

**NEW NUCLEAR, NEW SECURITY? FRAMING SECURITY IN THE POLICY
CASE FOR NEW NUCLEAR POWER IN THE UNITED KINGDOM¹**

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New Nuclear, New Security? Framing Security in the Policy Case for New Nuclear Power in the United Kingdom

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Abstract

Over the period of the past decade and across successive governments the case for new nuclear power in the UK has, in policy terms at least, become embedded as a key facet of UK energy policy. Crucial in this respect, this paper argues, has been the framing of the case for nuclear power stations and associated infrastructure in security terms: that is, the case for new nuclear power has come to be articulated and consistently reiterated in direct relation to future energy provision and climate change as key impending 'security challenges' faced by the UK. Drawing on different approaches to the analysis of framing in application to policy discourse, as well as engaging debates in critical approaches to the study of security, this paper assesses the political significance and effects of framing nuclear power in security terms. In particular the paper focuses on how a specific framing of new nuclear power in relation to security has the political effect of narrowly defining and delimiting the ways in which nuclear security – and nuclear insecurities – can be articulated and understood.

Introduction

The statement “nuclear power is controversial” is, somewhat ironically, one of the few uncontroversial claims that might be made when discussing nuclear power at both national and global levels. Long-standing concerns about the safety and efficacy of nuclear power emanating historically from events such as those that took place at Windscale in 1957 (see Arnold 2007) and later at Three Mile Island in 1979 and Chernobyl in 1986 have, for some at least, simply been reinforced more recently by those that occurred at Fukushima Daiichi in March 2011 (see, for example, Perrow 2011). Proponents of nuclear power, by contrast, point to what they see as the ‘robust’ record of nuclear power in terms of safe operation, relative to the number of nuclear power plants in operation globally and their period of operation (see, for example, World Nuclear Association 2012). National governments likewise diverge on the merits and risks of nuclear power. Fukushima and its aftermath prompted a major review of Japan’s nuclear infrastructure, whilst it led to reiteration and acceleration of Germany’s pre-existing commitment to phase out its domestic nuclear power provision. And yet other states’ development and expansion of civil nuclear infrastructure appears relatively unaffected by the aftermath of Fukushima, and even in spite of the continued presence of pre-existing popular and political anti-nuclear constituencies. The UK provides a case in point in this regard, having already set a course for a programme of ‘nuclear new build’² – the term commonly used within UK policy debates as shorthand for the construction of new nuclear power stations – under successive New Labour and then Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition governments.³ That commitment has been reiterated explicitly in the wake of a review of potential ‘implications’ of the Fukushima incident for the UK (see Huhne 2011: 1).

This paper argues that the concept of security plays a key function in articulating the justification for the UK’s policy on nuclear power and consecutive governments’ commitment to nuclear new build. Rather than offering a direct contribution to the debate on whether the future of the UK should be, as one collection puts it, ‘Nuclear or Not?’ (Elliott 2010) or a straightforward polemic either way, the paper instead seeks to investigate the framing of that debate in the first place. It analyses how the

² The UK currently has nine operational nuclear power stations, all but one of which is due to reach the end of their ‘operational lifetime’ in the period between 2016 and 2023. Eight sites for new nuclear power stations, all located on the sites of existing nuclear power stations, have now been identified as suitable for nuclear new build: Hartlepool, Heysham and Sellafield in the north of England; Sizewell and Bradwell in the East; Oldbury and Hinkley Point in the Southwest; and Wylfa in the Northwest of Wales (see DECC 2012).

