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TAKEN BEFORE

DEFENCE COMMITTEE

THE FUTURE OF THE UK'S STRATEGIC NUCLEAR DETERRENT:

THE STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Tuesday 21 March 2006

MR DAVID BROUCHER, PROFESSOR COLIN GRAY,  
PROFESSOR SHAUN GREGORY and PROFESSOR JOHN SIMPSON

Evidence heard in Public Questions 68 - 141

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Oral Evidence

Taken before the Defence Committee

on Tuesday 21 March 2006

Members present

Mr James Arbuthnot, in the Chair

Mr David S Borrow

Mr David Crausby

Linda Gilroy

Mr David Hamilton

Mr Dai Havard

Mr Adam Holloway

Mr Brian Jenkins

Robert Key

Mr Mark Lancaster

John Smith

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**Memoranda submitted by Professor Gray and Professor Simpson**

**Examination of Witnesses**

Witnesses: **Mr David Broucher**, University of Southampton, **Professor Colin Gray**, University of Reading, **Professor Shaun Gregory**, University of Bradford, and **Professor John Simpson**, University of Southampton, gave evidence.

**Q68 Chairman:** Good morning everybody. May I say a particular welcome to our academic witnesses who are giving evidence in this inquiry into the strategic nuclear deterrent. You are most welcome and we are grateful to you for taking the time and trouble to come along. The purpose of this inquiry, as I said last week, is not to come to a decision - that decision will be for others - but to inform the debate. We will be conducting in the course of this Parliament a number of different inquiries into different aspects of the strategic nuclear deterrent and this first one is in relation to the strategic context and the timetable that faces us. We have a lot of issues to cover, and we have a lot of members of the Committee and we have a lot of people who are giving evidence. Please do not feel that it is essential for each of you to answer every question. Please could I ask the members of the Committee to keep your questions as short and succinct as possible - no pre-ambles, please - and in answering questions to the panel please would you keep those as short as possible as well. The questions that we have are divided into distinct subject matters and if it is possible for you to stay within those subject matters (for example,



like, "Timetable"; or "Is it independent?" or "What is the attitude of the United States or of Europe?") it would help us in our inquiry. If I may, therefore, I would like to begin by asking whether the nuclear deterrent that we have is still effective as a deterrent now that the Cold War is over and in the post-9/11 world.

Professor Gray: My answer to that is that, at this moment, in 2006, it is admittedly very difficult to think of a scenario that is halfway plausible of the present time wherein it would be relevant. The main argument for retaining nuclear weapons, for Britain to remain a nuclear weapons state, is that we do not know what the 21<sup>st</sup> Century will bring. In my very short paper - brevity is not usually one of my strengths, but I made an exception for the sake of the Committee - I made the point that I do not think, in 1906, people looking out to the future would have got much of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. In 2006, to anyone who says, "I don't think that Trident is relevant to the Britain's security situation," Britain's security situation could change almost overnight. I am in the process of writing a book about the strategic history of the last 200 years and I am greatly impressed by the ability of strategic history to effect great changes and to surprise us. We do not know what the world of the 2010s and 2020s and 2030s will be like. We do know, I think, that the world of interstate conflict, as opposed to conflict against irregular enemies, is very likely to return. Whether or not it does, it is prudent of us to assume that it might, and the unique value of nuclear weapons for the protection, if you like, of the ultimate values of the country would be highly relevant in such a situation. Those who say our security future is to do with trans-national terrorists and other irregular forces are just guilty of the sin of presentism: they look out on the world of 2006 and they see the future. I think that is very foolish. The future brings all sorts of threats to which this will be relevant.

**Q69 Chairman:** How is it possible objectively to judge whether it is effective as a deterrent?

Professor Gray: If a weapons system of a military posture is effective as a deterrent you have no evidence for it. It is like the argument that we were good at deterrence during the Cold War. How do you know? We do not know. We may have succeeded in having a no war outcome despite our deterrent policies. We do not know that. There are no footprints in the sand.

Professor Gregory: I suppose I plead guilty to presentism, in a sense, to the charge that is made. You asked the question about now: Is it still effective as a deterrent? If



you look at the security horizon, even in the medium term, the principle threats that we face - threats of global warming, threats of terrorism, threats of collapsing states and civil conflicts, even proliferation - I just do not see the connectivity about deterrents in relation to these kinds of threats. I think Colin is right, the strongest argument is the longer term one. It is the issue of uncertainty. But, even in that context - and I am assuming that is something we are going to explore in the next couple of hours - I still think that looking forward it is difficult to see realistic threats to this country from other states which require us, given our allies, given the European Union, given the United States, to have a deterrent of our own - which, after all, I do not think is an independent deterrent. That is my position.

Chairman: We will come on to that in a second or so.

**Q70 John Smith:** The argument that we are guilty of presentism and we do not know what the future holds, is that not an argument for any military system and any price-tag on the defence budget? It could be applied to any scenario. Surely there must be some reference to intent and/or capability, either present or indeed in the future. We need to identify what these possible scenarios could be, otherwise we are justifying any defensive mode.

Professor Gray: I think that line of argument is unsound. You are right, in the sense that: anything is possible but some things are more likely than others. The danger of presentism is likely to dominate this particular debate, but the value of a nuclear deterrent is so obvious, and, if you like, the ultimate argument of Her Majesty's Government in a whole range of possible scenarios that it is not a case of this as opposed to other military capabilities. This is a quite unique capability. This is the most potent weapon that mankind has ever devised. As I say, it is, if you like, the ultimate argument. Objectively speaking, of course, one does not say, "We have this because the future is uncertain." It is a matter of judgment; but the judgment, I think, would indicate that, given the bad things that might happen in the future, the pay-off could be very, very considerable. I was troubled by the word used by Professor Gregory just now. The word was "given" - you know: "given this alliance; given the Americans; given Europe". I do not know what we should take as given for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Ten, 20, 30, 40 years from now, I do not know who is going to be allied with whom. I know who I hope is going to be allied with whom, but if we start saying, "Given the fact that we always operate with allies; we will always have an American ally; we will always be part of Europe; Russia will always be down and out; China will always be looking for its own prosperity before anything else; given the problems of climate change ..." -



with which, I think, by the way, we can connect strategically to a nuclear deterrent - be very careful of that word "given".

**Q71 Chairman:** Could I ask you, Professor Gray, please, to keep your answers a little tighter, if I may put it that way.

Professor Gray: Yes.

Chairman: If I may say to the rest of the panel: you will, with each question, have things with which you agree and disagree - that will be perfectly obvious because this is your speciality - but would you mind if we move on to the next issue, which is that of other powers.

**Q72 Mr Crausby:** First of all, specific threats - and I direct this question to Professor Simpson. What is the nature of the military threat that we currently face from China? How might that threat evolve over the coming decades? What level of investment is China putting into its nuclear programme, and how is its nuclear capability likely to develop in the coming years?

Professor Simpson: At the moment, there does not appear to be a nuclear threat to the United Kingdom mainland from China. They have some fairly ancient long-range missiles which I think take about two days to fuel up. Their main capability is a short-range missile, short-range weapons which appear to be focused on Taiwan. As to how China will develop, well, one can argue the past is no guide to the future, but it is interesting that the Chinese really have not engaged in an arms race with anyone. They do not seem to have been driven, as the US/USSR race was driven, by specific concerns about other states. They seem to want a capability but do not want to go beyond that, so their numbers of warheads are variously at the moment put at 300 to 500. Looking to the future, I think we have to ask ourselves what the world configuration is going to look like. There are indications that the United States is taking the view that China is going to be a competitor, but, at the same time, if you look at the American national security strategy document that came out very recently, they are also placing great emphasis on the need to try to address themselves to a cooperative, as it were, solution to their relationship with China. Therefore, as things stand at the moment, we are in a situation where China is a very major trading partner of ourselves. In the main, the threats that we would confront from China will be threats to our trading allies in the region, and will be threats, if you like, to the cheap consumer goods that we are able to obtain from China, from Japan, from South Korea. And it is not self-evident to me that under these circumstances we would want



to intervene vis-à-vis China and vis-à-vis that region with our own weapons.

