not out of strategy, but out of outrage and the immediate feeling that we must do something now. That was not out of any overarching, long-term thinking, was it?

Sir Kim Darroch: There is the long-term thinking about not allowing proliferation of and use of chemical weapons that underpinned the whole American, British and French approach on this.

Q119 Chair: This all comes back to the point that we were making right at the beginning about reacting to events rather than forging a way in the world, deciding what our security strategy should be over the longer term and working out, therefore, the ends, and how we achieve those; in other words, how we achieve the ways, and what the means—namely, the resources—are.

Sir Kim Darroch: You get events—you are right—and we have demands on us and requests from allies and we have to react to that. But going back to the national security strategy and the SDSR, those are attempts, surely, both to set a strategic concept for the UK and for the Government and to determine what ways and means we have to deliver.

Chair: Everybody wants to come in, but Derek Twigg has been very disciplined and he is entitled to come in.

Q120 Derek Twigg: I want to clarify some of the things you said in your answers to Mrs Moon and then Mr Docherty. I think you said—correct me if I am wrong—that, when asked about developing the national security strategy, the Prime Minister said that that was not a priority at the moment. I think you then went on to justify that by saying that we are on the run up to an election and we are not sure what funds will be available. Then in a later answer—I think to Mr Docherty—when you were asked in which order they should go in, you said that the strategy should come first and then the money. So I wondered which it is, really.

It seems obvious to me that you should have a national security strategy, which needs to be ongoing and developed and as it is about looking at the possible threats and how we deal with those, I cannot possibly see how that would change considerably due to a change in Government. Could you therefore clarify what you mean?

Sir Kim Darroch: If I gave the impression that the Prime Minister does not wish to do anything about the next security strategy—

Derek Twigg: I did not say that. Let us take the words carefully. I said that you said—

Sir Kim Darroch: His priority at the moment, given that there are not unlimited resources, is implementation of the 2010 SDSR. But he does want us to start preparing for the next national security strategy. In particular, there is a thing called the national risk register, which we revise every two years. The next revision comes up in 2014 and that in turn informs the next NSS, because it is an analysis of the various risks that the UK faces: all the way from terrorism to another of those volcanic clouds that affects all air transport; a whole range of risks are analysed there.

He wants that work to continue. He wants us to start thinking about how we will do outreach next year: how we will involve the academic community and Parliament and how we will develop the next NSS. So it is not like we are doing nothing, but he just says

11 September 2013 Sir Kim Darroch KCMG and Julian Miller

that he does not want all the attention on the next one and implementation of the last one to be put on the back burner.

Q121 Derek Twigg: From what you are saying, there is not much attention on the future one, so could you tell us at what point serious, significant work will start on the strategy? Will it be in the next six months, or the next year?

Sir Kim Darroch: There is preparatory work in Departments now on scope and structure and process and timing options for external engagement, and I think that next year we will start doing those things, rather than just thinking about them. What we will probably do is take our proposals on all of those things to a meeting of the NSC—or we may do it by writing around—and then when we get a green light, we will take it forward next year.

Q122 Chair: When?

Sir Kim Darroch: I would expect to do this in the early part of 2014, which gives us a full year and a half to work through things, given that we will not be writing the SDSR until 2015. We will do a certain amount of preparatory writing, but the main text will have to be done in 2015.

Q123 Derek Twigg: Just to be clear on the SDSR and its relationship with the strategy, you will start doing it next year, and the SDSR will follow from that.

Sir Kim Darroch: It all depends on Ministers agreeing to the timetable on the work programme that we put to them.

Derek Twigg: So you have not got a timetable?

Sir Kim Darroch: I have in my own head a timetable—

Derek Twigg: So there is no timetable?

Sir Kim Darroch: We have said to the Prime Minister, “This is what we will do this year in terms of preparation. We will put to you some firm proposals around the end of the year and take it forward next year.” He is content with that, and he is content for that work to be going ahead. We have not agreed with him a timetable.

Q124 Derek Twigg: Is there a timetable or not?

Sir Kim Darroch: At the moment, there is not a timetable, but there will be—

Q125 Derek Twigg: When will that timetable be published?

Sir Kim Darroch: We will put a proposition to him at the end of the year. When he has decided that, if he agrees it, then we will move ahead next year.

Q126 Derek Twigg: Right. So there is no timetable. That will come in at some point at the end of this year or early next year.

Sir Kim Darroch: There is no precise timetable. We know that we have to publish an SDSR and an NSS in 2015, and we know that next year we have to do this risk assessment. Those, in terms of the broad timetable, are fixed, but how we work up to that is not fixed.

Q127 Derek Twigg: Can I move on to something else? You keep saying that stuff happens, and you are absolutely right that stuff does happen, whether it is in security or in Government generally. I do not suppose it was beyond the scope of imagination that there was a chance that the Syrians might use chemical weapons. I assume that some work had been done on the potential threat of that, and the strategy had been put in place to deal with that. Is that correct?

Sir Kim Darroch: Certainly, work had been done on potential responses were the Syrians to use chemical weapons.

Q128 Derek Twigg: So we had a strategy to deal with that?

Sir Kim Darroch: Whether it is called a strategy or a policy, I am not sure, but there was certainly work done on that.

Q129 Derek Twigg: So we had no strategy for it, then?

Sir Kim Darroch: I wouldn't say we had no strategy. We did have some work, whether you call it a policy or a strategy. We had analysed the extent to which we, the UK, would be able to act in the event that the Syrians used chemical weapons, and we believed a response was possible. We consulted the military about what was possible, and we consulted Parliament's thought about this. The conclusion we reached was that were there to be wide-scale use of chemical weapons, such as the kind of thing we have seen, it would be right for there to be some response—potentially a military response—but this could not be done by the UK alone or even just with France; it would need to be led by the Americans because of capability issues. This stuff was thought about beforehand, which is why we were able to move comparatively quickly when the phone call came through from the President.

Q130 Derek Twigg: Coming back to the issue about the security strategy and the point you made about resources, you did qualify it by saying clearly that if we had to deal with a really urgent threat, we would have to find the money, which is always the case. In terms of setting the strategy out, I assume there are certain basics that we would take as read, for instance that we would have to find money to fund the nuclear deterrent. I am trying to find out the kind of balance between the core security strategy that will probably stay the same until whenever—unless some Government changed their policy massively from that of a previous Government—and future potential threats. Could you describe to me how that work is done via the National Security Council and in co-ordination with Government Departments?

To give you a further example, I think everyone accepts now the approach, whether in Iraq or Afghanistan, of whole-Government involvement. It was not just the kinetic response; it was things such as development and investment, and obviously the Foreign Office in relation to diplomacy and so on. How will you look at these things? I would be interested to understand the mechanics as part of the process.

11 September 2013 Sir Kim Darroch KCMG and Julian Miller

Sir Kim Darroch: The mechanics of?

Derek Twigg: Of how that fits into the development of the security strategy.

Sir Kim Darroch: Of Afghanistan? You mean our military—

Q131 Derek Twigg: I am saying that there are certain things that are taken as read and that you will have to take as a matter of course, such as the nuclear deterrent. But there are other things in terms of lessons that we have learned from what has happened in Iraq and Afghanistan, and possibly Libya, but also future potential threats and how we fit in with that. How does the process work? Is there a template for going through this, or is it something where someone pitches in their idea from a Government Department or defence?

Sir Kim Darroch: Since Julian dealt with the last one, he can tell us something about how we did it last time. The way the process will work next time is still to be decided. The decision has not been taken, but I suspect that the Cabinet Office will again be holding the pen on the NSS and the SDSR, and so we will need some surge capacity to cope with the extra drafting requirements. We will go through a series of Whitehall meetings with all the key Departments, where we will test the judgments and the conclusions reached in these documents against the expertise that others bring to the table and the lessons of Afghanistan, Syria and Libya, and whatever should feed into that. It is a process. It will go like that and then eventually go to the National Security Council for Ministers to take a view, probably several times. I am sure that that is not a satisfactory answer, so I shall let Julian describe how we did it last time.

Julian Miller: I don't think that there is a template in any particular form. A mixture of issues were handled in the last exercise. For example, the overall management of the exercise was run from the Cabinet Office with a specially created team. It drew on the National Security Risk Assessment which Kim mentioned. To take a specific example, the importance of cyber was highlighted and it was therefore possible for the team in the Cabinet Office to come up with propositions about what we might do to improve our cyber capability. Those were then debated with Departments and their costs worked through as part of the CSR, coming up with the decisions which were announced in the SDSR about the increased investment in cyber capacity.

At the same time the Ministry of Defence, as it entered the spending review, was looking at the things it wanted to do, things it thought would be improvements to our forces and how those might be funded by spending less on other capabilities. It was looking at how it would respond if it was asked to live with a smaller budget, coming up with a range of options for changing the contents of the defence programme to align with a changing resource level. All of those elements were produced, some centrally and some by Departments, and then they were centrally synthesised into the documents which were published in 2010.

Q132 Derek Twigg: May I ask a final question? Were you happy with the way in which the defence decision on 2020 reserves was taken?

Sir Kim Darroch: It did not come to the NSC. Am I happy that it did not come to the NSC? Yes, I think it was the right decision that the NSC should do other business. That fell within the context of the SDSR, which had been exhaustively discussed at the NSC before I joined it.

Q133 Derek Twigg: You don't think that had an impact on the security strategy?

Sir Kim Darroch: I think that it was consistent with the conclusions the Government had reached, that were embodied in the SDSR and were taken forward.

Q134 Ms Stuart: I am still trying to work it out. The great military strategist Mike Tyson said that you have a plan and then someone punches you in the face. For me that is one of the book-ends, and the other is Britain's role in the world. Somewhere in there we require a framework which allows you to marry together the need to respond to an immediate crisis, but also to have some lodestar for where you think you are. It may well be that we agree with Putin's spokesman who said that we are a small island.

Sir Kim Darroch: Did you see the Prime Minister's response to that?

Q135 Ms Stuart: Yes, on YouTube. It is set to "Land of Hope and Glory", and it's very good. But if you go to the Foreign Office, nowhere is there a clear statement about what we think our role in the world is and what that includes. We could start by saying that we are a member of the P5 with veto rights and we are a nuclear power, and with that come certain responsibilities. That could have been the framework within which we set the Syria debate, but we didn't. I would have thought that that is something which ought to be falling into your pigeonhole: straddling the big strategy with the ability to respond to having just been punched in the face. Or is it not?

Sir Kim Darroch: I think it is. If you are talking about concepts and knowing where we are going, prior to 2010 we did not have a national security strategy, and it has now developed. Did we have a risk assessment prior to 2010?

Julian Miller: We had a national security strategy prior to 2010, but it was at a much higher level of generality.

Sir Kim Darroch: Okay. So, since then, you have the National Security Council, the strategy and the SDSR—we have had 12 previous defence reviews—so life isn't too bleak. But I would say that the framework is much clearer, more solid and better than it has ever been.