³ The Liberal Democrat party having dropped their previous opposition to a new generation of nuclear power stations as part of the coalition agreement, on the proviso that no public subsidies be provided for nuclear new build – see Macalister (2010).

governmental case for new nuclear power has been constructed, rearticulated and reiterated over time. The introduction and use of the concept of 'security' within the UK's nuclear discourse at governmental level is a marker of a key policy shift in which greater impetus and emphasis is given to the UK's nuclear 'revival' (Findlay 2011: 1). The UK is of course not unique in citing 'security' as a driver of revived interest in civil new nuclear power.⁴ But it is especially notable in this regard given that the governmental discourse in the UK shifted from a general position of reticence towards nuclear power and the case for nuclear new build in the late 1990s (see Greenhalgh and Azapagic 2009) to one in which the future provision of electricity from (and infrastructure for) nuclear power is judged to be an issue of overriding public interest. Given the now apparently commonsensical acceptance, at the policy level at least, of the 'need' (see also Teräväinen *et al* 2011) for nuclear new build in the UK we might ask: how has that political acceptance been articulated, justified and determined?

In response to the above this paper makes the argument that security *matters* in the recent context of recent UK nuclear policy and political decision-making, and the concept of 'security', when used in association with the UK's policy on nuclear new build, is itself articulated and rearticulated in specific and important ways. This not only has potentially far-reaching political implications in respect to the case of the UK, but also and consequently provides an important case of relevance to the contemporary study of security. Whereas the disciplinary study of security has long been concerned with (and might even be argued to owe its initial post-war impetus to) the study of nuclear weapons and strategy (Buzan and Wæver 2013), it has generally been less well attuned to the ways in which 'security' might feature in discussions of civil nuclear power.

Addressing the latter in application to the case of the UK generates findings that are pertinent in this regard. In particular, the paper makes the argument that the UK's new nuclear policy discourse is characterised by two related, but distinct, conceptions of security. For the purposes of the paper and for brevity these are distinguished conceptually as a 'negative nuclear security' frame and a 'positive nuclear security' frame. The former refers to the usage of the phrase 'nuclear security' to denote the physical security and integrity of nuclear installations, facilities and materials. The latter refers to a broader and more all encompassing association of nuclear power with provision of *national* security for the UK itself, now and in the future. Here 'nuclear' and 'security' are not conjoined (as in the previously outlined understanding of 'nuclear security'); rather, nuclear power, and the expansion of the UK's nuclear infrastructure is framed in a more expansive sense as being key to addressing

⁴ For broader global overviews and comparative accounts of different national contexts in this respect see Adamantiades and Kessides (2009); Findlay (2011: 5-32); Pelopidas (2012); Teräväinen *et al* (2011).

urgent and immediate issues of achieving 'energy security' on the one hand and avoiding the potentially disastrous consequences of climate change on the other. By way of clarification, the 'positive' and 'negative' labels here are explicitly *not* intended as intrinsic value judgements by the author. Instead they are used to denote the association of either negative or positive connotations to nuclear power within the specific discourses that are analysed. In the former understanding, 'negative nuclear security', denotes a frame in which new nuclear facilities constitute a source of potential security risks and thus carries associated negative connotations; in the latter 'positive nuclear security' frame, the same facilities are seen as a key element in addressing energy insecurity and the potentially catastrophic effects of global climate change, and hence the 'positive' association and connotations.

The differentiation between the 'negative nuclear security' and 'positive nuclear security' frames in the UK's policy discourse is more than semantics. Recent interventions in the field of critical security studies have suggested a note of caution against a monolithic or universal understanding of 'security' and its political effects within (policy) discourses, instead suggesting that analysts approach this as a question to be addressed within specific policy contexts (see Browning and McDonald 2011: 4): that is, *what does 'security' do politically?* In this case, we might ask, what difference, if any, does it make to conceive of and frame civil nuclear power in the UK in *security* terms? Examination of the UK policy discourse indicates that whilst elements of a 'negative nuclear security' frame do feature, the 'positive nuclear frame' is potentially more significant in that it is seen to supersede potential concerns about the safety risks, cost, and efficacy of nuclear power provision. The latter also provides an overarching framing that argues that the UK's reliance on nuclear power for a substantial part of its energy provision is essential, with consequent practical implications for the expansion of its civil nuclear infrastructure.