**Q73 Mr Crausby:** Turning now to Russia - and I direct this question at Professor Gray. Russia's nuclear capability remains vast. Despite the end of the Cold War, serious questions remain about the security of its nuclear arsenal. What is the likelihood that the UK might face a threat from Russia in the coming decades? I accept, it is difficult to predict the future, but we have to, do we not?

Professor Gray: It is very difficult, certainly. The Russian Federation accords its highest investment priority in defence to modernising its nuclear arsenal. It has been boasting about it for recent years; it has the lowest threshold for nuclear use of any country's nuclear doctrine and it boasts of that. It has a strange theory that in the event of a conventional conflict - where Russia, of course, would be at a great disadvantage because its conventional forces, frankly, are a mess - it would employ nuclear weapons very early and it would implement nuclear escalation which it believes would produce a satisfactory outcome from its point of view. If you look at Russia today, it has, shall we say, unsatisfactory relations on most of its frontiers. No, it is not satisfied with its current situation. There is a whole plethora of quotations from senior Russians one can quote about how it views NATO, basically, as an enemy - and of course NATO is an enemy, in the sense that NATO stands between Russian realising its return as a great power in the current situation. You do not need to invent very imaginative scenarios to see Russian embroiled on several of its frontiers with countries in which we have a security stake or maybe to whom we have a legal obligation. Russia, as I say, is almost totally nuclear dependent in its defence positions. It has been emphasising a new generation of nuclear warheads, very precise, very low yield, and I say it has a very, very low threshold for nuclear use. It is not reconciled to the loss of the Baltics; it is not reconciled to the loss of the Ukraine; it is not reconciled to what has happened in the Caucasus; and NATO is right up against its frontiers. Who knows what the future of Russia will be - either under Putin, or who knows who will succeed Putin? I am not making a prediction; I am just saying that the notion that Russia was sort of yesterday's problem is, I think, an unjustified and unjustifiably optimistic assumption.

**Q74 Mr Borrow:** Could we perhaps move on to some of the emerging nuclear powers and a question for David Broucher, looking specifically at the threats from North Korea and Iran, and perhaps linking into that the possibility of Pakistan, which is in a pro-Western position at the moment, perhaps becoming rather more unfriendly in the future and



how that could configure if we are looking into the next 10 or 20 years.

Mr Broucher: Thank you. I think it is quite difficult at the moment to foresee a situation where the DPRK could directly threaten UK interests where the United States would not also be involved. Much the same, I think, is true of Iran. If Iran is, as we think, developing a nuclear weapon and the means to deliver it, its target is not the UK. Its potential target is likely to be a regional one rather than a UK strategic target. That is not to say that things will not change in the future, but, looking at the situation as it exists today, it is very hard to foresee either of those countries threatening the UK mainland. I think the same is true of Pakistan. I would perhaps be slightly less confident about that, but I think you would have to look a very long way into the future to see a situation where the UK mainland would be threatened by any of those countries and where the United States would not be standing with us.

**Q75 Mr Borrow:** Which other states do you think are likely to develop nuclear programmes between now and, say, 2030?

Mr Broucher: I think that depends very much on the future of the non-proliferation regime. One of my worries about this is the way in which the Non-Proliferation Treaty has been eroded. Confidence in this treaty is flagging, frankly, through the activities of the four countries that have remained outside the treaty and that are outside the treaty; through the activities of those who have been cheating within the treaty; and also, I think, through the failure of the existing nuclear weapons states to live up to their obligation to pursue negotiations on multi-lateral disarmament in good faith. If the Non-Proliferation Treaty were to break down, and if Iran develops a nuclear weapon, I think it is difficult at this stage to be precise about which countries might follow suit but there is a danger that you would see several countries considering the nuclear option. I think there are at least 15, perhaps more, countries in the world that could develop a nuclear weapon quite rapidly if they were to take the decision to do so, and this is why I think it is very important that any decision that we take takes account of the fact that we are, as it were, an actor in this play and that the actions of others are conditioned by the way in which they perceive us.

**Q76 Chairman:** You said 15.

Mr Broucher: That was a figure that I was aware of sometime ago, so it may not be current any more.

**Q77 Chairman:** Would it be possible for you to let us have a list of the 15 that you have in mind?



Mr Broucher: I can do some research into that, certainly.

Chairman: Thank you. I would be grateful.

**Q78 Mr Borrow:** Mr Broucher, I think you mentioned in answer to an earlier question about Iran and North Korea and Pakistan not being a direct threat to the UK. If we are looking across the wider group of nations who could develop nuclear weapons, how many of those do you think not only have the capacity to develop nuclear weapons but also the delivery mechanism to directly threaten the UK?

Mr Broucher: I think in fact very few. Unless you are looking at a situation where there has been a complete breakdown in the current security arrangements: the end of NATO, the end of European Union, a series of situations that we do not currently envisage, I do not think that is the real risk. The risk is that nuclear weapons will be developed by countries for regional purposes, particularly in the Middle East and perhaps in South-East Asia. If the denuclearisation of South America does not hold up, then there is a lot of potential there for nuclear mischief. As you know, there is a treaty that the South American nations have signed up to, keeping nuclear weapons out of that area, and the same applies to Africa and to South-East Asia. If that were to crumble, you could see a whole set of regional confrontations and conflicts that might impel countries in those regions to go for the nuclear option.

**Q79 Chairman:** Would any of you like to add anything to that?

Professor Gray: Could I say that I think David Broucher's assumption that the British denuclearisation would have an influence on decision making elsewhere is a fallacy. States which are thinking about going nuclear or having a nuclear option for their own very good local reasons would be entirely uninfluenced by the British example.

Chairman: We will come on to that in just a second.

**Q80 Linda Gilroy:** I was going to address this to Mr Broucher, although he has already given us some extensive views, on what the future is likely to hold for the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and I wonder if you have anything more to say about what we can do to halt the spread of nuclear weapons if the treaty continues to break down and does not recover.

Mr Broucher: I think that will be very difficult because the treaty provides the essential legal underpinning for the activities of the International Atomic Energy Agency. I think we do need an international watchdog, a policeman, if you like, to monitor the civil nuclear industry in a very



large number of countries to make sure that nuclear materials are not being diverted for weapons purposes. If the treaty did not exist, I think we would have to invent it or something very like it, but it is difficult to see how we could now negotiate a new treaty getting the same bargain that we got in the 1960s which allows five signatories of the treaty to keep their nuclear weapons on a temporary basis - and that is very important: that it was supposed to be a temporary basis - looking forward to the day when nuclear weapons would hopefully eventually be abolished. It may take a very long time to get to that desirable situation, but the fact is that the treaty was based on that premise, that one day there would be no nuclear weapons left in the world. If you abolish that premise, if you say there are always going to be nuclear weapons in the world, then it becomes very much more difficult to maintain the moral authority for saying that some countries can have it and some cannot.

**Q81 Linda Gilroy:** On the link you have just made with nuclear civil energy, and reminding us of the role that the treaty has in that respect, I wonder if I could perhaps turn to Professor Gray. You made a statement just now that there were indeed links between climate change and the decision on the deterrent. Could you perhaps say a bit more about that.

**Professor Gray:** It has been fashionable for quite a few years now to say that the old-fashioned, traditional reasons why states are in conflict (those who want sort of traditional power politics, et cetera) is no longer the security agenda and now we are concerned about pandemic possibilities and climate change, et cetera. The problem is that a fairly abrupt climate change could threaten international civility globally. Given, shall we say, the over-population in Asia, in particular, and the fact that climate change could be at its most adverse in the areas where the populations are, shall we say, at their greatest, we could literally be in a situation where very powerful countries were unable to feed and water their populations. In theory, one likes the idea that the world cooperatively would cope with climate change, but one fears that it might be a case of the 1930s, of *saive qui peut*, that suddenly one would find that the wonders of information technology and globalisation did not meet the need and that there would be a desperate need for arable land, a desperate need for clean water. The first duty of every government would be, of course, to see to the physical survival and wellbeing of its own people, and climate change, which really caused a crisis in terms of food and water and also in terms of energy provision, would strain every alliance tie, would strain every inclination to cooperation. One would not have to go very far down that road for the more powerful states to try to ensure that their populations had the food and water that



they needed. Suddenly, instead of the 1990s and the current notion that it is information that is the creation of wealth and happiness, one finds the old-fashioned need for, if you like, soil and water. You find that computers do not grow potatoes; that you need land; and suddenly the territorial issues, if you like, make a return to international politics. You could see climate change exploding civility in international politics. That is not a prediction, but I think climate change is in some ways the most threatening possibility to upset the whole game table of international politics in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

**Q82 Linda Gilroy:** Professor Simpson, in your paper to us you pointed out that by the end of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century global temperatures could rise between 1.4 °C and 5.8°C, and, while the argument exists over the role of human activity in this change, as Professor Gray has just been discussing, it seems probable that the variation, however caused, will impact on the international security environment in significant ways and pose the question to what degree the possession of nuclear weapons assists the UK in facing any threats that arise from climate change. Do you have a view on that which you would like to share with us?