In terms of the UK's place in the world, as an EU member, a NATO member, P5, and perhaps the only country now to have reached 0.7% of GDP in terms of international development aid—I think we have the world's fourth biggest military budget and are the sixth biggest economic power—we have quite a lot to bring to the party. I would have thought that we are reasonably clear about that. The National Security

11 September 2013 Sir Kim Darroch KCMG and Julian Miller

Council sits at the centre of British foreign policy making as the forum in which, collectively, Government can take decisions.

Q136 Mr Holloway: A couple of times I have done presentations to the NSC. I remember once being asked only just a staggeringly stupid question by a very senior Minister. You guys do the sort of hypothetical planning and all of that, but you go to the Ministers for the sensitive priorities and how things should be handled. Obviously that is very good in constitutional terms, and it is fine if you have a Winston Churchill figure, but it is less fine if you have a Gordon Brown—

Chair: Steady on. There is no need for that.

Mr Holloway: So who is doing the actual strategy? If those decisions have been made by people at the very top of the politics, it means that you are not really doing the strategy in the round, are you?

Sir Kim Darroch: First of all, don't underestimate Ministers'—especially senior Ministers'—abilities to do strategy. There are a lot of heavyweights around the table.

After that meeting, there was a lot of work in terms of delivering that and taking it forward—the Foreign Office doing a certain amount of international diplomacy, talking to partners and the French; me talking to my counterparts in Washington and Paris in particular, and delivering, as it were, the decision that had been taken. My experience of the NSC over 18 months is that it is pretty good at taking decisions.

Mr Holloway: Sorry. I wasn't running down that—

Chair: Stop. Allow me to intervene. One thing I will say is that your question was phrased in a way that will need to be redacted, because it is not the sort of—

Mr Holloway: Sorry. I was just saying what I thought.

Chair: I dare say.

Mr Havard: Perhaps they didn't understand the questions. Perhaps they were not stupid at all.

Chair: I want to draw this gradually and peacefully to a close, but I have a few questions after Thomas Docherty.

Q137 Thomas Docherty: I am concerned that we are using the word “strategy” in a more and more generous way and that we are approaching the point where the Prime Minister has to have a strategy for going to Waitrose. Do we have a problem about defining what we mean by strategy?

If you think back to the Public Administration Committee report in 2010, they said that no one does grand strategy. From my point of view, what I think—I could be entirely wrong—is that the strategy is, the Foreign Secretary sets out Britain's relationship with the rest of the world. He is a fan of Pitt and economic interaction—that is the strategy. What we then talk about is, “We have a policy on Syria or Libya.” Are we, as politicians and civil servants, getting hung up on the wrong words or not understanding what we mean, and not having the grand strategy at the very top that everything else flows from?

Sir Kim Darroch: Possibly. I think there is a lot in what you say. I think “strategy” is one of the most

over-used words around. What I am required to do when we bring a subject to the NSC—it is often called a strategy but you might be right to say it is a policy—is to bring to the table something that officials have prepared, that is clear about the objectives and the implications and is clear, as far as one can be, about what might go wrong and what you would do if those things went wrong. If it is a military element it has to be clear about the exit strategy. But actually that also applies for a piece of diplomatic policy or whatever. It is a comprehensive picture of how you go forward: what will happen when you do what is proposed; what might go wrong; what you might do if it does; and where it finishes. That is often called the strategy.

But what you are talking about, in terms of grand strategy, is about what we can bring to the international community given the basis that I have described of our membership of the EU, NATO, the permanent five and all the rest of it, and Britain's place in the world, our objectives and our role in the world. What I am basically saying is that I agree with you that they are two different things. Mostly what we are required to do and bring to the National Security Council is not grand strategy, as you describe it, but self-contained pieces of policy with clear objectives, exit strategies and a consideration of the implications, risks and threats involved.

Q138 Thomas Docherty: I am conscious that the Chair wants us to make progress. Would it be right to say that you would hope that the next NSS would be a grand strategy or is that for someone else and not the role of the NSS? It is not to be a grand strategy. It is to feed from a grand strategy. Or is it the grand strategy?

Sir Kim Darroch: I quoted earlier the objectives of the NSS. That is quite a big concept, whether you call it grand or not I don't know, but it should be a comprehensive assessment of the range of threats and risks affecting the UK and the strategic concept in which decisions like the next SDSR have to be taken. If you want to call that a grand strategy I would not disagree, but it needs to be a very far-reaching and comprehensive document.

Q139 Chair: When will outside consultation begin on the national security strategy and the SDSR?

Sir Kim Darroch: Chairman, it depends on the Prime Minister's judgment. I will put the advice to him before the end of the year and I think it will be at the beginning of next year. The nature of that outside consultation is still to be decided because there are various options out there: broader and narrower.

Q140 Chair: Will there be a red team?

Sir Kim Darroch: I don't know what a red team means. I am sorry.

Q141 Chair: That is interesting. Will there be a team of people set up to suggest that you are getting this wrong?

Sir Kim Darroch: I get you now. It is an option. I don't know whether that is the option that Ministers will go for but I think there should be. My advice to

11 September 2013 Sir Kim Darroch KCMG and Julian Miller

him would be that you need to have some challenge in the process.

Q142 Chair: It can be exceptionally helpful and effective, if people are working together as a united team, to say how you could do things differently. So I would recommend that to you as a course of action. Talking about red, will there be a Green Paper?

Sir Kim Darroch: What did we do last time?

Julian Miller: There was a Green Paper published in February 2010 which had been entirely focused on defence and looking at some of the issues which might need to be addressed in the SDSR after that election. It is an option for this time. No one has taken a decision on whether we should have a Green Paper. If we were to have a Green Paper it would clearly need to be more broadly based than the 2010 example and cover the full range of security issues.

Q143 Chair: If there were to be?

Julian Miller: If there were to be.

Q144 Chair: May I recommend to you the virtues of having a Green Paper? That, of itself, would identify outside views on something on which outside views are important. Please would you keep this Committee involved at every stage because our inquiry here is intended not to put you in a fix but to help the next SDSR to be better than the last one? That is not a comment on the quality of the last one. It is just intended to be a continual improvement process.

Sir Kim Darroch: Chairman, of course. As I said at the outset, first we welcome the Committee's work, advice and thoughts on the next SDSR. Secondly, I have read with great interest the evidence you have taken so far. I look forward to reading the evidence you took yesterday. Thirdly, of course the recommendations that I put to the Prime Minister on

this, involving this Committee as well as the JCNSS and other parliamentary Committees that have a role, will be part of that.

Chair: Thank you. My final small set of questions begins with this. Did you watch a programme called "Blackout" on Channel 4 on Monday night?

Sir Kim Darroch: I read about it in reviews but I was not home in time to watch it.

Q145 Chair: Well, you are like most Members of Parliament. We don't actually watch much television.

Sir Kim Darroch: I might catch it on iPlayer.

Q146 Chair: I think that might be an idea. As I understand it, it contained a scenario that may or not be likely of the national grid in the UK going out because of cyber-attack. Do Ministers ever practise what to do in those circumstances?

Sir Kim Darroch: I don't think there has been a practice of that. *** It is not unknown for this Government or the Prime Minister to get involved in these, but I don't think he has done one of that kind. I am not sure whether other Ministers have.

Q147 Chair: Does the NSC practise?

Sir Kim Darroch: It has not in my time done a practice like that, but it is an interesting thought.

Q148 Chair: Do you not think it should?

Sir Kim Darroch: I think you may have a point. I think we need to think about how we could use their time and make it work. Yes, maybe we should.

Chair: I think you should. Any further questions to the National Security Adviser? Thank you both and your supporting staff. It has been very helpful and interesting, and it will help our inquiry. We have let you go before the two hours as well.

Wednesday 9 October 2013

Members present:

Mr James Arbuthnot (Chair)

Mr Julian Brazier	Mrs Madeleine Moon
Thomas Docherty	Penny Mordaunt
Mr Jeffrey M. Donaldson	Sir Bob Russell
Mr Dai Havard	Bob Stewart
Mr Adam Holloway	Ms Gisela Stuart

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: **Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP**, Secretary of State for Defence, **Edward Ferguson**, Head of Defence Strategy and Priorities, Ministry of Defence, and **Tom McKane**, Director General for Security Policy, Ministry of Defence, gave evidence.

Q149 Chair: This is the final evidence session for our preliminary inquiry into the next Strategic Defence and Security Review. I would like to welcome the Secretary of State, Tom McKane and Edward Ferguson to our evidence session.

Secretary of State, there is no need for you to introduce Mr McKane or Mr Ferguson, who have both given evidence to us before. Looking forward to the next Strategic Defence and Security Review, we have already received evidence from Professor Lindley-French and Lord Hennessy that the essential requirement of an SDSR is a strong view of the United Kingdom's place in the world. Do you agree?

Mr Hammond: Yes, that is one of the essential requirements for a Strategic Defence and Security Review, and we would expect the National Security Strategy to reflect that view of the UK's place in the world.

Q150 Chair: What should that place be?

Mr Hammond: That is a matter of opinion.

Q151 Chair: What is your opinion?

Mr Hammond: My opinion is that the UK is and should remain an outward-looking nation. We have a very large network of interests around the world. Our geography, our history and the nature of our economy—as one of the most, if not the most, open of the large economies, dependent on trade and investment for our livelihood—mean that we simply do not have the option of divorcing ourselves from the affairs of the world. We have to remain engaged in defence of our interests. We have to remain engaged to shape the international agenda. We have to remain engaged to support the international rule of law, upon which so much of our prosperity and security depends. That means being prepared to play a very active role in the world, using all the levers at our disposal, including our permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council and including our Armed Forces, which are among the most capable armed forces in the world.

Chair: Thank you.

Q152 Ms Stuart: That is all very nice, but could you put into a sentence what you think the Armed Forces are for?

Mr Hammond: It will probably be a long sentence, if you insist on a single sentence.

Ms Stuart: You can make it a German sentence, with lots of sub-clauses.

Mr Hammond: I am very fond semi-colons, so that may help in this case.

The Armed Forces are there, of course, as the ultimate guarantor of our independence and sovereignty. They are there as a tool of our international diplomacy, alongside the significant other tools that are available to the United Kingdom. Essentially, they are there as part of a raft of ways in which we deliver influence and project our power and interests in the world. Clearly, it would be disingenuous to pretend other than that for strong Armed Forces to represent a projection of the UK's influence, there must ultimately be a willingness to use them in the last resort.

Q153 Ms Stuart: I can see a very logical case for the Navy, given that we are an island. I can see a very logical case for the Air Force, given that there is a threat from the air. Can you tell me a little more about what you think a standing Army is for?

Mr Hammond: An expeditionary land-based capability is an extension of those capabilities you have talked about in relation to the Air Force and the Navy. The history of modern warfare is that while you can do a great deal from the air and you can do quite a lot from the littoral, you cannot always deal with a threat without putting boots on the ground, to coin the expression. The ability to be able to support an expeditionary force in the field is one of the things that distinguishes the UK from many other countries of broadly comparable size and broadly comparable economic strength.