Framing new nuclear power in this manner, as is argued below, structures (and pre-structures) the policy debate in particular and important ways. In particular, the security framing of new nuclear power in this instance can be regarded as an attempt at achieving discursive closure, wherein, for example, concerns about potential *in*securities associated with nuclear power are acknowledged but regarded as ultimately subsidiary to larger national 'security' goals. The seemingly commonsensical status of the 'positive nuclear security' framing within policy produces a self-referential argument for nuclear new build in the UK. With regard to current debates within critical security, then, the framing of nuclear power in relation to 'security' in this case represents not simply a further instance of the 'hyphenation' of security (Buzan and Hansen 2009) or attempted 'securitization' of an issue

(Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde 1998); in this instance at least, it also constitutes a case where 'security' is invoked as means of circumscribing the limits of debate to an expert/policy level (cf Aradau 2004, Balzacq 2011). As is discussed in more detail below, in so far as public consultation and engagement are concerned a strong argument can be made in this case that such processes are largely performative and reiterative (of the overarching frame) rather than substantive in nature. This is not to say that there are no other ways of framing 'security' in relation to 'nuclear': such counter-framings are potentially latent even within detail of official policy, and have certainly been highlighted by those who questions the grounds of the case for new nuclear power by pointing to negative security risks. But the overarching policy frame leaves little space for articulation of such nuclear insecurities and, in this sense, the case of the UK's nuclear new build policy might ultimately be said to constitute an instance where '...insecurity is frequently a zipped lip' (Booth 2007: 168).

To make this argument the paper proceeds by firstly outlining its approach in relation to the study of policy frames, relating the wider literature on policy framing to concepts and analytical strategies developed within critical approaches to the study of security discourses. It then moves on to assess in detail, via analysis of key policy texts, the security framing of the case for nuclear new build in the UK, and, specifically, the prominence and reiteration of the 'positive nuclear security' frame. Finally, the paper reflects on potential 'counter-frames' and, in reference to the study of security discourses more broadly, the political implications of framing policy issues in relation to security.

Framing as Political Signification

Analysis of policy framing is often referred to as a 'fractured paradigm' with its own internal distinction and divergences in how it is conceived of and applied (see Entman 1993: 51). Entman contends that the study of framing addresses the twin concerns of '*selection and salience*' in relation to the conceptualisation and constitution of a policy 'issue' *per se* as a problem requiring some designated form of action: '*To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation*' (Entman 1993: 52, emphasis in original; cf Bacchi 1999; 2009). Frames thus 'diagnose, evaluate and prescribe' (ibid).

Different approaches, self-identified as being concerned with policy framing (see Chong and Druckman 2007 for an overview) might be said to share this minimal commonality. They diverge, though, in terms of the methods for and purposes of the analysis of policy framing. For some a

primary concern in the analysis of policy framing is to unpick the genesis of individual policies. The emphasis here tends to be on investigating the 'real' motives and intent behind the drafting and deliberation of policies, attendant coalitions and conflicts amongst relevant political elites, and the relative roles of both institutional structures and agenda setters (or 'policy entrepreneurs') in successfully defining a 'problem' in policy terms (see, for example, Daviter 2007). If this approach to policy framing can be said to exhibit a concern primarily with the 'formulation' of a policy problem as such, others might be seen to be more concerned with what might be termed instead as the 'shaping effects' of policy framings after they have been formed. Here policy framing is approached as a rhetorical strategy by which political actors (most usually, although not limited to, governmental elites) seek to frame an issue in a manner that is most conducive to 'winning' the support of a particular audience, constituency or public (Lakoff 2002; Riker 1996).

There are, though, reasons why an emphasis on either formulation or shaping might be avoided as both create substantial - and possibly even insurmountable - 'methodological hurdles' (Krebs and Jackson 2007: 40). An exclusive focus on the gestation and formulation of a particular policy frame involves an attempt at reconstructing the twists and turns that ultimately lead to a specific policy formulation, and weighing up the relative roles and significance of individuals, groups and institutions in that process.⁵ It relies not only on gaining access to 'insiders' involved in the processes of formulation, but also on their own retrospective and potentially partial recounting of formulation processes. Conversely, accounts that focus on the 'shaping effects' of a particular policy frame are not as naïve to suggest that either individuals or public opinion are simplistically directed or duped by policy frames. But they do tend towards a subsequent methodological approach that places an emphasis on measuring or gauging, in a quantifiable sense, the extent to which a particular policy framing is 'persuasive' and has been accepted and internalised (or not) by its target audience (for an overview and review of the potential limitations of such approaches, see Jerit 2008).