Professor Simpson: I suppose, to put it succinctly, there are some extreme scenarios where you could see a British nuclear weapon capability assisting the UK in this context, but, certainly as we are attached to Europe and the EU, it seems to me that we are going to have to address these things on a regional basis. While I accept Professor Gray's scenario as one possibility, it seems to me, beyond this non-civil world that he is indicating would be generated by it, that it is very difficult to see - to make the banal but obvious point - how our nuclear deterrent is going to stop large areas of Lincolnshire being inundated with water.

**Q83 Linda Gilroy:** Could I turn to Mr Broucher and the Non-Proliferation Treaty in relation to civil nuclear energy and its role in relation to that. Nuclear energy produces waste, but it does not produce the emissions which cause climate change. There are ever upwards significant pressures for new resources for energy. We have an Energy Review, but, whatever we decide, I suspect the rest of the world will go down the path of adopting nuclear energy. Could you perhaps surmise what might happen in terms of the NPT and its ability to which you have briefly referred to try to contain the consequences of that for security issues.

Mr Broucher: I share your analysis. I think that does underline the need to preserve the integrity of the Committee to strengthen the authority of the International Atomic Agency; giving the agency more power, more funds, to



monitor the civil nuclear industry in the countries that already have it and other countries that may acquire it in the future to prevent the diversion of nuclear materials for military purposes. But that is only going to succeed if the countries that have to allow this inspection to take place on their territory remain within the consensus that that is the right way to go. If that consensus breaks down, then I think we are in serious trouble.

**Q84 Mr Havard:** This latest situation in India and the United States of America, where we seem to see people who are part of the process, if you like, having extra emphasis put on them, namely Iran, whereas people who were not a signatory get a benefit by getting a deal with the United States of America. Where does that leave us in terms of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the policing of it?

Mr Broucher: I can only say that I share your misgivings about that development. I must not lecture my American friends, but it may turn out to have been a mistake.

Mr Havard: Anything from unwise to a blunder, right?

**Q85 Mr Havard:** In the high level review that there was of the Security Council and its future last year, are you aware of any input there was to recognise the issue that we have just put on the table, about the links between trying to maintain security as nuclear energy itself proliferates within the world? Was there a discussion of which you are aware?

Mr Broucher: Yes, I believe there was in the run-up to that reform. The Security Council did become seized of the issue of weapons of mass destruction in general and the proliferation of the technologies and the raw materials that would be needed to make them and did what it could to strengthen the regime. Yes, the international community is aware of this issue at the highest level and is doing its best to counter it.

**Q86 Mr Havard:** Do you think it informed the debate at all about the make-up of the Security Council, which was under debate as part of that review?

Mr Broucher: Not directly, perhaps, but I think there is an issue here. There is a widespread perception, particularly among the non-aligned countries that in some way nuclear weapons are a passport to a permanent seat on the Security Council. I think this line of reasoning is absolutely pernicious and we need to be very clear that that is not the purpose of nuclear weapons. They do not confer, as it were, the right to sit on the Security Council and you do not need a nuclear weapon in order to be, for historical, economic,



diplomatic or whatever reason, entitled to sit on the Security Council.

**Q87 Mr Havard:** Do you think there should be a further review of the make-up of the Security Council to take into account the issues relating to obtaining civil nuclear power proliferation and its link with security issues in future?

Mr Broucher: All I can say about that is that it is absolutely essential that the Security Council should remain seized of the proliferation issue; but whether it is necessary to reform it further in order to achieve that, I am less certain.

**Q88 Mr Lancaster:** We have touched on this before, firstly with Professor Simpson's comments about China and then disagreement, I think, between Mr Broucher and Professor Gray, but to what extent do you think Britain's decision to pursue with a replacement for Trident or a strategic nuclear deterrent will really impact on other countries, both on the pace and scale of what they decide to do, or will it not impact on it at all?

Mr Broucher: If I may respond briefly to the point that Professor Gray made, of course I agree with him that there is no direct correlation. If the UK decided to give up nuclear weapons this would not directly influence any other country to do the same. That would be too facile. If you look at it the other way round: if the UK decides to keep nuclear weapons, will that perhaps influence other countries to wish to keep their weapon and countries which do not have a weapon to think that maybe they should have the right to develop one? there maybe the logic is not quite the same. If the UK were to take a kind of conditional decision that it would retain a nuclear capability if it were not able to restart multilateral arms control negotiations, then you might conceivably begin to get some movement. I would like to see a determined effort by the UK to restart the conference on disarmament in Geneva and move it down the track towards multilateral arms control. I think it is not impossible to envisage something like that.

**Q89 Chairman:** A decision whether or not to replace Trident and the effect that a UK decision not to do so might have on other countries is a question of such importance that I would like, if I might, to ask all of you for your views.

Professor Gray: I think a decision not to replace Trident would have no effect. In fact, this bears on the question of multilateral nuclear disarmament and article 6 of the NPT, where the nuclear weapon states committed themselves to negotiation in good faith for nuclear disarmament. That is, frankly, a nonsense. There has never been negotiation in



good faith for nuclear disarmament. There was mention in earlier discussion here this morning of potentially going down to zero. Zero nuclear weapons is, of course, utterly impossible, for the simple reason of verification: if you like, the country that hit the last five would win, and verification is utterly impossible. None of the current nuclear weapon states, to the best of my knowledge, have any intention - and that includes the UK - of abandoning their nuclear weapons because nuclear weapons are found to be too useful. If you endorse the notion of nuclear disarmament negotiations, it is a journey, literally, to nowhere. It cannot be a journey to zero, because, if we all signed a treaty saying zero nuclear weapons, it is utterly unverifiable and no-one could trust their security, their promise, if you like, to trust. If we trusted each other, we would not need the treaty in the first place.

**Q90 Chairman:** As you say in your memorandum, nuclear non-proliferation is a lost cause.

Professor Gray: Yes. We can slow it down and that may be valuable. Countries acquire nuclear weapons for reasons that to them seem very serious.

**Q91 Chairman:** Thank you.

Professor Gregory: I have, I suppose, a slightly different view. I agree with the idea that it is too simple to make a connection that if Britain gave up its nuclear deterrent then somehow - the old Labour unilateralist argument of the 1980s - we would lead some great international denuclearisation. I do not believe that. My point would be that removing(?) Britain's nuclear weapons, partly because of its dependence on the United States, is essentially irrelevant; in other words, if we have it or if we do not have it, it is not going to make any difference to whether regional states proliferate or to our security situation. But - but - I think there are a number of states in the world within the NPT framework who have stayed true to that framework, even though they have had the capability to develop nuclear weapons for many, many years - and a number of 15 states has been mentioned, We have had South Africa that has given up a nuclear capability, we have had states like Argentina and Brazil that have turned away from nuclear competition, and we have had the Ukraine that has given up nuclear weapons in the post-Soviet context. I think the possibility is open to Britain, through a phased denuclearisation, a decision not to renew, to assert diplomatic leadership in this field. We would be in a very strong moral position - and, do not forget, we are still a state that punches above its weight through all sorts of things - through the Security Council, through the EU, through the Commonwealth - and this would actually give us



much more leverage than simply carrying on in tow by the United States, so that our next 30 or 40 years look like the last 30 or 40. I think we have a chance to cut ourselves free from the American policy in this respect and that would be enormously, in my view, for all sorts of reasons.