Q154 Ms Stuart: So when it comes to the next round of financial discussions with your Cabinet colleagues, will the MoD be the only voice to make that case to the Treasury? Who else would you expect to support you in that argument for financial means?

Mr Hammond: If I were conducting that argument today in the context of the present Government, the outcome of the SR 13 shows very clearly that that argument would have the support of senior colleagues around the Cabinet table—certainly the Prime Minister and the Chancellor, who understand the importance of maintaining our military capability and

9 October 2013 Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP, Edward Ferguson and Tom McKane

who I think would acknowledge the great progress that has been made in balancing the defence budget and getting us to a point where we are now delivering, very cost effectively, the military capability that we are able to offer.

Q155 Ms Stuart: But balancing the defence budget is quite different from marrying up your ambitions of what our Armed Forces should do and what amount of money that would require. It is quite a different conversation next time around, isn't it?

Mr Hammond: It could be. We have set out in the SDSR 2010 the level of ambition that we have in terms of the size of an operation that we are able to conduct, the standing military tasks that we must deliver and the level of contingency that we need to be able to offer to the National Security Council. We are confident that within the budgets that we currently have we are able to deliver those outputs. It is tight, and there isn't a lot of slack in there—I wouldn't like any marauding Treasury officials reading the minutes of this meeting to misinterpret my comments—but we are clear that, after a very difficult period and having made some very difficult choices, we can deliver that capability. There will always be individual equipment programmes or capabilities that we would like to have in addition. But, in big handfuls, can we deliver Future Force 2020 and can we deliver the outputs set out in SDSR 2010 within our current budgets? The mood in the MoD and among the Chiefs of the Armed Forces is yes, we can: it is tight, but it is deliverable.

Q156 Chair: It sounds as though you are a strong supporter of expeditionary capability. Is that right?

Mr Hammond: Expeditionary capability is one of the things that distinguishes the UK and one of the things that I think enhances our influence and strategic reach.

Q157 Chair: Do you think support for expeditionary capability is shared by the public as a whole in this country?

Mr Hammond: That is a leading question, Chairman, if I may say so. Clearly public appetite for different types and levels of engagement will fluctuate based on recent experience. We have seen that in the UK and in other countries post a period of conflict. Right now, I would be happy to acknowledge that public appetite for expeditionary warfare is probably pretty low, based on the experience of 10 years of engagement in Iraq and Afghanistan. But I could easily paint a picture of a series of events that would lead to demands for an ability to go and do something—to go and sort the problem out somewhere or go and protect a community of British nationals somewhere in the world. Having that expeditionary capability to put boots on the ground—and not just to put them there, of course, but to sustain them there over a period of time—gives us enormously more reach and enormously more influence.

Q158 Mr Brazier: On that very point, polls suggest that rescuing British nationals is in fact the only expeditionary mission that would command popular support. Can I ask what we are doing to rebuild

support in the community and to rebuild the basic Clausewitzian link between the people and the Armed Forces, because—dare one say it?—apart from sympathy for the wounded it is arguably at an all-time low?

Mr Hammond: I think this is a cycle and if we look at what has happened in other countries, the United States is probably the best example. After the Vietnam war, there was a clear disengagement of public opinion from the idea of being an active participant in military operations, but we saw with 9/11 what a single event can do to change the mood and the tone of public opinion. So time is a great healer. I think that once we have completed our withdrawal from Afghanistan and completed the restructuring of our forces to deliver contingent capability for the future, we will then seek to rebuild public support for—as a last resort—the ability to project expeditionary forces. And of course our reserves agenda is partly—not primarily, but partly—about rebuilding the links between the military and civil society in a way that perhaps has been lost to some extent since the end of the cold war.

Q159 Chair: But Secretary of State, the power of modern weapons is such that you may not have the time that you are looking forward to. You may not have the time to rebuild this support between the British people and the notion of expeditionary action. Is there not something you can do between now and the gradual building up of support again over the years?

Mr Hammond: I am sure there are lots of things that we can do. Public opinion is conditioned by what people hear politicians saying, by what they read in the media and by what they hear commentators saying, so there are plenty of things that we can do. But I think it would be realistic of me to say that I would not expect—except in the most extreme circumstances—to see a manifestation of great appetite for plunging into another prolonged period of expeditionary engagement any time soon.

Q160 Bob Stewart: Secretary of State, I totally agree with you and I think public opinion can be very fickle, and can change rapidly; in my experience, it can change within two or three days. So the idea of actually changing public opinion can happen very fast if there is a serious disaster.

My question is this: when we are talking about expeditionary warfare, or carrying it out, in your view how long do you think we might put a force—perhaps a brigade-level force—into a situation for? How long might that be? Clearly, it would be six months first, but are you anticipating that we might have to go beyond that, if necessary?

Mr Hammond: My colleagues will correct me if I am wrong, but the 2010 SDSR output requirement is that we would deploy a brigade-level force on a sustained basis through a full five-roulement pattern, on an indefinite basis, with the significant use of reserves as part of the model.

Bob Stewart: Thank you. I thought that I would get that answer, which is just what I wanted to put on record.

9 October 2013 Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP, Edward Ferguson and Tom McKane

Q161 Mr Brazier: Secretary of State, how will lessons from recent military operations play into the next SDSR?

Mr Hammond: I think perhaps I will just answer that briefly at high level, and then invite Edward or Tom to talk about what we are actually doing on the ground. We recognise that we are better at learning lessons at the operational level than we are perhaps at the strategic level, and there is some effort going into making sure that we focus on strategic-level lessons as well as operational-level lessons, something that the Army does almost in real time. If you look at the evolution of operations in Afghanistan, you can see the effects—the benefits—of the learning process in recent years, and you can trace them back directly to events—sometimes very painful events—that occurred in the early years. We have to be able to do the same at a strategic level.

Tom McKane: I would just add to that, Secretary of State. I would say that the Ministry of Defence has a more developed lessons process than most other arms of Government although, as the Secretary of State has said, we have been conscious that we could do more in absorbing strategic lessons, so we have consciously tried to put more effort behind that. The Defence Strategy Group, which is chaired jointly by the Permanent Secretary and the Chief of the Defence Staff, has discussed strategic lessons recently. The process is owned by the commander of Joint Forces Command, the new command that was created as a result of the recent reforms. He brings together all the operational lessons that are examined in the Permanent Joint Headquarters and the lessons processes that are run by the three Single Services so that they can be brought to the top of the Department. I am sure that, as we get closer to the next review, these will be presented to the Secretary of State and Ministers.

Q162 Mr Brazier: Forgive my breaking in but, inevitably, as in every part, people will change over fairly quickly in that. Do we still have designated historical branches whose job it is to provide continuity and look back?

Tom McKane: We do have dedicated historical branches—one for each service. They continue the process of writing and storing history, and that is available.

Q163 Mr Brazier: They are consulted as part of this process.

Tom McKane: Absolutely.

Mr Hammond: You might be interested to know that—it says here—in each of the services there is also something called a lessons board. We have a land environment lessons board in the Army and a defence operational lessons board, which meets twice a year in PJHQ to gather the information that has been sucked up through the lessons learned process and formalise the learning process into our doctrine and concepts.

Q164 Mr Brazier: That is very encouraging to hear, but forgive my pressing one point further. In the 19th and 20th centuries, absolutely central to the whole

concept of building a body of knowledge was detailed recordkeeping by the people on the ground. It is the feeding back of diaries, thoughts and so on that one again and again finds influences doctrine. We are hearing from people on the ground that they are afraid to keep records because of the danger of legal action at a later stage. Is that something that has entered into the thinking at all?

Mr Hammond: We move on to a different subject about the intrusion of law into people's behaviour on the battlefield—perhaps we might touch on that later. Obviously, I cannot answer for the actions of individuals who are personally recording thoughts but, in terms of the official recording of events, we are clear that that is an important part of the process. After a review of how historical records are maintained, a decision was taken to keep that as it is on a single-service basis, and the system remains unchanged.

Q165 Chair: We will not get on to the law question that you have just raised during this sitting because we are conducting a separate inquiry into that.

Mr Hammond: I look forward to coming back and talking to you about it in due course. It is a subject that is very close to my heart.

Q166 Chair: We look forward to all manner of thoughts from the Ministry of Defence on this matter. Before you go off this subject entirely, you said that each service maintains an historical branch. Does that include Joint Forces Command?

Tom McKane: No, these are Single Service historical branches.

Q167 Chair: Because it seems to me that we have been talking so far about historical ways of waging war, and it is something to bear in mind that we need to learn strategic lessons about the future ways of waging war based on the past, as well as the use of tanks, bayonets and bows and arrows.

Mr Hammond: A decision was made when Joint Forces Command was stood up not to create a Joint Forces Command historical branch.

Q168 Chair: Why?

Mr Hammond: I suspect primarily resource constraints. We are trying not to replicate structures when we can avoid it.

Chair: Do you think that learning lessons from history—

Mr Hammond: Let me finish. Joint Forces Command specifically is able to call on the most relevant historical branch of the other three single services when required.

Q169 Chair: What on earth is the point of an independent Joint Forces Command that recognises the fact that the other services do not really cover that Joint Force if you do not have a separate historical branch?

Mr Hammond: There was a choice to be made: as we stand up a fourth command—Joint Forces Command—should we merge all the historical branches and create a single historical entity covering the entire forces? The decision was made that if it

9 October 2013 Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP, Edward Ferguson and Tom McKane

ain't obviously broke, don't fix it. The historical branches in the Navy, the Army and the Air Force were working well, so the decision was taken to leave them in place, with some slight modifications to the way the Army historical branch worked, and to give Joint Forces Command the freedom to call on any one of those historical branches as appropriate and necessary. The range of activities by Joint Forces Command is very wide, and it is quite obvious in some cases that bits of the work would fall naturally to one or other of the single service historical branches to support.

Q170 Mr Havard: We visited Joint Forces Command some time ago. Can we have a description from you, or through you from them, of how that process works from their point of view? How do they actually enact the capability that they have? Do they have to request, for example, or is it a regular process whereby they talk to the others about what needs to be collected from them, as opposed to what they feel they need to give over? Could we have a description of that process, as it is ongoing, so that that we understand it better?

Mr Hammond: I suspect that we are far too early in the life of JFC to be able to give a definitive answer to that, because typically the historical process is some way behind the action on the ground.

Q171 Mr Havard: The history was last week. These will be current. They are historical, but they also need to be current.

Tom McKane: I think we are in danger of confusing the role of the historical branches and the lessons process. Obviously, the historical branches contribute to the lessons process, but the lessons process as I described it certainly involves single service activity, but it also involves activity by the Permanent Joint Headquarters to look at operational lessons. Now, sitting above that, Joint Forces Command brings together the lessons so that the strategic lessons can be extracted from that activity. In doing so, where they need to draw on history, they have access to the three historical branches, and they can go to them. But it would be wrong to give the impression that it is the historical branches themselves that are the sole, or even the main, feedstock for the lessons-learned process.

Chair: That is a fair point well made.