From an alternative perspective emphasis on both formulation and shaping effects may in fact potentially crucially miss a wider political significance of policy frames – and, indeed, their wider importance as a form of *political signification* in their own right (on the 'politics of signification' see Hall 1985). When viewed as a form of political signification, questions relating to both the formulation and shaping effects of policy frames are subsidiary to a broader analytical concern with 'what actors say, in what contexts, and to what audiences' (Krebs and Jackson 2007: 36) rather than questions of 'intent' or 'persuasion'. Framing an issue is, in itself, both an inescapable facet of policy

⁵ For a comparative account on the policy formulation of recent nuclear new build policy from a historical institutionalist perspective that employs interviews with policymakers, see Baker, Stoker and Simpson (2012).

making – policy discourse necessarily frames the issue it refers to in one way or another (Lakoff 2002: 372-373) – and an inherently political act precisely because, as Entman puts it, it necessarily entails judgements on ‘*salience* and *selection*’. The specific framing of a policy issue involves privileging some forms of interpretation, presentation and representation rather than others, including some ‘expert’ voices and not others, prescribing particular courses of action and not others (Bacchi 1999: 1-2), and constructing imagined audiences or publics to which the frame is addressed (Wynne 2011: 7).

Policy frames thus necessarily have political effects; moreover they often prescribe and (seek to) legitimise particular decisions, practices and courses of action, not least when they issue from governmental authorities. They may also of course shape, prospectively in fundamental ways, the manner in which individual and collective audiences perceive of, understand, and respond to an ‘issue’ – such as, in this case, in relation to nuclear new build in the UK. But, equally, the analysis offered in relation to this case suggests that certain policy frames may actually be considered more important as a form of political signification that seeks primarily to establish, circumscribe and, crucially, delimit the terrain of political action and debate. Indeed, these are all aspects of the study of framing to which critical approaches to the study of security discourse have arguably been more keenly attuned than has mainstream political science (see Milliken 1999: 229; 236; Doty 1993: 298; Hansen 2006: 18, 21; Krebs and Jackson 2007: 35-36; Weldes 1999: 110; and, in more specific relation to nuclear disarmament and arms control, Cooper 2006 and Pelopidas 2011). In such instances convincing or persuading an audience might be seen as a secondary goal in relation to the primary political act of policy framing and the attempted establishment of ‘warranting conditions’ (Fay, 1975: 85, as cited in Weldes 1999: 13) for a particular course of action.

In this sense, then, the approach to policy framing offered here moves closer to Snow’s outline (although espoused in relation to collective action frames in his case) wherein (policy) frames

...focus attention by punctuating or specifying what in our sensual field is relevant and what is irrelevant, what is “in frame” and what is “out of frame,” in relation to the object of orientation. But frames also function, perhaps even more importantly, as articulation mechanisms in the sense of tying together the various punctuated elements of the scene so that one set of meanings rather than another is conveyed, or, in the language of narrativity, one story rather than another is told (Snow 2004: 384).

In particular this paper seeks to analyse the ways in which UK policy on nuclear new build has been framed in relation to ‘security’ in a manner that has become a persistent, consistent and arguably even hegemonic over the past decade in the form of what is termed here, for shorthand purposes, as the ‘positive nuclear security’ frame. As Gamson and Modigliani note in a related context, ‘Nuclear policy, like every policy issue, has a culture. There is an ongoing discourse that evolves and changes over time, providing interpretations and meanings for relevant events. An archivist might catalog the metaphors, catchphrases, visual images, moral appeals, and other symbolic devices that characterize this discourse. The catalog would be organised, of course, since the elements are clustered; we encounter them not as individual items, but as interpretive *packages*’ (1989: 1-2, emphasis in original).