Professor Simpson: First of all, there is an issue that you probably do not want us to go into at the moment as to what precisely you mean by replacing Trident. But, if we are to talk about a bald decision to go for another 30 years of Trident after 2025, I think that undoubtedly would have an influence upon the diplomacy surrounding the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. It certainly would make it much more difficult for the United Kingdom to take any diplomatic initiatives in order to strengthen the treaty, or, if you like, to prevent the degradation of the treaty that we see at the moment. This is why I agree with my colleague David Broucher, that if the United Kingdom were to decide to replace then I think that would have to be accompanied by a diplomatic initiative to try, as it were, to ameliorate the consequences. Now, on whether those consequences are real, I think it is impossible to provide any hard evidence - I mean, we are talking about attitudes, we are talking about the way in which people think about these things. But, undoubtedly, if the UK were to choose in a very bald way to say, "We are going to replace Trident," it would be used by those who wish to proliferate, as camouflage, if you like, as cover and justification for that decision. I am minded of what happened in 1958 when in fact the UK and the US decided that they were going to collaborate once more on nuclear weaponry and almost the next week the USSR (as it was then) and the People's Republic of China announced a similar agreement and justified it on the basis of the agreement that the US and the UK had made. In terms of the decision not to replace Trident, again, I think this is something where it is very difficult to put your finger on what the consequences would be in any hard way, but it seems to me that the United Kingdom would be fairly stupid to make a decision not to replace Trident and just to do it that way. It seems to me that if you are going to decide not to replace Trident then you need something in return for it: you need something in the multilateral arms control disarmament field; you need political initiatives to accompany it. But, at the same time, I think that a decision not to replace Trident (a) is not a decision for the British to give up a nuclear weapon capability and (b) is in fact legally going to be difficult for this to be done in any event, because, under the terms of the NPT, we are a nuclear weapon state; it is just we will become a nuclear weapons state which does not have an operational nuclear weapon capability.

**Q92 Chairman:** Yes, you have set that out in your memorandum.



Professor Simpson: Yes.

**Q93 Linda Gilroy:** Is there any evidence that the steps which have been taken to reduce the number of warheads and the state of readiness of the present deterrent have had any beneficial impact on proliferation?

Professor Gray: Not that I am aware of.

Professor Gregory: None that I am aware of, either, directly, no.

**Q94 Chairman:** Professor Gregory, you said that, for example, South Africa had decided to become a non-nuclear state. Was there any benefit achieved by South Africa in the diplomatic terms that you were talking about flowing from that?

Professor Gregory: I suppose that I think, in a sense, there was. You talked earlier about the non-nuclear treaty that covers the whole of Africa, the nuclear-free zone in Africa - the Pelindaba, I think it is called. The decision by the South Africans to do away with nuclear weapons in the post-apartheid transition allowed that deal, and also, in a sense, drew the sting of others on the continent, the Nigerians and others, who might - and still, indeed, might - develop nuclear weapons in that context. In that sense, it opened the door to a pan-African/non-nuclear/nuclear-free zone arrangement, and I do believe stayed the hand. I do not have evidence for this - and Africa is not my specialist area - but in the decade and a half since then we have not seen serious moves in the nuclear direction on the African continent - indeed, the reverse. States that we were worried about in 1990s, like Libya, like Algeria and others that were on the maps at the time as potential proliferators when people were talking about an "arc of crisis" encircling Europe, all fizzled.

Professor Simpson: I think it is arguable that, had it not been for the standing that South Africa gained in the nuclear non-proliferation area as a consequence of its disarmament, we would certainly have found it much more difficult to make the NPT permanent in 1995 and arguably it was the South Africans who were central to us being able to do that. Without the south Africans, it might not have happened. Of course, the same in fact applies to the Review Conference in 2000. The South Africans, in the context of the New Agenda Coalition, of which they were one of the leaders, took a very, strong, positive lead in that. The negotiations which produced a final document were negotiations between the New Agenda Coalition and the P5 essentially, and therefore I think diplomatically South Africans disarming was very, very significant in (a) strengthening their position within Africa and (b) enabling



the non-proliferation regime to survive through what could otherwise have been a very difficult period.

**Q95 Chairman:** But, if we look at what is happening in Iran, is not Professor Gray right to say that nuclear non-proliferation is a lost cause?

**Professor Simpson:** No, because what is happening in Iran is a mixture of two things. One is the problem of handling what many believe to be an Iranian desire for nuclear weapons - but a desire which is still probably about five years away from fruition. Secondly, it is something which is, as it were, at the point of a broader set of issues which were alluded to earlier: What is going to happen if, as a consequence in the rise in the price of oil, a significant number of states in future decide that they want to acquire nuclear power stations and the dual-use facilities which go along with them? Under those circumstances, we have to have a regime which attempts to come to grips with the problems associated with dual-use facilities, the problems associated with having a nuclear fuel cycle which is almost entirely in the control of the individual state in order to give that state security. We now see an exercise which is being attempted within the International Atomic Energy Agency, and also via American policy as set out in the latest document, to see if in fact one can set up an international system of providing fuel for power stations, low enriched-uranium fuel, while at the same time having this as part of a package which would enable one to pressurise other states, such as Iran, not to acquire the full fuel cycle for similar purposes because they guaranteed it on an international level - and therefore not to give them an excuse for acquiring enrichment capabilities, which is what we are all worried about at the moment.

**Chairman:** We have spent a long time on non-proliferation. Could we now move on to terrorism.

**Q96 John Smith:** Of course a very real and present danger to this country is the threat of international terrorism. What role do you think nuclear deterrent currently has or a future deterrent could ever have in terms of tackling this problem? The French, in January, announced publicly - and whether they did it or not, we do not know - that they had reconfigured their nuclear forces to target potential supporting countries of international terrorist groups, and threatened that nuclear weapons would be used against them if they were the victims of terrorist attacks. The British have not done that. Theoretically, at least, do you see a role for nuclear weapons in that?

**Professor Gregory:** I have not seen any credible analysis where anyone in France or here or in the United States has



come up with a way of using nuclear weapons to deter terrorists directly. Nuclear weapons are about, essentially, states. Therefore, the analysis that I have seen is about deterring state supporters of terrorism - assuming you can make that jump. Chirac said in his January statement that France for many years has had an anti-cities policy - basically, if you threaten France, it is going to destroy your cities - and France was responding to the so-called Saddam question: How do you deter someone who does not feel threatened by the holding to ransom of his or her populations? because they do not make the same calculations that perhaps more civilised states do. The answer is: You target their economic and political and military centres of power. That is what Chirac has done; that is what the French have done. In essence, we have done something similar in the UK - we have, and so has the United States - because everyone has been wrestling with this conundrum. Because we know we are going to have to justify nuclear weapons to our publics going forward, how can we find the right deterrence arguments to persuade them that these weapons still have utility in relation to these new threats?

**Q97 Chairman:** Posing that question to anybody else as well.

Professor Gray: One probably should not assume that one-size fits all, and that all terrorists are beyond deterrence. Certainly, I accept mostly what Professor Gregory has said: I am sure there are many terrorists who literally are beyond deterrents, but terrorists require support, and, to the degree that they require state support, the states that support them are capable of being deterred. There have been moves - certainly in Russia, certainly in France, not in the UK, and there are moves which are still in fairly early stages in the United States - to adjust the Cold War characteristics of the nuclear arsenal to make those nuclear weapons, if I may use the phrase, "more useable" and to have lower yields, to be able to apply them much more precisely - so the counterforce damage against very particular targets doing very little collateral damage - and it may be that some terrorist targets, particularly those that are very hard to find, in very difficult terrain, would be appropriate targets for nuclear action. There is relevance to having nuclear weapons, shall I say, to discourage terrorists or to discourage those who are supporting terrorists. In the new environment, we are not in the business of having nuclear threats to destroy populations. If we ever had to use those weapons, they should be employed against very particular targets and for very particular purposes, and that requires a nuclear arsenal that is not really the nuclear arsenal we have which we have inherited from the Cold War.

**Q98 Chairman:** Professor Gray, would your strategy be to



consider the possibility of using nuclear weapons against terrorists?

**Professor Gray:** Absolutely. If the political case and the military case required it, I certainly would not want terrorists and those who support them to say they can use weapons of mass destruction against Britain and we will do our best with conventional weapons to bring the roof down on their heads. I would like them to know that they are messing with a nuclear power.