Q172 Mrs Moon: In terms of lessons learned, last week the US released a report that was reclassified from "secret" to "open" in relation to the attack on Camp Bastion. One summing up of the report was that the British screwed up. Is that something that will be re-examined by the lessons board? Is that something that we have dusted up and put in a cupboard? How will we learn lessons as a result of the release of that US report?

Mr Hammond: I think I can answer that. When we receive the full, unredacted version of the US report, we will conduct our own review of it. That will be conducted by the Chief of the Defence Staff.

Q173 Mrs Moon: Will the response to that also be put into the public domain, as the Americans have done?

Mr Hammond: I do not expect so, no.

Q174 Mrs Moon: It will not be put in the public domain.

Mr Hammond: I do not expect so.

Q175 Mrs Moon: Why not?

Mr Hammond: I would not expect it, in the normal course, to be put into the public domain. This is a review conducted by another nation about an incident, the consequences of which were primarily borne by that nation. It may have implications for us, and we will therefore look at it to see whether there are lessons that we should draw from it and, if so, what those lessons are.

Q176 Mrs Moon: I have seen the report, and it is largely in the public domain—there is a very small amount of redaction. Basically, the great line is that the British screwed up. Are we going to learn lessons from that, and will the lessons we learn be put in the public domain?

Mr Hammond: That is not our interpretation of the report, and it is not the message that we are getting from the US.

Q177 Chair: But on the issue of whether it is put in the public domain, you answered "I do not expect so, no" as though the default position is to keep something secret. Would you recognise that?

Mr Hammond: I would not describe it as secret, but I think this is going off course, here. The Chief of the Defence Staff would, I hope, routinely be conscious of information that was coming from other sources. Where it has any implications for what we are doing, I would hope and expect that he would routinely review it to see if anything needs to be looked at more deeply and if any lessons need to be drawn for the UK. There may or may not be.

Q178 Chair: Don't you think he might be helped by public comment on that?

Mr Hammond: I do not see a process that would lead to a public review of a US report by a UK agency.

Q179 Mr Donaldson: Secretary of State, there is a growing narrative here. On one hand, we have the Afghan President making very critical comments. We have this report by the Americans. Surely we have done our review of the incident already; we are not waiting until the Americans do a review, and then we will review their review. I am just concerned that if all this is kept in secret, the narrative becomes very negative, and we do not have the UK Government, the MoD, or defence forces coming out and countering the narrative that is beginning to develop that paints the Afghan war and our involvement in it in a very negative light.

Mr Hammond: There are two separate things there. Although it is tangential to the SDSR 2015, I am happy to comment on the Afghan President's comments. But on the operational review of the attack

9 October 2013 Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP, Edward Ferguson and Tom McKane

on Camp Bastion, of course, there would have been a review immediately, as soon as it happened. That would have been conducted as a matter of course. The results of that would routinely not have been published. They are operationally sensitive. Actions will have been taken. It would be a very rare occasion when, following a successful attack, a review would take place and the conclusion would be that there is nothing we could do better as a consequence of what we have learned from the attack. So practical actions will have been taken, just as there are after almost every attack that occurs in Afghanistan—whether it is an attack on a vehicle or an attack on a base, there is always a review. There are always lessons learned, and there are almost always instructions given for things to be done differently immediately thereafter. For very good reasons, those are not routinely published.

Q180 Thomas Docherty: First, this attack led to the deaths of, as I recall, two US personnel. Eight were seriously wounded and there was the loss of half a dozen of their Harriers. I appreciate that this occurred last year—this is not a criticism of you, Secretary of State, in any way—but it was on the back of what is perceived as the debacle in southern Iraq, where the Americans had to ride in, as it is perceived, to our rescue. It goes back to Mr Brazier’s point earlier that—I think we are trying to be genuinely helpful—if you think what has been reported at the weekend is not a fair assessment, I hope you would take it as helpful of us to be saying, “We think you have to be going out there, saying, ‘This is our version. This is why it is not our fault that two Americans are dead and half a dozen Harriers have been destroyed. We are not actually incompetent, as the Americans are claiming we are.’”

Mr Hammond: If the conclusion of the report was that it was our fault, it is not obvious why two US Marine generals would get fired as a consequence. Faults and failures were identified. Significant failures were identified within the US Marine Corps chain of command. One thing that the Chief of the Defence Staff will want to look at carefully is whether, as well as discharging their obligations within the combined chain of command—because ISAF, obviously, is a combined operation; the regional commander southwest was a US Marine Corps general—UK personnel properly reported any concerns that they had to the National Component Commander’s chain of command, so that we have, as it were, a dual chain for looking at these things.

At the moment, our understanding of the incident, on the basis of our own review and on the basis of the published version of the US report, is that we do not believe that there is a systemic UK failure that we need to address. But we will certainly review that further when we have the unredacted account. We may have it by now; I last discussed this on Monday afternoon and at that stage we did not yet have an unredacted copy of the report.

Ms Stuart: Secretary of State, we are politicians. We know that this is not a rational game. The perception out there is that the headline is “The Brits screwed up over Bastion”. I don’t think you can just sit there

and say, “That is not our understanding and we will wait for it.”

Q181 Chair: The overall point we would like to make is that if you learn lessons from something it is probably best to make those lessons public. In the end, it helps both with the narrative and because there are a lot of experienced and—even more important— independent people out there who might be able to confirm what you say. At the moment there is not that support.

Mr Hammond: I appreciate that the Committee is trying to be helpful on this.

Chair: I know it doesn’t sound like it.

Mr Hammond: I must let the CDS conduct his own review and talk to people within the chain of command, but when we get the report we will look at what it is useful or possible to say. I will conclude by saying this: I have asked whether we have probed, on our military-to-military networks, US counterparts as to whether there is any hint of blame being cast in our direction and I am told that there is no hint in the military-to-military conversations that we should be looking at our operations. As far as the US Marine Corps are concerned, they have identified what went wrong, they have delivered very harsh but appropriate consequences to those concerned and they regard the incident as closed. That is what I am being told.

Bob Stewart: I am going back, Chairman. I was about to agree totally with what Mr McKane said in his last comments. The Army historical branch, Air Force historical branch and Navy historical branch are useful. If you require Joint Force lessons learnt, or something like that, historically people from those branches, in my experience—albeit that that was a long time ago—are pulled out and told to write the Joint Force lessons. That is the way it worked in the past, and I presume it hasn’t changed much. I wanted to cut in there.

Chair: We are now getting back to the thing that you were going to ask anyway.

Q182 Bob Stewart: Oh yes, sorry—I am on for my proper question. Secretary of State, how much work has been done to determine just how much money we really need for defence? Has that work been done, and are you content? I would rather like to hear the answer: have we done work as to how much money we really need for defence?

Mr Hammond: The problem with that question is that defence is an elastic term.

Q183 Bob Stewart: Yes, but based on SDSR 2010?

Mr Hammond: Based on SDSR 2010 and based on the budget that we have at the moment, and on the assumption we have made of flat real into the future—that is our budgeting assumption inside the Department—plus 1% real-terms increase per annum on the equipment plan from 2015 through to 2020, we are confident and the Armed Forces Chiefs are confident that we can deliver the required output.

That is not to say that there aren’t some tough prioritisation decisions to be made. We have made a decision to spend significantly more money on cyber. That money is not a free good: we have to reduce

9 October 2013 Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP, Edward Ferguson and Tom McKane

spending in other areas in order to meet that. But across the piece, I think I could fairly characterise my colleagues, senior officials and military personnel as thinking that if we are left alone, in peace, with the budget that we have assumed, we will manage to deliver the output, thank you very much. That is where we would like to be.

Q184 Thomas Docherty: What happens if the money doesn't go up?

Mr Hammond: In other words, if the assumption proves false? Clearly, if the equipment plan real-terms increase doesn't occur, the equipment plan will be squeezed by 1% per annum over five years, so at the end of it we will have an equipment plan that is 5% smaller than we would ideally have liked.

Q185 Thomas Docherty: What happens if the money decreases in the next Parliament?

Mr Hammond: In my judgment, if the amount of money available for the defence budget decreased significantly, we would reach the end of the process by which we can simply take salami slices off. We would have to ask some serious structural questions about the type of forces that we were able to maintain.

Q186 Thomas Docherty: So this is about hollowing out versus taking out whole capabilities.

Mr Hammond: Versus a much more fundamental piece of surgery. My view is that we are close to the point where continuing to shave amounts off budgets without fundamentally restructuring what we do is probably getting into diminishing returns, where for every pound saved, you lose more and more effective capability. If we were confronted at a future point with a significant further reduction in budget, it might be more sensible to stand back and rethink the structure of our forces.

Q187 Thomas Docherty: Have you got a team working within those who are working on the NSS and the SDSR to look at that contingency?

Mr Hammond: No, because we have a budget assumption, which is flat real, with plus 1% on the equipment plan. I have heard nothing to suggest otherwise than that for future settlements. If another political party in the run-up to the election were to publish a proposal to reduce radically the defence budget, we would have to start doing that work.

Q188 Chair: In view of what you have just said about being close to the point where we will have to change our military objectives, would it be fair to characterise that as being close to a loss of critical mass?

Mr Hammond: I did not say that we would change our military objectives; I said we would change our force structure. The point about critical mass is exactly that. When you are operating a broad spectrum capability within a constrained budget, there is clearly a critical mass point in each of the areas that you are operating in. If you have to keep reducing the budget, there will come a point when, rather than slipping below critical mass in a number of areas, it might be more sensible to ask whether you need to maintain the

breadth of spectrum and whether you would be better to focus capabilities. The Dutch, for example, have recently taken the decision to scrap some of their amphibious capability.

Tom McKane: They are scrapping their new large amphibious vessel, but retaining their smaller vessels.

Mr Hammond: So they have made a conscious decision that rather than trying to spread the jam thinner, they will take a hit in that area to protect other areas. Fortunately, we in the UK are not yet at that point. I believe that there are further efficiencies that we can still drive out that will give us some flexibility within the budgets that we have. If further significant reductions in budget were proposed, it would make sense to think about the overall structure.

Q189 Chair: A couple of years ago, we had in front of this Committee the Chiefs of each of the three Armed Services—the Chief of the Air Staff, the Chief of the General Staff and the Chief of the Naval Staff—and Gisela Stuart asked them whether we still have a full spectrum capability. The Chief of the Air Staff said no, as did the First Sea Lord and the Chief of the General Staff. Were they right?

Mr Hammond: I think I used the term broad spectrum capability. We clearly do not have a full spectrum capability in the sense that the United States does, but we have a broad spectrum capability that is much broader than most other nations in the world.

Q190 Chair: I put that series of questions and answers to the Prime Minister, and he said that he disagreed with them and that we did have that full or broad spectrum capability, whichever it was. Which do you think is closer to the truth?

Mr Hammond: That depends whether you are saying full spectrum or broad spectrum. We have a broad spectrum capability, but I do not think that we have every single part of the spectrum covered as the US does. Even if somebody gave us an extra £10 billion on the defence budget, it probably would not make sense for us to try to cover every part of the spectrum.