The paper thus catalogues and investigates the ‘interpretive packages’ associated with ‘security’ in the UK’s new nuclear policy discourse. It does so by qualitatively analysing the particular usages of the concept of security in policy documents and statements related to nuclear power issued by government agencies and associated institutions in the UK as a set of texts (Milliken 1999: 233) that cumulatively built and restated the policy case for nuclear new build in the UK (see Table 1 below).

Table 1
Key UK Nuclear New build Policy and Policy Consultation Documents (in chronological order):

DTI = Department of Trade and Investment

BERR = Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform

DECC = Department of Energy and Climate Change

DTI (2003) *Our energy future – creating a low carbon economy* [Energy White Paper, February 2003]

DTI (2006a) *Our Energy Challenge: Securing clean, affordable energy for the long-term* [Energy Review Consultation Document, January 2006]

AEA Technology Environment and Databuild (2006) *Analysis of Responses to the Energy Review Consultation* [carried out under contract for the DTI; June 2006]

DTI (2006b) *The Energy Challenge* [Energy Review Report, July 2006]

DTI (2006c) *Policy Framework for New Nuclear Build* [Consultation Document, July 2006]

DTI (2007a) *Meeting the Energy Challenge: A White Paper on Energy* [Energy White Paper, May 2007]

DTI (2007b) *The Future of Nuclear Power: The Role of Nuclear Power in a Low Carbon UK Economy* [Consultation Document, May 2007]

BERR (2008) *Meeting the Energy Challenge: A White Paper on Nuclear Power* [Energy White Paper, January 2008]

DECC (2009) *Draft National Policy Statement for Nuclear Power Generation (EN-6)* [‘Planning for new energy infrastructure’, November 2009]

DECC (2010a) *Revised Draft National Policy Statement for Nuclear Power Generation (EN-6) Volume I of II* [‘Planning for new energy infrastructure’, October 2010]

DECC (2010b) *Appraisal of Sustainability of the revised draft Nuclear National Policy Statement: Main Report* ['Planning for New Energy Infrastructure', October 2010]
 DECC (2010c) *The Government Response to the Consultation on the Draft National Policy Statements for Energy Infrastructure* ['Planning for New Energy Infrastructure', October 2010]
 DECC (2011a) *The Government Response to the Consultation on the Revised Draft National Policy Statements for Energy Infrastructure* ['Planning for New Energy Infrastructure', June 2011]
 DECC (2011b) *Overarching National Policy Statement for Energy (EN-1)* ['Planning for New Energy Infrastructure', July 2011]
 DECC (2011c) *National Policy Statement for Nuclear Power Generation (EN-6) Volume I* ['Planning for New Energy Infrastructure', July 2011]
 DECC (2011d) *National Policy Statement for Nuclear Power Generation (EN-6) Volume II* ['Planning for New Energy Infrastructure', July 2011]

The focus of the analysis is on not only the substantive understandings of the concept of security and how they are employed and articulated (see Weldes 1999: 98-103; Hall 1998) but also their recurrence, repetition and reiteration over time and across documents intertextually (Hansen 2006: 55-59). The latter is used as a means of gauging both the incidence of security frames in the UK's policy discourse on nuclear new build and their consistency over time, as well as on identifying the associative chains (Weldes, 1999: 98) between, for example, 'nuclear' and 'security' and their associated positive or negative connotations. The paper then addresses the question of what is left 'out of frame' in this case by examining countervailing concepts and concatenations of 'nuclear' and 'security' that are marginalised in or absent from the policy discourse.