**Q99 Chairman:** I see. Thank you. Professor Gregory?

**Professor Gregory:** I think there is another element to this that is important. The French explored the idea for a long time of *dissuasion du fort au fou*, in other words the deterrence by the strong of the mad, and it points us to the problem with the deterrence of terrorism which is not simply lack of targets and imprecision and all the rest of it; it is that fundamentally deterrence rests on you being certain or reasonably confident that you can understand the calculus of your adversary, the person you are seeking to deter, or the group you are seeking to deter. We thought we could do that with confidence with the Russians because we thought we knew them. We are less confident that we can do that with the Iranians and others because we know them even less and so on and so on and so on. My point is that in all the arguments I have read - and I am sure we have all read them - I have not seen plausible analysis that shows how one can deter leaderships of terrorist groups or others who may not (indeed the suicide bomber does not) make the same kind of rational cost-benefit kind of calculus with which we are used to dealing with state leaderships. I think this is just not something we can deter with nuclear weapons.

**Q100 John Smith:** Are there any grounds to believe that the Americans did consider in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 mounting a nuclear attack on Afghanistan?

**Professor Gray:** I do not believe so.

**Q101 John Smith:** It was never considered?

**Professor Gray:** I do not believe so.

**Q102 John Smith:** At any time?

**Professor Gray:** No.

**Chairman:** Now I would like to move on to the seat at the table issue. Robert Key?

**Q103 Robert Key:** We have dealt at some length with this



argument but there are some aspects of it that I would still like to explore. It is often said that possession of nuclear weapons gives the UK a seat at the top table and I was interested, Mr Broucher, that you said this was a "pernicious" idea. Would you explain what you mean by that?

**Mr Broucher:** When I was in charge of the UK delegation to the Non-Proliferation Conference I was often approached by diplomats from developing countries whose line would be: "The real reason you have nuclear weapons is because it guarantees your seat on the Security Council." If you accept the premise that you have got to have a nuclear weapon to be a permanent member of the Security Council, does not that, as it were, strengthen the argument for nuclear countries like, I do not know, Brazil or Mexico or Japan or I could go on, to develop this capability in order also to have a seat at the top table, and is it not rather better for us to establish that the reason we have a seat at the top table is because we are a powerful industrial nation with a great trading history and a great diplomatic history and we are a member of more international organisations than anyone else, a whole range of reasons why we can contribute. I do not think you need to be waving the big stick in order to justify your seat at the top table.

**Robert Key:** Does anyone disagree with that proposition? That is remarkable.

**Q104 Chairman:** --- I am not sure that Professor Gray in his memorandum entirely agrees with that proposition.

**Professor Gray:** It is an historical fact that members of the Security Council have been nuclear armed and the notion that we can change that unilaterally and the world would accept the logic --- The idea Mr Broucher has just outlined is attractive but I think - and I would not use the word foolish - it flies in the face of historical experience, which is to be a permanent member on the Security Council you have to be a very great power and very great powers are nuclear armed; at least they have been thus far. To try and rewrite that would be very difficult and not very persuasive. I think the diplomatic cost to Britain of abandoning her nuclear weapons would be very considerable and the case for Britain maintaining her position would become very much more difficult if she does abandon her nuclear weapons.

**Q105 Robert Key:** I notice that Professor Simpson said earlier that we would have to address these things on a regional basis but of course if we looked at it from a European point of view, in ten to 20 years' time it is quite clear that France under no circumstances, as far as I can see, will give up the nuclear deterrent, but we could see



that we might do so, which would leave only France with a nuclear deterrent. Do you think the United States would ever allow that to happen? That they would sit back and see Britain giving up the nuclear deterrent knowing that France would be the only European country with one?

**Professor Simpson:** First of all, at that stage you get into a discussion over what is a nuclear deterrent and what it is that we would have if we gave up Trident (or not have), but I think a great deal is going to depend on how the European Union, NATO, the whole European body politic evolves and our relationship with it, and in those circumstances I think you are into the set of questions which I posed in the memorandum of at what point in the proceedings might the United Kingdom and France link themselves militarily to Europe with the nuclear deterrent and would Europe in fact want a nuclear deterrent, as again we pointed out in the memorandum. If you have been in NPT forums you will realise that one of the problems the European Union has in getting a common position is that you have got two nuclear weapons states plus at least three states which were former neutrals and to try to get a common position from that group of states is not easy. It has been done but it is not easy. I think under those circumstances, let us put it this way, the United States would be very unwise to put pressure upon the United Kingdom to keep a nuclear deterrent which it decided it did not want to have. The real issue would be what would be the *quid pro quo* because if you go back to the UN Security Council issue, in many ways our real strength now is our ability to provide intervention forces, peace-keeping force under the UN umbrella. That is what we bring to the table. And again I think in an American context one of the questions that they might well look at is it better for the United Kingdom - this harks back to the late 1960s - to spend a lot of its defence resource on the nuclear deterrent, which does not appear really to have much relevance to global problems or to regional security problems, or to spend its money on forces which are useable and which do appear to be very relevant to the current and possibly future security problems of the United Kingdom and globally?

**Chairman:** Can we move on to the issue of independence now please. David Hamilton?

**Q106 Mr Hamilton:** I am still trying to work out Professor Gray's previous answer to the other question and that is that we nuke the terrorists because I am just thinking of how the Russians would deal with the Chechnyans in relation to that. It has far more ramifications than just the answer that was given. It is a real problem that we have got to deal with. Professor Gray, the Committee heard in its evidence session last week different perspectives on the



independence of the UK's nuclear deterrent and in particular about whether Trident or any successor system could be operated and maintained independently of the United States. In your judgment, is the UK's nuclear deterrent genuinely independent? What are the implications of any potential dependency we would have on the United States?

**Professor Gray:** Britain's nuclear deterrent since the early 1960s obviously has been thoroughly dependent upon the co-operation and indeed the willingness of the United States to sell us or loan us the most vital equipment, in other words the vehicles for delivery. So, yes, the independence of the deterrent is obviously highly questionable. Under what circumstances, grave national emergency and such like phrases, one can imagine an independent British decision, aside from American wishes, I have difficulty envisaging. From my own point of view, I think the Anglo-American connection regardless of what happens in Europe in a sense is our security environment. We learnt that three times in the 20th century, so as the holder of two passports - British and American - I am not the least troubled by the American connection, but for anyone who wishes to question the true independence of the British nuclear deterrent I would concede that it is, if you like, a hostage to American goodwill; I think that is true.

**Q107 Mr Hamilton:** But could the United Kingdom be totally independent of the United States in relation to Trident or is it too dependent on the United States satellites, guidance systems, software, and so on?

**Professor Gray:** It is my understanding that the dependency is critical and will continue. We certainly could develop a genuinely technically independent deterrent, but Trident I think could not be.

**Q108 Chairman:** Professor Simpson has something to add.

**Professor Simpson:** I think you have to be very careful in answering these questions to focus down on the components of the question, and in a sense there are three components. One is acquisition, one is use, and the third is decision making. It is true that the Trident missiles are held in a common stock at King's Bay with the United States missiles. It is equally true though that when on patrol it is possible for them to be used as a result of a United Kingdom decision. So to that extent use is something where the UK is independent in its ability to use and even though the missiles submarines are committed to NATO, in fact the decision system is such and the command and control system is such that it has to come through the UK naval system in order for the decision to be conveyed that they are to be used. So to that extent you have got independence. As to



whether or not the United Kingdom would ever be in a situation where it felt it had to use them itself, I have grave doubts, that is on its own and not in association with the United States or not in association with France. As I say, I have grave doubts about that because it seems to me that all conceivable situations where this might arise would be situations where the rest of the Europeans, either in the EU or NATO, were involved and therefore the threat would be a generalised threat to Europe.

**Q109 Mr Hamilton:** Professor Simpson, what would be the costs and benefits of limiting future dependence on the United States in our nuclear operations?

**Mr Broucher:** I think the benefits are likely to be benefits which would be only, as it were, felt in the longer term in acquisition, and in any event I suspect that unless you went for a totally different system from Trident, the only alternative is to actually look to the French or to look to a totally different system to give you greater independence but, as I say, I think you are talking here about a situation where there is going to be quite a lot of lead time. You are not talking about a situation where submarines are on patrol and someone in America then says, "We do not want you to use them." Under those circumstances I think the UK could still use them so you are talking very largely in non-independence independence terms about acquisition and, of course, acquisition cycles which, if you go for Trident, are liable to be very long, a decade/decade and a half, which is one of the reasons why our feeling is that in fact one of the issues you need to explore is whether the existing system's life can be extended.