Tom McKane: There are a couple of good examples. We have never had a ballistic missile defence system, for example, and we have never had in recent years a full suppression of enemy air defence system.

Q191 Mr Havard: When is full complete, and when is complete broad? In terms of the language and people understanding, can I just be very clear? What you are saying is that we have a spectrum of capabilities and that, should the finances reduce even further, we would have to look again at possibly reducing that range of capabilities—the spectrum of things that we can do with the capabilities that we have. Is that essentially what you are saying?

Mr Hammond: Not “We would have to,” but, “We could.”

Q192 Mr Havard: In plain English—but you would.

Mr Hammond: But it might make sense if the choice is: do we take another slice off everything and operate a smaller force of this capability and a smaller force of that capability? The critical point is the Chairman's point about critical mass. There is a minimum

9 October 2013 Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP, Edward Ferguson and Tom McKane

effective scale of operation. If I can use an analogy from the Scotland debate, I made the point yesterday that it is difficult to see how you could operate 10 Typhoons as an effective force. The cost of maintenance and support capability for a fleet 10 fast jets would simply be disproportionate. As you head to that sort of territory, with smaller fleets needing the same kind of fixed overheads, it may make more sense to take the hit—to take a bold decision to lose a bit of capability to ensure that you retain critical mass in other areas.

Q193 Thomas Docherty: Secretary of State, you keep using a future tense as if we would lose capabilities, but isn't the reality that we already have lost two capabilities? We have lost Carrier Strike and we have lost maritime surveillance. There is an intention, with a timeline, hopefully to restore Carrier Strike. I think you were on record just last week as saying that you hoped that Carrier Strike would be there 365 days of the year, but we do not have a timeline for maritime surveillance. Again, I am not trying to criticise, but we have made capability cuts already, so do you envisage that we would not be able to restore one or both of those, or are you talking about other capabilities that would be cut?

Mr Hammond: I am talking about future capability losses. In Carrier Strike, we've gapped the capability. We are spending billions of pounds to recreate it, an initial operating capability will be delivered in 2018. What I am on record as saying last week is about my own personal view on whether, having spent £5.5 billion on carriers, it makes sense to operate both of them or only one of them.

On maritime patrol, that is a capability that we had to take a decision to lose. In SDSR 2015, one of the specific issues that we will need to consider is whether, based on our experience since 2010 of managing this risk—largely by working with allies—it is a capability that we need to regenerate and, if so, how we would most efficiently regenerate it. There is growing evidence that evolving technology, particularly in relation to unmanned aerial systems, may make at least some of the functions of maritime surveillance deliverable at rather lower cost than might have seemed possible even four or five years ago.

Edward Ferguson: Just to clarify, you said we had taken out maritime surveillance. We still have a range of maritime surveillance assets; maritime patrol aircraft is a specific point.

Q194 Mrs Moon: Secretary of State, how do you distinguish between strategy and policy?

Mr Hammond: Policy is the set of objectives that we need to get to, and the strategy is about how we get there. Strategy is how we deliver the policy, and the policy is the agenda that we have set ourselves at the end of the game.

Q195 Mrs Moon: The Committee works on the basis that strategy is a course of action integrating ends, ways and means to get to the policy objectives.

Mr Hammond: Excellent.

Mrs Moon: I take it you agree with that.

Mr Hammond: I agree with that entirely, yes.

Q196 Mrs Moon: So will the next review be ends-based rather than means-based?

Mr Hammond: It has got to be both. If I may say so, this is a very popular question: what comes first—the budget envelope or the capability requirement? It's a bit like saying to a man outside a car showroom, "Decide which car you like and we'll look at the budget afterwards." It doesn't make any sense to go into the Ferrari showroom if you've only got a budget for a Volkswagen. You have to do both together to be doing anything sensible and useful, so I would expect to address the two issues in tandem. We need a broad sense of the resource envelope so that we can set a National Security Strategy. Once we have gone down that process, there needs to be a refining of the precise level of resources that would be needed.

Q197 Chair: So a reiterative process of building up a National Security Strategy and then a Defence and Security Review in the context of a comprehensive spending review going round and round until we eventually get to a sensible answer.

Mr Hammond: I do not know whether I would want to go round and round too many times, but if I was asked to review the National Security Strategy and set out our ambitions for the nation in the context of the security environment that we face, I would want to ask within what sort of resource envelope before I answered that question, otherwise the answer would be meaningless. I need a sense of whether you are giving me the UK defence budget, Monaco's defence budget or the United States' defence budget before I can begin to answer the question about level of ambition and how I see our strategic position. Later on, there will be a more refined and granular process about what specific resources will be needed to pay for the capabilities we have identified as being appropriate.

Q198 Thomas Docherty: I think, Secretary of State, you were supplied this morning with a transcript from the NSA's session with us in which he was asked about the running order and said—in case you have not seen it—that he felt the correct order was NSS, CSR and SDSR. Do you agree that that is probably now the correct order for 2015–16?

Mr Hammond: I am interested to know how you know what I was supplied with this morning, but you are correct—I was supplied with a copy of the NSA's transcript. Broadly, I think that is right, although the NSA said that the Prime Minister has not yet defined the process. We are, in a sense, ahead of the game here. Broadly, we need to establish a commonly recognised picture of the environment that we face and some common threads of understanding about the role that we want to play within that environment, and then we need to have a sense of the resource envelope. The resource envelope comes in two parts. It comes first as a broad understanding—are we talking about the same sort of level of resource, a significant increase in resource or a significant decrease—which allows us to shape the options and then perhaps look at the potential outputs that we could deliver.

9 October 2013 Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP, Edward Ferguson and Tom McKane

Q199 Thomas Docherty: Just so that I have this correct, because I do not want to misquote or misunderstand what you have said, you would do the NSS and say that these are the absolute things that we must do, and these are the things that we want to do. You would have a CSR and negotiate with the Treasury, which would give you a figure, but you would expect to have the ability both to ask for a bit more or, if subsequently you did not need it all, to hand it back.

Mr Hammond: No, that is not what I am saying. When you undertake the process of the NSS, there has to be an assumption about the broad level of resource available. It could make sense to go into the NSS process saying that it is on the basis that the budgets available will be broadly those currently assumed. That is a sensible process. You could have an assumption about a higher budget or a lower budget. It does not make any sense to go in completely resource-blind. It does not make any sense to say, "Please produce a National Security Strategy without any reference to the amount of resource that might be available to deliver it."

Q200 Thomas Docherty: That was not what I was saying. What I was saying is that you would do it saying that these are the absolute core functions. We agree that an expeditionary force is something that we would like to have, but it is not absolutely needed. So you do your NSS, and then the CSR. You negotiate with the Treasury a framework. Then you talk to the Service Chiefs and the Permanent Secretary to say, "Is that the right amount of money? Do I need to ask for some more?" Or, do you say, "The Chancellor's been phenomenally generous, as he always is. I can now give him back some money"? Is that wrong?

Mr Hammond: The timing sequence between the NSS, the SDSR and any CSR is not yet defined, and it is clearly not in my gift to define it. That will be defined partly by the Cabinet Office and partly by the Treasury, so I cannot say that this is the sequence we should follow, or that this is not the sequence we should follow. I shall repeat the same thing: you cannot have a sensible NSS process without a broad order of magnitude resource availability envelope. From that NSS, you could produce potential alternative outcomes, which might then inform a CSR process that defined more precisely the resource that was available.

Q201 Mr Havard: So that process colours the discussion for the review for those at the foothills, and then the review comes after.

Mr Hammond: Yes. I hope—I have to repeat this—that the process will be defined by the Cabinet Office in due course. It has not been defined yet, but I hope that in the pre-general election period we will establish a good degree of consensus around what the strategic picture is, what the core objectives of the UK are and what the core capabilities to deliver those objectives are. Without nailing anything down at that stage—clearly it would be absurd to try to nail things down before a general election—I hope that we will have a wide degree of consensus on a cross-party

basis as well as beyond the political village consensus about what is reasonable and what is required to—

Q202 Mr Havard: Some of my colleagues will ask you about who can be involved in that process and when they can be involved in all those different stages of the discussion—including ourselves because, as you know, we are structuring our work to try and make a contribution to that process itself. We were told by the National Security Adviser—it was him who told me and it wasn't this morning—that there was no firm timetable for all this, which is consistent with what you say, but a proposition for a timetable would be put to the Prime Minister at the end of this year so that from then we would begin to see exactly what the time process for those stages is. Is that correct or not? How are you operating? What are the MoD's assumptions in terms of the timetable process?

Mr Hammond: It is correct by definition, because it will be the National Security Adviser who puts the advice to the Prime Minister. If he said he is going to do it at the end of the year, that is what will happen.

Q203 Mr Havard: He says "not by" but "at" the end of the year, so there we are—happy new year!

Mr Hammond: Okay, and we are happy with that timetable. The MoD has its own process within the Department of preparing for the SDSR. It is fair to say that we probably got off the mark ahead of the game across Whitehall with our Defence Strategy Group, which pretty much started looking at the next Strategic Defence and Security Review as soon as the dust had settled from the last one. But we are very conscious of the Prime Minister's injunction not to allow this thinking about the next SDSR to distract us from delivering the conclusions of the last SDSR, so there is a twin track here. We still have a lot of delivery left to do, and it will be well into the next Parliament before the final pieces of the jigsaw arising from the decisions in the last SDSR are in place. In parallel, we are already identifying things that will have to be done and decisions that will have to be made in the 2015 SDSR, and we are starting internally to debate the options with the Armed Forces and other stakeholders in the Department, but we are only one Department in a cross-Whitehall process.

Edward Ferguson: I think that that is absolutely right. In the cross-Whitehall sense, the process is in its fairly early stages, and we are working out and trying to support the advice for the Prime Minister towards the end of the year. The Defence Strategy Group has been under way for about 18 months. It has met 13 times and taken a pretty broad agenda of issues. We are starting to think through the process but, as the Secretary of State says, this is very early, sensibly-paced preparatory activity. We are not trying to get ahead of the game; we are not trying to pre-cook an SDSR. We still have two years to go to play with. At this stage, we can afford to take a bit of time to think relatively deeply about some of the questions we may have to answer and some of the options that may be available to us. We are trying to make best use of that time.

9 October 2013 Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP, Edward Ferguson and Tom McKane

Q204 Sir Bob Russell: Secretary of State, as Dai Havard has very kindly set the ball rolling on SDSR, I will continue with the group of questions I have on that subject. How is it going to differ from its predecessor—you indicate that we have still got it—and what will be the major challenges?

Mr Hammond: There are some specific decisions that we have already identified and the appropriate time frame for decision making is the 2015 SDSR. For example, there is the decision about what we do with the second carrier—whether we bring it into operation or whether we mothball it. There is the decision on the balance of future air capability between manned and unmanned air platforms, and consequently the size of F-35 follow-up buy beyond what is required for the carriers. There are decisions about future maritime patrol capability—whether we need to have it and, if so, how best to deliver it. There are decisions about the level of future investment in cyber-capability, both defensive and offensive. Is there anything else?