Framing Security in the UK's New Nuclear Policy Discourse: Diagnosis, Evaluation, Prescription

In the UK context, energy security and climate change (with the latter occasionally also rendered as 'climate security' – see DTI 2007a: 28) have been and are central to the governmental rationale for new nuclear power. Across a variety of policy statements that have accumulated in the past decade (see table 1 above), a consistent theme that emerges is the priority of addressing the challenges of energy (in)security and climate change/security and the importance of new nuclear power in addressing those twin challenges. This is not to say that either the current or previous governments present nuclear power as a silver bullet solution to the UK's energy needs, or to the goal of cutting emissions of carbon. But, increasingly, the view presented is that although nuclear power has its 'disadvantages', such as the production of radioactive waste, and though it brings 'risks' associated with 'safety, security, health and non-proliferation', its 'advantages' (with respect to both energy independence and meeting carbon emission quotas) outweigh the disadvantages and risks (DTI 2007a). The 2007 Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) White Paper titled *Meeting the Energy*

Challenge: A White Paper on Energy (DTI 2007a) – published in the last days of the Tony Blair era – provides a representative example in this respect, arguing as it did that:

The United Kingdom has a challenge in common with every other nation of the world. Energy is essential for economic growth, and although the link between growth and energy use has become weaker the world's demand for energy is increasing rapidly, leading to greater competition for finite natural resources. Energy that comes from fossil fuels produces greenhouse gases which if not mitigated, threaten the stability of the world's climate [...] We will need to tackle that challenge as our own natural resources decline, and we become more dependent on imported fuels. We need therefore, to establish a strategy which delivers both energy and climate security. It is not sustainable to achieve one without the other. The investment decisions taken over the next two decades, will be critical in determining the world's energy and climate security and, therefore, its economic future (DTI 2007a: 28).

The White Paper went on to cite the contemporaneous findings of the IPCC (International Panel on Climate Change), which predicted rising temperatures and sea-levels (DTI 2007a: 30), as well as the potential for increasing 'resource nationalism' and conflict arising from resource scarcity (DTI 2007a: 32). In this context, the White Paper made the case that 'New nuclear power stations could make an important contribution [...] to meeting our needs for low carbon electricity generation and energy security in this period and beyond to 2050' (DTI 2007a: 185).

In doing so, the 2007 DTI White Paper made a number of interrelated arguments: (1) that energy security and climate change (the latter with potentially calamitous knock-on effects for the stability of the global order) will provide the preeminent security issues for the UK in the future; (2) that addressing these challenges requires action now; and (3) that the historical performance of nuclear power in the UK warrants considering the risks associated with its safety, security, health and non-proliferation as 'very small' (DTI 2007a: 195). The 2007 DTI White paper also invested a sense of urgency into the issue arguing that 'Because of the lead-times [involved in planning and building new nuclear power stations] without clarity now we will foreclose the opportunity for nuclear power' (DTI 2007a: 185); or, as the case is made more forcefully elsewhere in the same document: 'Not taking the public interest decision now would foreclose the option of new nuclear being one of our options for tackling climate change and achieving energy security' (DTI 2007a: 186).

This 'positive nuclear security' frame consistently runs through recent government White Papers, policy statements and public consultation documents. But in making its 'provisional' case for nuclear

power and nuclear new build, the 2007 DTI White Paper had to address and reframe previous policy. It did so explicitly by quoting directly from a prior 2003 White Paper, *Our Energy Future – creating a low carbon economy*, which stated that at that point in time provision of electricity from existing nuclear power plants was ‘...currently an important source of carbon-free electricity’. But the 2003 White Paper also noted the crucial caveat that ‘[However,] its [nuclear power’s] current economics make it an unattractive option for new carbon-free generating capacity and there are also important issues of nuclear waste to be resolved. These issues include our legacy waste and continued waste arising from other sources’ (DTI 2003: 12). The White Paper consequently committed that any decision to proceed with the building of new nuclear power stations in the UK would need to be preceded by ‘the fullest public consultation’ (DTI 2003: 12).