**Q110 Mr Holloway:** To follow on from what Mr Hamilton was saying, can I ask Professor Gray could Britain independently detonate a nuclear weapon? Could we decide here is a spot that we would like to put one and we would like it to go off; can we do that on our own?

**Professor Gray:** Yes.

**Q111 Mr Holloway:** I thought you were implying earlier that we would not be able to do that

**Professor Gray:** Yes we could.

**Q112 Chairman:** So the satellite guidance, weather information, all of that is independently held by the UK, is it, or is available to us independently?

**Professor Gray:** I can think of no technical reason why we would be prevented from detonating a weapon if we so chose is my answer to that.



**Q113 Chairman:** But if you are so content with the dependence of the UK on the United States, what is the point of our having it?

**Professor Gray:** Well, I believe that the alliance with the United States has been proven by history, and common sense tells me as well that it is the prudent course for Britain for the future. I do not know what may happen. One can imagine all sorts of things. I do not know what the 21st century will bring. We may sail on happily with the American alliance and all will be well. If we are going to be in the expeditionary force business, as has been mentioned here in the discussion already this morning, British forces on a UN mandate or a NATO mandate will be around the world doing good, and I think it is important that behind the British element of the forces (which may be substantial in some cases) that there should be British weapons of mass destruction. No-one is going to care as much for the security and safety and, if need be, rapid evacuation of British forces as does the British Government.

**Chairman:** I see. Thank you. Let us move on to the timetable of the decision making whatever it might be. Dai Havard?

**Q114 Mr Havard:** We have done the preamble. The Government has said that decisions need to be made of certain types in this Parliament hence our inquiry. What I need to really try and get from you is a view about what sort of decisions you think we need to make in this Parliament, both in terms of political decisions and capability decisions, and why we need to make those decisions now. Can I start with you, Professor Gregory perhaps, as you were nodding at me.

**Professor Gregory:** I start from a point of view that I think we have got an historic opportunity to walk away from these weapons and that we should do that and therefore I do not think I am the right person to ask about the timetable for carrying them forward. **Chairman:** But there is a timetable involved.

**Q115 Mr Havard:** Exactly, there is a timetable involved in what you suggest as well, is there not?

**Professor Gregory:** Yes there is.

**Q116 Mr Havard:** There is a certain political timetable for that.

**Professor Gregory:** I understand. The Trident system, as far as I know, can run on until 2025. The Americans are talking about possibly extending the system as late as 2040 but you have 15 to 20 year cycles, which means we have to take a decision one way or another on this, as I understand it, by



around 2010. I know there has been debate about whether that is not slightly premature and, to be honest, I do not know what the exact physical timetable of these weapons is.

**Q117 Mr Havard:** Right, do you have a view, Professor Simpson?

**Professor Simpson:** First of all, I think there is one driver in terms of the missiles (and it is not my knowledge but my impression) and that is that there was an agreement with the United States which was of a specific duration over the storage and maintenance of the missiles at King's Bay. I have no knowledge as to what the end date of that was but I presume it was probably somewhere in the range of 2020 to 2025, and therefore there is a question of whether if you want to extend the life of the system you would have to make an extension to that agreement. I think that is in a sense the key decision as far as the United States is concerned in terms of having to make additional agreements with the United States to extend the life of the existing system and it may well be, I do not know, that the current Government and the current Prime Minister feels that such an extension is better negotiated whilst it is in office and he is in office rather than anyone else, and while the current American President is in office. I am speculating here but that seems to me a possibility. In terms of the warhead, as I think the Ministry of Defence memo indicated, there the question really is maintaining the technical credibility of the warhead into the indefinite future in a situation where we are not able to test because of the testing moratorium, and that is a possibility both for the United States and the United Kingdom, and France for that matter, who have this problem of sustaining the technical credibility of the warhead under a non-explosive nuclear testing regime, and that seems to be the route of the current collaboration between them. Insofar as there is a real driver to the current schedule, it appears to be the question of the submarines and there the issue appears to be a belief that the submarines have a limited life to the 2020 through about 2027 period, depending on which of the submarines you are talking about, and quite why that limited life exists is again not clear to me. Whether it is on hull fatigue, whether it is a consequence of the reactor and refuelling the reactor, or whether it is a problem over the capabilities at Barrow and what the nuclear submarine building programme looks like at Barrow, and whether there is a large gap after the Astute class finish building there, and whether therefore in a sense the decision is about whether we should sustain a nuclear submarine capability in the United Kingdom (because if one did not build a new set of nuclear submarines to take Trident then that capability would be lost). I do not know, but those seem to me to be the issues that are out there driving us.



**Q118 Mr Havard:** I do not think you are a million miles away from all of them together actually. Perhaps I could look at it in a slightly different way and look at where the United States are now because there is this relationship and it is so inter-linked. I have been watching with interest the Quadrennial Review they have just been having and statements within that. It seems as though to some degree they are looking at whether or not they need to upgrade and replace their own nuclear deterrent capability extending the new D5 (A) missile so they can go to 2042 and the Mk4 re-entry vehicle, and those sorts of things (the technicalities of the process) and also their own submarine fleet in order to continue to carry them so we know all of those things. What I really want to know is what you think is coming out of all that decision making that is happening in the United States, what the implications are for all of that about where it leaves us in making this decision that we have to make.

**Professor Simpson:** If I am honest I do not know the answer to that. All I would say is that the lesson of Chevaline for the Navy and the Ministry of Defence is never to be left out of step with the United States, never to be placed in a position where we have to effectively support an American system which is not in current service in the United States.

**Q119 Mr Havard:** What do you think, Professor Gregory? Do you see any implications from the current thinking in America that alters any of the timing of the decisions or the type of decisions we need to make?

**Professor Gregory:** I would agree with what John has just said. I think if we go, as is most likely, down the path of the continuation of existing policy (because that is in a sense the least risky option for the Government to take) then the experience of Trident the D5, for example, is we like to have the best system, the current system, the most up-to-date system, the system we know the Americans are going to support for the longest period of time because that gives us the "Rolls Royce" of nuclear weapons and so on and so on. I do not see us deviating from that policy. We are not going to replace Trident (if we do) with an aging system which, as John says, is going to be out of the American arsenal in a few years' time. We will not do that.

**Q120 Mr Havard:** Professor Simpson, you said a lot of this is clearly driven by the capability decision. We have to make decisions about procurement and acquisition of new submarines and all of that. We know the potential dates for the capability gap if we do not extend the life of the current boats and buy new ones and so on. The whole thing seems to be driven partly by that but also partly by the fact we are talking about strategic nuclear weapons. What I find interesting about the United States' position is that



they now say that they want to change from "threats from large institutional forces" to "irregular, disruptive and catastrophic threats". That is the conceptual change. It says it is "defeating violent extremists; defending the homeland; helping countries at a strategic crossroads; and preventing terrorists and dangerous regimes from obtaining weapons of mass destruction". That is what their policy is going to be based on. We have partly discussed about where do nuclear inter-ballistic missiles fit into that particular policy, and not into most of it it would appear. What I really want to get at is if there is going to be this change of debate in the United States, are we going to see a different form of nuclear deterrent? Is the nuclear deterrent not simply going to be strategic, is it also going to be thought to be sub-strategic, whatever that might mean, or is it going to move partly to tactical?

**Mr Broucher:** I think you had better stop there because that is quite a long question.

**Mr Havard:** That seems to me to be important in the sense that that all the decisions have been predicated on strategic inter-ballistic missiles being nuclear? Does it mean that it is going to morph into something different?