Edward Ferguson: I think that captures a number of the capability questions. Importantly, of course, our combat troops will be out of Afghanistan by the end of 2014, which will change the strategic environment within which we are operating—2010 was heavily conditioned by that commitment. So we are able and we are doing some early conceptual thinking about what that might mean and how we might want to reposition the Armed Forces post Afghanistan for contingency and wider activities.

Q205 Sir Bob Russell: While we cannot foresee the future in that sense, how do you see Service—with a capital “S”—priorities shifting after Afghanistan as the UK moves towards Future Force 2020 and the “Adaptable Britain” stance, and with that, of course, the Army reserve? Are you able to put a bit of flesh on those bones?

Mr Hammond: Yes. If I hesitate for a moment, it is because although operations in Afghanistan, of course, remain our No. 1 priority, intellectually it is fair to say that the Service Chiefs have already moved on to thinking about how we return to contingency. They are already there in the post-Afghanistan era, reconstructing their contingent capability, building the Future Force 2020, which will have a greater reliance on reserves and will build on the whole-force concept, using civilians and contractors in a different way from how we have used them in the past. It will be focused on international defence engagement as well as contingent intervention capability. All this is well under way in MoD terms; it is absolutely already banked in the DNA of the Armed Forces Chiefs.

Q206 Sir Bob Russell: Thank you for that. Following on from your earlier answers to Gisela Stuart, the Chair and Julian Brazier, will your ability to justify sustaining defence spending to your Cabinet colleagues be reduced when the profile of the Armed Forces is reduced following the withdrawal from Afghanistan?

Mr Hammond: I don’t think so. There is a good understanding of the concept of defence across Government and across the political centre ground, if

I can put it that way. It is not only when we are deployed on operations that we are delivering defence effect, but when we are providing deterrence, when we are engaged in capability building, when we are projecting influence and when we are delivering a defence engagement strategy. The military capability that we have can be used in many ways. We have been through a period when it has been used kinetically and in support of a broader reconstruction effort in Afghanistan. We would expect—but, as somebody said a moment ago, who knows what the future will bring?—to be moving into a period, from 2015, when it will be used somewhat differently.

Q207 Sir Bob Russell: Satisfying your Cabinet colleagues and justifying this to them may be the easy bit. Can you now answer that question in the context of public opinion?

Mr Hammond: We have to explain to public opinion continuously what the value of defence is to the United Kingdom—what it buys us in terms of our role and influence in the world. We have to make the connection between the prosperity agenda and the UK’s ability to influence world events. As I said at the beginning, we are a nation—probably more than any other large economy—dependent on the functioning of an open global trading and investment system, and we need to be clear, lest anyone forgets, that the survival and prosperity of that system is not a given. There are emerging powers in the world, as the balance of economic power shifts, that do not have the same commitment to the rule of law, the openness of the trading system and the democratic principles that have served us so well. Being able to shape that agenda as the balance of power—particularly economic power—in the world changes is crucial to the UK, and it is important to our future prosperity.

Q208 Sir Bob Russell: So keeping public opinion onside is obviously a major issue.

Mr Hammond: And if you listened to my party conference speech, which I am confident you will have done—

Sir Bob Russell: It was stimulating.

Mr Hammond: For all the right reasons, I hope. You will have noticed that I went out of my way to link the defence agenda with the prosperity agenda and to make the point that the quality of our Armed Forces and our ability to project military force is one of the things that gives us a voice in the regulation of the world’s affairs.

Sir Bob Russell: There may actually be more on which we are in agreement than separates us. Us Essex boys need to stick together on these occasions.

Mr Hammond: We do indeed.

Q209 Sir Bob Russell: Earlier you talked about—I think I am quoting you correctly—rebuilding links between the military and the civil community, and I suggest that the basing plan and the closure of Territorial Army bases has made that more difficult. I come from a garrison town where that is not an issue, but it is an issue across the United Kingdom. May I suggest that one way of making sure that the public are aware of what is going on and that the military

9 October 2013 Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP, Edward Ferguson and Tom McKane

have not just a military role, but a role of peace at home, is through the military bands, which have taken a major hit? I say that because they are very much part of the PR profile of Her Majesty's Armed Forces.

Mr Hammond: You have raised this issue with me before. I have raised it with the Chief of the Defence Staff, and I am well aware of the importance of military bands to the way in which the military engage with the wider community.

I do understand your concerns about TA base closures. In terms of the decisions that we had to make about future TA basing lay-down, there is clearly a tension. It is not about money—unusually—in this case; it is about the ability to deliver the quality of training and the real participation in the whole force that we have offered to reservists. We cannot do that at TA centres where we are routinely getting only 12 people parading; that is not the basis on which we can offer a real experience. So we have had to take some tough decisions. But, equally, in some areas of the country where we looked at the map and we saw that there would be no military presence for miles and miles around, we have retained a TA base that, frankly, on a completely objective view of recruited strength, would not justify retention. So we have tried to strike a balance.

Q210 Chair: The point Sir Bob makes about military bands is one that would be supported by the entire Committee, because it is very difficult to put a monetary value on the power of inspiration, but that is what military bands provide.

Mr Hammond: Mr McKane has just reminded me that there were no reductions in military bands as a result of the 2010 SDSR, unlike in previous rounds of defence cuts.

Sir Bob Russell: They have taken a huge hit over the years.

Q211 Chair: We look forward to seeing the expansion of military bands as and when funds allow.

Mr Hammond: Chairman, I hear that but as I constantly remind the Department, there are no free lunches. If we expand one thing, we cut something else. We must focus very much on the delivery of military effect. I completely understand that things that support the moral component, raise the spirit of the Armed Forces and build our connection with civil society are important in delivering military effect. We must keep things in balance.

Q212 Mr Brazier: Who within the MoD looks across Whitehall at functions that could be better done by the MoD? To give one example, across government, there are half a dozen private navies, one of which is run by the Treasury. There could well be savings and better delivery. Who, if anyone, is looking at functions outside the MoD that could be run effectively from inside?

Mr Hammond: I do not think we have a systematic approach to that. I would expect to find a little bit of caution in the Department. Because of the way government works in practice, it is quite easy to acquire new responsibilities; it is less easy to acquire the budget to go with them. The MoD may have had

a not entirely positive experience in the past of taking on additional roles on behalf of other Departments, and then finding that it is not funded for them.

Q213 Mr Brazier: May I throw in a point, Chairman, because people were talking about bands at some length? When visiting Australia I was struck by the fact that it has what before the second world war was very common here. Most TA units have their own little band with absolutely tiny, almost non-existent resourcing, but it is a significant component in the local community. Just a thought—not a fully resourced separate one, but a group of bands within the existing unit.

Mr Hammond: And the obvious place to push this agenda is with cadets. Anecdotally, I have been dismayed to find that in Weybridge it is impossible to find a bugler for the Remembrance day service in the local church from any of the cadet units in the surrounding area.

Q214 Thomas Docherty: On forward planning, I am sure you have studied our report on the implications of Scottish independence. One of our concerns about the UK Government is that they do not appear to be doing any contingency planning for, however much you and I may wish it not to happen, the Scottish people choosing to become a separate nation. Is it still the MoD's policy not to do any contingency planning?

Mr Hammond: It is.

Q215 Thomas Docherty: Do you not accept our concerns that you have a contingency plan for pretty much everything that could happen, because you are a very organised Secretary of State? Why do you not have a contingency plan for Scotland?

Mr Hammond: That isn't the reason. The reason we have contingency plans is because that's the way the MoD is. It has a contingency plan for everything. There will be plenty of generic contingency plans within the MoD that would be applicable to some of the issues that would arise in the unlikely event of a Scottish vote for independence.

As I have said before and I am happy to say again—I recognise that the Committee's concern is based on the best of intentions—it is to misunderstand what the consequence of a yes vote in a referendum would be. It would signal the start of a complex process of negotiation following which a series of steps of disengagement between the two nations would take place. Some might take place over an extended period. Lack of contingency planning should not be seen as presenting a risk to defence. Any defence disengagement that was required would have to be structured over a period to allow that disengagement to take place in an orderly fashion.

We and the Scottish Government are both clear that we cannot pre-negotiate an independence settlement and therefore contingency planning is not appropriate. It would muddy the debate at this stage.

Q216 Thomas Docherty: Forgive me, Secretary of State, but we were very clear in the Report. We do not see contingency planning as discussions with the Scottish Government. We see contingency planning as

9 October 2013 Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP, Edward Ferguson and Tom McKane

discussions within the Ministry of Defence. It is nothing to do with Mr Salmond or Mr Brown. This is purely about talking to the Service Chiefs and talking to Mr Ferguson, Mr McKane and Mr Thompson, to say “What do we then have to do?”

Mr Hammond: Making certain assumptions about what we think the priorities of Scottish Government would be in those circumstances.

Q217 Chair: We have made our point in our report and we look forward to getting your response to it.

Mr Hammond: We will respond, indeed, in due course.

Q218 Thomas Docherty: On the Pacific pivot, to use the phrase popular in the United States, what are the consequences for the United Kingdom of the US reorientation towards the Pacific?

Mr Hammond: As a prominent European NATO member we clearly are affected by the change in the balance of NATO focus. We are probably less affected than many of our continental European allies, because of the nature of our military and strategic relationship with the United States, but overall there is no doubt that the consequence of a US focus on the strategic challenges of the rise of China is that the European nations will have to do more for their own defence in the future.

That can be delivered in two ways, as I have said in countless speeches across different places in Europe. It can be delivered by European nations spending a greater proportion of their GDP on defence, which they should do but which, in the short term, they are not going to do, because they are all facing the same kind of fiscal pressures that we do; and it can be delivered by ensuring that the money that is spent on defence by the European NATO nations is spent in a way that delivers effective defence outputs. Not all, by any stretch of the imagination, of the collective defence budgets of European NATO is effectively spent on deployable military capability.

Q219 Thomas Docherty: Do you think, given our trading and historical links with the far east, that we should be in the next NSS and SDSR placing a greater emphasis on a mini-pivot to the Pacific, and, if so, what would be the consequences elsewhere?

Mr Hammond: We are not a Pacific power. The US is a Pacific power, of course. In purely military terms it would be difficult for us to pivot to the Pacific region, but in strategic terms there are things that we can do, and we are in the process of strengthening our engagement with countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia, countries with which we have the opportunity to deepen our strategic relationships, to leverage our long-established relationships with Australia, New Zealand, Canada—all Pacific nations with a Pacific focus. Actually, your raised eyebrows just confirmed the insularity of our view. We think of Canada as an Atlantic nation, but of course Canada is a Pacific nation as well.

We have excellent defence relationships and, indeed, intelligence relationships, with all of those countries, which can enhance our situational awareness in the Pacific, and that is something that we are doing. As

part of our defence engagement strategy I met the new New Zealand high commissioner this morning, to talk about precisely this—how we can mutually benefit from New Zealand’s geographical position and our strategic capabilities, to improve our awareness of the Pacific as a theatre.

Q220 Thomas Docherty: You also said, taking it back slightly—and, by the way, you are absolutely right; I hadn’t really thought about Canada in that way before—that you expect that the US will look to us to take greater responsibility for our own defence. I think the US NSS actually says that Europe is now no longer a consumer of international security in the same way. It also goes on to expect us to take a greater role in both the Middle East and Africa, given the Pacific pivot. Is it built in to the working on the next SDSR and NSS that there is the expectation that the UK, perhaps in partnership with other leading European nations, will be taking a greater burden share on North Africa?

Mr Hammond: The North Africa, Middle East, Horn of Africa area is certainly an area of focus for bilateral joint operations, particularly with the French, but it is also an area for European NATO to consider as, if you like, a subset of an organisation. As you will be aware, there is a tension within European NATO about the relative focus that there should be on the defence of the NATO homeland against a currently non-existent but potential future threat from Russia versus the creation of expeditionary capabilities to forward defend Europe’s interests in areas such as the Middle East and North Africa. There is a healthy debate going on within NATO about that, and, as you would probably expect, the further away you get from the Russian-European border, the stronger the inclination towards expeditionary warfare becomes.

Q221 Chair: In the context of the Pacific, you have mentioned Indonesia, Malaysia, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and America, but recently the United Kingdom has signed a strategic dialogue with Japan. Would it be possible for you to write to the Committee please to set out the significance of that strategic dialogue and how it can be deepened and broadened over the coming years?

Mr Hammond: Indeed. I would be very happy to do that. Japan is a very important example of a significant pool of defence resource that is on the right side of most arguments but is generally not seen as being deployed to maximum effect at the moment. I think I am right in saying that Japan’s defence budget is only fractionally smaller than our own, although Japan’s defence contribution is not well understood or recognised by most people.

Edward Ferguson: It might also be of interest to you in the context of the SDSR focus of this inquiry that we have now initiated a strategic exchange with the Japanese. I was over in Tokyo swapping notes on our respective strategic planning processes not long ago, and they are coming over here shortly as well. We are starting that exchange across quite a broad spectrum, including on this particular area.

9 October 2013 Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP, Edward Ferguson and Tom McKane

Q222 Penny Mordaunt: I have a number of questions regarding risk and planning processes. First, could you tell us what work the MoD does on assessment of risks between iterations of the national risk register?

Mr Hammond: It is updated every two years, so it is pretty much continuous.

Tom McKane: The Ministry of Defence continually reassesses risk in all its forms so it would be wrong to take away the impression that assessing and managing risk is something that we do once every couple of years. It is really central to our business. We are one of the Departments that take part in the National Security Risk Assessment. The first of those was completed in the National Security Strategy in 2010. The exercise was done again in 2012, and we expect that there will be another examination of it in the run-up to the next National Security Strategy.

Q223 Penny Mordaunt: I am thinking of things like emerging threats, or changes to leadership in particular countries that might have implications.

Tom McKane: There is a cross-Whitehall process, which is led by the Cabinet Office, of looking at where the risks of instability around the world are rising and where they are falling. It is a process that the Ministry of Defence, the Foreign Office, the Department for International Development and others all contribute to, so it is a continual process, which leads to advice being brought to the attention of the National Security Council, where the risks of instability in particular countries or regions appear to be changing substantially.

Q224 Penny Mordaunt: Is that done on a regular basis, or an ad hoc basis?

Tom McKane: It is on a regular, continuous basis.

Q225 Penny Mordaunt: So in terms of reports flagging issues that are coming up, how frequently does that happen? You say it is regular, so is it a set timetable?

Mr Hammond: It depends at what level you mean. Ministers receive daily intelligence reports, which in one sense are flagging emerging risks.

Q226 Penny Mordaunt: I was thinking of things that might lead you to change things in the SDSR—assumptions and, at a very top level, emerging threats and things that would change some of the parameters in the review.

Mr Hammond: Okay. The way I see this working is that we are collecting continuously, through our intelligence networks and by other means, a hopperful of things that might change our strategic thinking—inputs to the strategic review process. As we come to do the NSS, we will process them. Some of them need a little bit of time—when you first receive them, you think that you must react, but when you look at them again a month later, you think sometimes, “I’m glad I didn’t react immediately”, after setting them in a broader context. There is a continuous stream of reporting and information—some open source, some classified—which builds a picture of friends, risks and

threats, and that will inform the next iteration of the National Security Strategy. That is how I see it.

Edward Ferguson: Absolutely. To add to that, there is that sort of stuff, which is focused on the short to medium term—relatively near-term risks—but at the same time, particularly from an SDSR perspective, which is important, we have a much longer term horizon-scanning process. That is owned across Government now, and Jon Day, the chairman of the JIC, recently did a review of our horizon-scanning process across Government. He established a new set of structures to bring policy and horizon-scanning more closely together.

Q227 Penny Mordaunt: This is new?

Edward Ferguson: Yes. There is a new body at the top-end level, with a board chaired by the Cabinet Secretary, which tries to shape, direct and commission horizon-scanning product from the range of futures organisations around Government. Within defence, we have the Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre up in Shrivenham, which produces something called Global Strategic Trends every five years. It is in the process of drawing that together now, and it will be published in April next year. That is a 30-year look. So as well as that quite short-term, responsive and reactive process through intelligence and through monitoring of countries at risk of instability, essentially, we also have a much longer-term lookout, which allows us to monitor where longer-term trends—climate change, demographic expansion and all those sorts of things—might lead us, which from a defence perspective is obviously important, because the timelines on many of our capabilities are some way away and we need to ensure that our future force structures will remain relevant to future challenges, as well as to the more imminent ones.

Q228 Penny Mordaunt: What changes have you had to make to the 2010 SDSR as a result of emerging threats?

Mr Hammond: I do not think that the kind of emerging threats that we are talking about create imminent, immediate changes in the design of our force structure or the requirements of military capabilities. I am struggling to think of something that has caused us to make an immediate, short-term plan.

Tom McKane: The only thing that I can think of is what you have decided to do on cyber, although that is already something that had been identified in 2010.

Mr Hammond: We have made an announcement about a decision to invest in offensive cyber, in order to create a deterrent capability by having a cyber counter-strike ability. We are also continuously planning our deployments of assets, such as naval assets, for example, on the basis of our understanding of the level of heat in different parts of the world and of the risks emerging—but that is operational decision making, which is constantly being retuned depending on what is happening in the world. The decisions about the type of capability we need to hold and the type of weapons systems we need to be buying or developing for the future are made over longer time horizons. The quinquennial SDSR is the appropriate time frame. You need to be able to see a strand of

9 October 2013 Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP, Edward Ferguson and Tom McKane

reporting or intelligence over a period of years before you start making multi-billion pound, sometimes multi-decade decisions to invest on the back of it.

Q229 Penny Mordaunt: How far ahead will the next review look?

Mr Hammond: It immediately considers our requirements from 2015 to 2020, but it will also look formally at the context beyond 2020.

Edward Ferguson: Yes. It is yet to be determined, to an extent, but in the previous review,—the national security risk assessment,—which we anticipate will be embedded again in the national security strategy—looks at five and 20 years, so a 20-year time horizon is essentially the right-hand end. In 2010, again, we talked about Future Force 2020 from a defence perspective, in terms of where we were building, as a waypoint towards our future capability. This time we will probably be looking more at Future Force 2025, so we are taking a 10-year rolling view of the force structure.

Q230 Penny Mordaunt: How do you find the balance between the long-term planning that you describe and the necessary flexibility to respond to random events?

Mr Hammond: The military is deeply ingenious and highly flexible. Obviously, in the short term you have to operate within the capabilities that you have. I have not yet come across a situation where the military has said, “We are not able to respond to this contingency.” They might say, “We are going to have to respond to this contingency in a way that is sub-optimal or using a force structure that is not the ideal one that we would have in future.” We can respond to things within our force structures. The question we have to ask ourselves is whether, if such a situation were to endure or if we can envisage a certain evolution of the strategic environment, the force structure is the one we would want to have at that point in the future. Are these the weapons systems on which we would want to rely? In that context, we are able to make more strategic decisions about the shape of our forces and the shape of our investment for the future.

Q231 Penny Mordaunt: As a supplementary to that, in the past we have raised concerns with you about things being done at too high a risk. Clearly, a lot of activity is going on in the Department to improve management, procurement and so on. As of today, are you confident that the systems are now in place in the Department that historically had not been in place to ensure that kit is available, and able to get to where you need to use it, in a scenario that we might face?

Mr Hammond: If I may, there is a slight misunderstanding about the way this is done, and I shared that misunderstanding until I came into the Department. Defence is about managing risk. There is always risk in delivering military effect. It is about quantifying, identifying, managing and being comfortable with that risk, and I think we are in a good place. We have some quite sophisticated risk-management tools. Risk is routinely managed in a formal sense in the Department. Risks are assessed, identified and managed. Registers of risks are properly

kept, and at its monthly meeting the Defence Board at the very top of the structure regularly reviews reports of the risks that we are carrying and how we are managing them. It is not about how we get to a world with no risks; there will always be risks. It is about making sure that we have proper systems in place to capture and manage those risks, and that we have a proper understanding of what those risks are and how they impact on the decisions that we make. Obviously, as we invest in capabilities, we would expect to see risks reducing in certain areas. Since I have been in the Department, which is almost exactly two years now, that is certainly what I have seen—reds turning to ambers and ambers turning to greens on the risk register that we regularly review.

Q232 Penny Mordaunt: My final question: how do you deal with risks that you can identify, but that are not susceptible to deterrence? Again, there is a wide spectrum—space weather might be an example, or an irrational political leadership.

Mr Hammond: That is a threat. Risks include threats, but they also include risks that we are carrying within our equipment programme or within our manning balance, for example. In terms of externally delivered threats—risks such as space weather events—we are obviously aware of a range of risks that we face in that area. There are resilience strategies that can be put in place, and which are engineered into equipment and processes not only, in the case of space weather events, to make the equipment more resistant to the impact, but also in terms of planning contingency, should we be impacted by such an event and should there be a catastrophic system failure as a consequence.

Q233 Ms Stuart: I have a quick question. When Her Majesty the Queen went to the LSE she said, in reference to the banking crisis, “Why did none of you see this coming?” The answer was, “Because we all understood only a bit of our system and had lost sight of what the whole system amounted to.” In the light of new developments, such as cyber-security, that you are addressing, where is that “holding together” bit, where you see things coming in the light of various bits changing? Who is holding the threads?

Tom McKane: There are several answers to that. It comes back to bringing together a whole-of-Government view of the threats, so it is partly—

Q234 Ms Stuart: No, you misunderstand me. It is all of the existing threats as you understand them, and then the threads of the threats coming together, but who needs to spot that the sum of the individual bits is suddenly something other than what you thought it was? That is what we had with the banking crisis: they all understood the bits, and suddenly there was the most unholy of storms.