**Q121 Chairman:** Let us have some answers please. Professor Gregory?

**Professor Gregory:** I would look to the French for an answer to that. The French have kept two systems. They have kept their submarine-launched ballistic missile system for this basic strategic deterrence but they have also kept a stand-off, an accurate, aircraft-delivered missile system which is the system that they are adapting for striking these precision targets and articulating arguments in relation to holding at threat the various parts of a dictator's regime or taking out perhaps underground weapons of mass destruction centres, or whatever it is, and you are right to put this finger on this absolute conundrum. If Britain goes down the path of replacing Trident, ie a submarine-based launch, for all the arguments that one makes for that which really centre on the vulnerability argument (essentially, as long as we have something out there we always have this capability in a way that we do not have otherwise) I think that is always going to be in tension with the issue of flexibility. We have tried to fudge this over the last few years in the new context by articulating sub-strategic roles for Trident but those are pretty unconvincing, I have to say, and certainly the French and the Americans, as they face up to this new threat agenda as they see it, are doing that not on the basis of configuring their strategic systems but on the basis of developing these smaller high precision, more accurate and (many fear) more useable nuclear weapons.



**Chairman:** Linda Gilroy, do you have anything to ask here or shall we move on to Robert Key?

**Linda Gilroy:** I am happy to move on.

**Q122 Robert Key:** In broad terms how is the United States' nuclear relationship with Europe going to develop over the future decades? Could you get out your crystal ball and help us?

**Professor Simpson:** I am very tempted to make a response to you by saying I have got no idea at all! I think what is clear is that the relationship is evolving in so far as it has moved from one where Europe was heavily dependent upon the United States from a security perspective to one where Europe appears an increasingly important base or staging post for the United States if it is going to operate extensively in the Gulf, or if it is going to operate extensively in the stands in Central Asia. I think in turn that is going to generate a rather different relationship of costs and benefits from the perspective of the Europeans because it almost reverses the situation that we had before 1991 where the United States was committed to defending Europe and to that extent it was placing its homeland at risk from an attack from the USSR. Now in some ways we are in a situation where arguably Europe is going to be at risk from the areas in which the US wishes to operate in the next ten or 20 years because it is providing staging areas. For example, if missile defence were to develop a number of the key facilities for missile defence of the United States are going to be in Europe, and that missile defence is not necessarily going to defend Europe itself, so you are going to move into a rather different relationship. Quite how that relationship is going to play out, especially given a number of the European states in the EU were not in NATO and have not been in NATO and have taken a very different view of the United States to the view we take of the United States, I think is just very unclear.

**Professor Gregory:** I think again it is helpful to look at this from the Frenchist point of view. We are probably at the moment as close with the French in terms of nuclear co-operation as we have ever been. We set up this Joint Commission on Nuclear Policy and Doctrine under the Major Government, you will remember, in 1992-93 where we started to talk quite seriously in the post-Cold War context with the French about a whole raft of nuclear questions, largely staying away from the operational but co-ordinating arms control policy, talking about all sorts of things, co-ordination of nuclear policy in all sorts of fields. The French have this idea that Europe in the end will become a centre of power of some kind and if it is going to be a power, for the French, it needs to be a nuclear power, and



that means in the end the co-ordination of Britain's and France's nuclear weapons. The question concerns these European states within Europe who are neutral or anti-nuclear and do not buy into this kind of thing. The French have a wonderful way round this. They have this idea of *dissuasion par consteil(?)*. It means "by the fact they possess nuclear weapons", and the logic is this: any state that thinks about taking on the Europeans has to factor in somewhere deep in its recesses the fact that two of the European members are nuclear powers, therefore it does not matter whether these other European states accept this, want this, feel protected by France's extended deterrence or whatever, none of that matters; what matters is this fact. And the French will say that what that means is that sooner or later the other Europeans are going to have to talk to them about the European question and the best way I have heard it encapsulated is if European defence goes forward over the next 20 or 30 years so that we do eventually have some kind of European army, in whatever form it is going to be, that army will need a nuclear dimension. We cannot therefore sit and reach that end point and not have done any thinking about nuclear forces, so this co-ordination is going on. It is highly secretive. I have done research in Paris and here in London and found it almost impossible - no-one will talk about the Joint Nuclear Commission. The best way I heard it encapsulated is it is like a mole. It is going on underground quietly and then 20 or 30 years down the road, when need be, it will pop up. That is a nice little way of conceptualising it.

**Q123 Robert Key:** Can I be absolutely sure that I understand where France's deterrent rests. It is three components, is it not?

**Professor Gregory:** Two.

**Q124 Robert Key:** Four SSBN, three squadrons of Mirage-2000 equipped with air-launched missiles ---

**Professor Gregory:** Yes.

**Q125 Robert Key:** Does it not also have a flotilla of Super-Etendard on the aircraft carrier?

**Professor Gregory:** Yes it does but they all deploy one weapon, they all deploy the ASMP.

**Q126 Robert Key:** I want to come back to something you said earlier, but just for one moment is it conceivable that if the French buy into the British aircraft carrier programme and we find ourselves without our Joint Strike Fighter project, the Rafale will fly off both British and French carriers deploying French nuclear weapons?



**Professor Gregory:** It is an interesting thought.

**Q127 Robert Key:** It is interesting but could you comment on it, please?

**Professor Gregory:** In a sense this debate that we are having is being conducted with one of the big pieces of the jigsaw missing. We are thinking about either continuing our relationship with the United States or we are thinking about, as I would prefer, giving it up. The big hole here is the possibility of moving with the French down the path of a European deterrent and uncoupling ourselves from the United States, in which case these things you are talking about, like flying French missiles from British aircraft carriers, suddenly become less fanciful, let us put it that way. Yes, the French have a degree of technical collaboration and co-operation with the United States but have largely independent nuclear forces in all three realms of their submarines, their missiles (which Britain left decades ago) and their warheads. In essence - and I would not make this case - you could make a case for Britain moving towards the French as a way of actually empowering themselves paradoxically because they would be given by the French and would necessarily have as part of Europe a much bigger say in the development of the co-ordination of nuclear forces in Europe, allowing us to come technically on board in areas like computing and all these other things that we are working on, in a way that we will never have that kind of equality with the United States because they are simply too large, too powerful, and too dominant.

**Q128 Robert Key:** We have been told in the Committee that the French nuclear deterrent costs maybe three or four times as much as the British one because they do the whole thing from building the ships to the weapons themselves, whereas we of course procure and do not build our own system entirely. Why is it that there is such a difference in public opinion in France where they are prepared to see 20 per cent of their defence budget taken up on a nuclear deterrent? French public opinion is robustly behind the nuclear deterrent whereas in this country we are timid, we are doubting whether we should continue, we are talking about not doing it. What is the difference between the French democracy and the British democracy in this respect?

**Professor Gregory:** I think the two nuclear programmes have very different histories. The underlying thing for the French is that we need to remember that the French developed and started to go down their nuclear path in the 1950s. They had just passed through 70 years of history in which they had been invaded three times, in 1817, 1914 and 1940. For them, and it is still the case with Mr Chirac's statement in January 2006, the number one reason for the retention of



nuclear weapons for the French is to guarantee the survival of the state. I think there is a direct connection between that and the national humiliation of occupation. That is why.

**Q129 Chairman:** Do you think they are wrong?

**Professor Gregory:** In the modern context, yes, I do they are wrong because hopefully what I have been saying all morning has been consistent with the basic parameters of my thinking that nuclear weapons are not relevant to the main security threats we face now and most likely in the future.

**Q130 Robert Key:** I certainly can understand this idea that the French have a very different concept of something they call "the state" to which they are implacably wedded and emotionally involved at every level which we simply do not have in this country, we have a rather more practical approach. We touched on this question of Anglo-French nuclear co-operation which is apparently so secretive. I wonder if any of our other witnesses would like to comment on this secrecy.

**Professor Simpson:** Can I just make a comment of a more general nature. I think there is a difference between British and French defence planning in that the British defence planning is much more systemic, much more management technique-led, in that if you look at the 2004 Defence White Paper it is laid out there at the back just what are the contexts in which British forces will be engaged, what are the forces that are going to be needed for those contexts, and in a sense what it is that we are incapable of doing beyond those contexts by default, whereas the French have not arrived at that very almost clinical way of deciding what their forces are going to look like. Of course, in the UK case, the one element of the forces which really does not fit into this framework at all is the nuclear force. I think that is another reason why you have a rather different relationship. In terms of discussions with the French, clearly one element that makes life difficult is the commitments the United Kingdom has dating from 1958 that effectively they cannot talk to the French about nuclear weapon issues unless the United States agrees to it on specifics because that is part of the nature of that agreement.

**Professor Gray:** I think the French nuclear weapon programme is not only about survival in the context of the three invasions. It is also about the French sense of glory, of status and French self-regard, which also of course one can relate to French history over the last 150 years of course. I would like to throw a rock in the pool here by saying that I can imagine without too much of a stretch a continuing,



shall we say, drift apart of the Atlantic between Europe and the United States. I believe that if Europe does indeed become a genuine defence entity, then that is incompatible with NATO, and in some ways the stronger Europe becomes, if one can imagine that, the less likely it is that NATO will survive. NATO has been an American guarantee organisation essentially. If Europe, almost unimaginably from today, were to become a genuine potential partner in a defence and foreign policy sense, NATO as we know and love it could not exist. In fact, I think the relationship across the Atlantic is very dubious for its future anyway given the differences of outlook between the United States and Britain on one side and Europe by and large on the other. It came to a head, as we know, in 2002-03 over Iraq and I think we should not take for granted the fact that Britain can happily co-operate in the "European project" whatever that becomes and all the while remain happily part of the great family of American defence. I see a need for a choice. Personally I have no difficulty if I have to choose between being in bed with Washington or being in bed with Paris. I know what I would choose, and it would not be Paris!

**Q131 Robert Key:** Come off the fence, Professor!

Professor Gray: This is a serious point. As Europe comes together, if it does, and acquires, shall we say, a unified place in international politics, I think the existing structure and the existing relationship to the United States would alter and become much more distant. I think NATO would be very, very fortunate indeed to survive, bearing in mind that NATO is the only organisation that actively involves the United States in European security and the fact of course that the European project is sharing a continent with a heavy nuclear armed and nuclear focused irredentist Russia, and there may yet be lively times in Europe that do not appear in very much of today's commentaries.

**Q132 Robert Key:** I believe it would be a mistake to look at this issue entirely from the Atlantic end of Europe. This might be one for Mr Broucher. I am very conscious of the role of Turkey in the future of NATO and the future of European defence. I wonder if you have any knowledge on the perspective of how Turkey views this issue given the determination of the French and Germans that Turkey will never be part of the European Union and at the same time Turkey's determination that they will, and the fact that the Turks are determined to be good NATO partners? Do the Turks say anything about their role in the nuclear world? Do they have nuclear ambitions? Where would they see their preference? Would they prefer to see a French-dominated nuclear scene in Europe or an American and British one? Mr Broucher first, please.



**Mr Broucher:** I am not an expert on Turkey but I think it is true to say that the further east you go, the closer you get to the areas of instability around the former Soviet Union, around Russia, and the more you find that countries in that region look to the United States as the ultimate guarantor of their security. It would be my expectation that they value the US connection and ultimately the US nuclear umbrella and that you would not find them being particularly enthusiastic about developing an alternative strategy.

**Q133 Mr Holloway:** Can I just rewind about ten minutes. Professor Gray and Professor Gregory have been quite straightforward and clear about where they are coming from on this. Do either of the other of you favour Britain having an independent nuclear deterrent in the future?

**Mr Broucher:** I have never been in favour of unilateral disarmament. I do not think we should go out of the nuclear business unilaterally if we determine that our national security requires us to retain a weapon. I think there are questions now about whether that requirement still exists. I have always been in favour of multilateral nuclear disarmament and I think we have ceased to pursue that with the vigour that we used to give it and that we ought to revive that area. It may not work but I think it is something that has not been explored properly for a number of years and could be explored. I think the moves that we made to reduce our capability, in contrast to the opinions of my colleagues, did help to strengthen the Non-Proliferation Treaty and I believe that there have been negotiations in good faith in the past on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, on banning nuclear weapon from outer space, on banning nuclear weapons from Antarctica, and agreements among the nuclear powers to respect the non-nuclear status of South America, Africa and South East Asia. So there have been negotiations in good faith on that and there have been successful negotiations to outlaw biological and chemical weapons, so I do not think we should give up on arms control. If the decisions that we are going to take allow the timetable for us to approach this in slightly slower time then there would be a case for Britain taking a diplomatic lead in trying to restart multi-lateral negotiations.

**Q134 Chairman:** Before we move on to you, Mr Broucher, can I go into that a little bit more. I am going to go into contingencies here so you might not want to answer. If there were nothing on the table from somebody else that would make it worthwhile giving up our nuclear weapons, would you wish to see the nuclear strategic deterrent modernised in order to retain its usefulness?

**Mr Broucher:** I think the simple answer to that is yes. If we



cannot make progress with disarmament and there are going to be at least one, possibly two, nuclear armed countries that might be hostile to the United Kingdom, then you could make a strong case for us retaining the deterrent.

**Q135 Chairman:** Thank you, that is very helpful.

**Professor Simpson:** First of all, I think the issue of independence is a bit of a red herring in all this. It seems to me that if you have independence of use then the issue of where you acquire it from is not awfully significant. As long as you can acquire it the system will function, if it is to be used. In terms of the question you directly asked about the future, it seems to me that the issue is what sort of nuclear weapon capability are the British going to have in future, because just saying that you are going to abandon Trident does not mean that you do not have a capability. The real question is what sort of capability. To that extent it seems to me that the real issue here is how much of our military resources, how much of our national resources are we going to commit in the nuclear area as against in other areas? I am struck by this 49-page document which the Americans have produced because I think you would find it difficult to get what is said here about nuclear weapons and nuclear capabilities into two pages of it and it seems to me that the real judgemental issue that we face is what salience do we think nuclear weapons are going to have in the world of the future and in terms of our defence capabilities.

**Q136 Mr Holloway:** Sure.

**Professor Simpson:** All the evidence points to that evidence being very limited indeed.

**Q137 Mr Holloway:** So what is your opinion then?

**Professor Simpson:** I am inclined to go down the same road as David Broucher in that it seems to me the key question is what can you actually get from this decision-making process by way of reducing the capabilities of others, and therefore if it takes more time, if it is useful to extend the current capabilities to try to move multilateral negotiations on, let us do that.

**Chairman:** Then we will move on to the final area which we have covered to a certain extent already and that is the relationship with civil nuclear issues. Linda Gilroy?

**Q138 Linda Gilroy:** How relevant is the public debate over the future of the civil nuclear power to decision-making on the future of the UK's nuclear deterrent, in the sense that there are issues perhaps connected with the stockpiling,



reprocessing and storage of weapons-related nuclear material and waste that would be affected by a decision to abandon civilian nuclear power? I am not sure who might be most ---

**Professor Simpson:** Sorry, I am a bit lost, you mean a decision to abandon civil nuclear power?

**Q139 Linda Gilroy:** We have an on-going energy review at the moment in which there is a big debate about the future role or non-role of nuclear energy. If we were to continue going down the path of gradually letting go of our nuclear energy what would be the implications in relation to any decision about the nuclear deterrent? Does that pre-empt the decision about the nuclear deterrent or have additional costs for the nuclear deterrent?

**Professor Simpson:** I do not think the two are connected in any obvious way. The military sector is completely insulated from the civil sector now. I do not see any obvious need to acquire additional fissile material for any decision, at least I do not at the moment see any need to acquire additional fissile material for military purposes. In fact, we have already transferred some plutonium from the military to the civil sector. There is an issue over nuclear submarine fuel which is a slightly complex area.

**Q140 Linda Gilroy:** The processing of the waste and the costs of that would lie entirely with the military programme rather than the civil programme?

**Professor Simpson:** I am not quite sure what waste you are going to process out of the military programme because the fissile material is there. You might have to rework some of the plutonium to wash out material which had gradually built up over time but that cost would be very small and would probably be done in a plant which is not committed to EURATOM. One of the things you have to remember is that France and the United Kingdom, unlike the United States and Russia, are under EURATOM safeguards, so in a sense anything that is not specifically military is safeguarded via EURATOM.

**Q141 Linda Gilroy:** Finally how does public opinion on the future of civil nuclear power compare with public opinion on the future of the nuclear deterrent? Is there any correlation or crossover in the debates that are going on?

**Professor Simpson:** I have not seen any figures.

**Chairman:** Does any of you know what the public opinion on either of them is? If you do not, I think we had better finish there. Can I thank you very much indeed for your very helpful and interesting evidence this morning. We are most



grateful and I would also like to thank the Committee for keeping it tight and brief.