Tom McKane: I still think the way in which you try to make sure that you understand the overall impact of a series of different risks or threats is by trying to draw together the resources of the whole of Government in order to make sure that the picture that you have in your mind of the threats that you face is as rounded and complete as possible. The way we

9 October 2013 Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP, Edward Ferguson and Tom McKane

work is that the Cabinet Office, drawing on the resources of other Departments, brings it to the attention of the National Security Council.

Mr Hammond: We have in Shrivenham a capability to act, as it were, as an in-house think-tank—

Mr Brazier: I am sorry, I did not hear that.

Mr Hammond: We have an in-house think-tank in Shrivenham, in the Defence Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre, which thinks outside the bubble—a lateral-thinking process. Sometimes, people at one remove from day-to-day operational activity are able to see some of these bigger trends developing. There is a process by which papers are produced, and thought processes are kicked off across defence on a quite cerebral basis. It really is quite a sort of think-tank operation.

There are various things across Government. For example, you mentioned cyber, and we have the centre for—

Tom McKane: Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure.

Mr Hammond: Yes, where the impacts of cyber issues and cyber attacks on the broader national infrastructure are worked through, so that the vulnerabilities of utilities and other services that might be impacted by an attack on critical networks can be worked through and defensive strategies put in place. We have a number of mechanisms across Government that can absorb developments in one area and translate them into potential effects in other areas.

Q235 Mr Holloway: To continue Gisela's point, if we look at the Arab Spring, we have got radically different policies towards different countries. We are selling arms to some, we are arming others, we are threatening to bomb others and we are bombing others. Who, in answer to her question, has a joined-up view of what our strategy is and what our policy is towards the Arab Spring?

Mr Hammond: That is clearly the responsibility of the National Security Council, and it regularly looks both at an operational and tactical level at individual countries and the challenges there, and at a more strategic level at an issue like "the Arab Spring" and how it impacts us more broadly.

Q236 Mr Holloway: Bringing it down a level, the Permanent Secretary told us that he has responsibility for organisational strategy in the MoD and that the CDS has that for military strategy, obviously under you. How does that work in practice?

Mr Hammond: Very well.

Mr Holloway: Excellent.

Mr Hammond: If I am honest, I came into defence with warnings about non-collegiate behaviour, and I have largely found very good collegiate behaviour and very good relationships between the current senior civilian management and the current senior military management. There is an approach where in many areas things are done jointly. There are lots of committees that have military and civilian people on them and have joint decision making. At a practical level and in terms of the personal relationship involved, we have got a team at the top of defence, both civilian and military, that works together

seamlessly. Whether or not someone is in uniform—most of the military people do not wear uniforms most of the time in the MoD—it works pretty well together and there is a collegiate atmosphere. I have not found very much at all of the behaviour that I might characterise as the caricature of what the MoD would be like.

Q237 Mr Holloway: What about competition between the services? Is it only on the rugby pitch?

Mr Hammond: There is an important balance to be struck. Having a combative and competitive streak is probably a positive thing in military service and we certainly want to maintain an appropriate level of competition. The emphasis that is placed on joint effect, and the clear understanding that a commitment to joint working and collaboration is a precondition for holding a senior role in any of the services, or in the joint forces area, have changed behaviours. When you talk to relatively senior officers—those just below the top cohort—the difficulty of identifying after 20 minutes of conversation whether you are talking to a soldier, a sailor or an airman, if they are in civvies and you do not know them, is very striking.

Q238 Mr Holloway: What difference has the Defence Strategy Group made?

Mr Hammond: The Defence Strategy Group is focused specifically on the preparations for SDSR 2015. Do you want to talk about that, Edward since it is your baby?

Edward Ferguson: Yes. It plays back to the first question. We shared with the Committee a paper I wrote, which is one of the first papers that the Defence Strategy Group took up. It is called "Organising Defence's Contribution to National Strategy" and it set out how we try to—the DSG is really where this happens—fuse together the corporate strategy function that the PUS owns with the military strategy function that the Chief of the Defence Staff owns, along with the politico-military strategy function, which is the exertion of influence that is jointly owned between them, into something called defence strategy. That comes together in that group, which they jointly chair. That is important, because it is a forum where we can do the fusion of ends, ways and means, and it brings together the people who are capable of doing that. The discussions there have worked pretty well.

Q239 Mrs Moon: Secretary of State, I want to ask you a few process-orientated questions. How and when will outside influences be brought in to influence the next SDSR and to give their insight?

Mr Hammond: I cannot tell you either how or when, because, as the National Security Adviser has already told you, we have not defined the process yet. That is a Cabinet Office lead. He has indicated that he will be putting advice to the Prime Minister at the end of the year. I assume that that will include advice about the process for inclusion of cross-party political views and views from beyond the political bubble, which I would very much welcome.

Q240 Mrs Moon: So you are also not able to tell us when a Green Paper on this will be published?

9 October 2013 Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP, Edward Ferguson and Tom McKane

Mr Hammond: I am not able to tell you when or whether a Green Paper will be published, I am afraid. As the National Security Adviser has told you, that is an issue that the Prime Minister will decide in due course, before the process kicks off. Do you want to add to that?

Edward Ferguson: I was only going to add that that is absolutely right, in that the broader cross-Government approach—the engagement approach—is yet to be determined. In the Ministry of Defence and within the early preparatory work that we have been talking about, we have been doing quite a lot of outreach and external engagement. We have run a number of conferences—most recently, at the Royal College of Defence Studies, with about 80 experts from industry, academia and other areas coming to talk about the implications of technology change, for example. One of your advisers came to a session we did on the Arctic and the Antarctic. So we are engaging pretty broadly on the subjects that we have been putting to the defence strategy group. We have been trying to make sure that we bring in a cross-section of views, but again, this is really just the in-house Ministry of Defence work. What we need to do is make sure that that fits neatly into the cross-Government piece when that becomes clearer.

Q241 Mrs Moon: Will you have a red team, and if so, who?

Edward Ferguson: The red teaming, as a function, is owned, again, by the DCDC in Shrivenham, which we have talked about a few times. What we are trying to do, in the way that we are thinking our way into the SDSR in process terms, is make sure that challenge is built into the process at an early stage. Indeed, my team has been arranging for red-teaming training to be given to more staff in the head office, so that we can get better at this. The first training session is happening shortly. We think that challenge is important, and that red teaming is important. DCDC is the centre of excellence, knowledge and expertise, and we will use them, but we will also seek to enhance our ability to challenge ourselves.

Q242 Chair: Could you bring the concept of red teaming more to the fore in the Department, run by the National Security Adviser, please?

Edward Ferguson: I will see what I can do.

Mr Brazier: Just a quick one. I was very encouraged to hear about the technology conference. I recommend that you have two—one with opinion pollsters and the other with lawyers, because between public opinion and what is going on in the courts, which we will be dealing with in another study, there is a real danger that we may end up unable to use this structure.

Q243 Ms Stuart: You mentioned a number of times that cross-party consensus is important. When do you intend to meet the new shadow Defence Secretary, Vernon Coaker?

Mr Hammond: I met him last night.

Ms Stuart: Officially?

Mr Hammond: It depends what you mean by “official”. We sat in my office and talked through matters of defence.

Q244 Ms Stuart: Did you set a date for meeting again?

Mr Hammond: No. I have told him that my door is open. We can meet as often as he wants us to meet, and he has accepted my offer of an induction briefing from Ministry of Defence and military officials.

Ms Stuart: Thank you. Good.

Q245 Chair: My final question is on the Defence and Security Review that you are carrying out. How do you train people so that they have the necessary intellectual tools to carry out such a review?

Mr Hammond: Do you want to answer that, seeing as your team is responsible?

Edward Ferguson: As it happens, the Department has very kindly been supporting me through a master’s course at the LSE in strategy, which I have just completed. A number of other staff are going through that as well, including in the Cabinet Office and in the National Security Secretariat, where at least two staff have completed that course. So we are investing in some of those skills. The majority of my team are military and have been through the advanced command and staff course, which obviously includes an element of strategic training. I have now taken on a role lecturing it on an annual basis on strategy. They are trying to boost the strategic content of that course going forward.

We invest in routine training more broadly. We have good access, through the Ministry of Defence, to a range of opportunities to go to the think tanks and see what is going on. There are always things going on which we can draw on and learn from. We try to get out and about and away from our desks as much as possible, and to engage as widely as we can to build our network, so that we are not just talking among ourselves but drawing on a vast range of expertise. My team is relatively small. We certainly cannot do it all ourselves, so we need to draw on as much external expertise as we can, and we try to do that.

Q246 Chair: Are you able to say how many of the MoD people working on the review have strategy-related qualifications?

Edward Ferguson: I couldn’t tell you how many have a degree or some formal qualification with the word “strategy” in it.

Q247 Thomas Docherty: One quick question about co-operation. How much co-operation are you expecting to have with the United States as you prepare your NSS, and how much will you learn from each other? They are about to go through the same process.

Mr Hammond: Good question.

Edward Ferguson: Shall I start? I am pleased to say that I have pretty strong links into the office of the Secretary of Defence for Strategy and to my equivalent there, Dan Chiu, who is essentially running the quadrennial defence review. We meet and talk reasonably regularly. I have an American exchange officer embedded in my team, and we have a British exchange officer embedded in his team, so those links are pretty good.

9 October 2013 Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP, Edward Ferguson and Tom McKane

I am pleased also to have a French exchange officer embedded in my team, which is a relatively new thing and really helpful. We also have a good and growing relationship with the Délégation aux Affaires Stratégiques in France, which is now taking on a central role in the strategic development and international relations piece within the French system. So we are pretty well plugged in. We are seeking to engage with and help inform their quadrennial defence review, and we will seek to learn from their experience when they have been through it and to feed that back into our own process.

Mr Hammond: This is very important. If we are going to work closely with allies in future—principally the US and France—it is clearly vital that we have a similar strategic view of the world. As you will know, the British ambassador to France participated in the French *Livre Blanc* process, and we discovered, not to our surprise but to our great pleasure, that the French strategic analysis is almost identical to our own, which bodes extremely well for our ability to co-operate in future to develop joint approaches to challenges in the world and joint force responses.

Q248 Thomas Docherty: When we met your embedded personnel in the Pentagon earlier this year,

we were all very impressed. My final question is this. Would you therefore expect the US and the French to be positive and confident in coming forward and saying, “We think these are the things you should concentrate on in your SDSR”? Would you welcome them coming forward proactively?

Mr Hammond: We would want to have a high level of communication with both the French and the Americans, and possibly others. The format in which we do that is something that the Prime Minister would have to decide. In terms of how they would make their contributions, I suspect they would want to take a leaf out of the book of Sir Peter Ricketts, the British ambassador to France, who, I am sure, made all his suggestions in the gentlest possible way.

Thomas Docherty: Like we do.

Mr Hammond: Exactly.

Chair: We will now bring this evidence session, although not the meeting of the Committee, to an end. Thank you very much. It has been extremely lively, interesting and helpful.

Mr Hammond: As long as you don’t say “illuminating”, Chairman. Whenever I give evidence and the Chairman says it has been illuminating, that usually means trouble ahead.

ISBN 978-0-215-06603-9



9 780215 066039