The DTI 2003 *Our Energy Future* became a keystone point of reference in the subsequent policy case for nuclear new build in the UK (e.g. DTI 2006a: ii; 1; 11; DTI 2007a: 15; DTI 2007b: 9; 14; BERR 2008: 38) and in subsequent public consultations (DTI 2006a: 7). *Our Energy Future* had sounded a note of caution about the ‘current’ economic merits of new nuclear power and a commitment to public consultation, but in a later and more detailed iteration of the same basic point stated ‘[But] we will keep the [new nuclear] option open’ (DTI 2003: 44). Consequently, subsequent (and more positive) policy evaluations of nuclear new build have had to make the case that changes in context render nuclear new build as both desirable and economically viable; and has also had to also take into account the 2003 commitment to ‘the fullest public consultation’. In part, then, the onus has been on government to make the economic case for nuclear new build, frequently by reference to models that outline the relative implications, with respect to energy prices and markets, of ‘nuclear included as an investment option’ versus the costs of excluding ‘new nuclear as an option’ in the period up to 2050 (DTI 2007b: 85-99). And frequently the argument is made that failure to pursue nuclear new build will result in a ‘gap’ (DTI 2007b: 182; BERR 2008: 52; DECC 2009: 7, fn18; DECC 2010c 17) in the UK’s electricity production as current nuclear power plants come to the end of their operational lifespan.

In the policy case for nuclear new build post-2003, the fine points of the economic arguments for and against new nuclear power in the UK (which, as with any attempt at projecting future scenarios, are open to argument based on alternative calculations – for discussion see Shrader-Frechette 2011) are crucially framed initially in relation to ‘energy security’, and this is intertwined with the twin ‘challenge’ of addressing climate change. Arguably the paradigmatic framing in this regard came in

then Prime Minister Tony Blair's foreword to the DTI's July 2006 Energy Review Report *The Energy Challenge*:

A clean, secure and sufficient supply of energy is simply essential for the future of our country [...] Ensuring we have a sustainable, secure and affordable energy supply is one of the principal duties of Government.

As a nation, we have been fortunate up to now that our energy needs have been met largely from domestic sources. Coal, with oil and gas from the North Sea more recently, have driven our economy. Investment in nuclear power has also provided a significant proportion of our electricity.

But we now face two immense challenges as a country – energy security and climate change. (Blair in DTI 2006b: 4, emphasis in original).

Blair went on to stress that meeting these challenges would not simply depend on gaining access to new, environmentally-friendly sources of energy. It would also require 'saving energy', changes in patterns of energy consumption and greater promotion and use of renewable energy sources. 'But', Blair continued, 'neither renewable energy nor greater energy efficiency can provide the complete solution to the shortfall we face. This will depend on securing energy supplies from abroad, in [sic] new nuclear power stations to replace those becoming obsolete and replacing older coal-fired stations with cleaner, more efficient technology' (Blair in DTI 2006b: 5).

Within this short sequence, Blair effectively established what might be regarded as the template for the 'positive nuclear security' frame: energy (in)security and climate change are identified as key imperative challenges, and nuclear new build is then specified within the frame as making a positive and required contribution as part of a multifaceted approach to addressing those challenges. Working within this larger frame, the detail of the report went on to argue that 'Based on a range of plausible scenarios, the economics of nuclear now look more positive than at the time of the 2003 Energy White Paper' (DTI 2006b: 113). It thus explicitly sought to address one element of the conditionality established in 2003, albeit with the caveat that '[However,] it will be for the private sector to make commercial decisions on investment in nuclear'. Moreover *The Energy Challenge*, whilst reserving final judgement on the investment potential of nuclear new build for the private sector, went on to prescribe a 'facilitating' role for government in addressing 'regulatory barriers' to 'enable industry to undertake long-term planning' (DTI 2006b: 121).

From Consultation to Reiteration

In Entman's terms, then, *The Energy Challenge* thus states a diagnosis (of the nature of the twin challenges of energy (in)security and climate change), an evaluation (of the changed economic light in which nuclear new build should be seen) and a prescription (nuclear new build as a key component in avoiding a 'gap' in UK electricity provision, led by private sector investment but encouraged and facilitated by governmental review of regulatory 'barriers'). However, as already noted, the previous 2003 Energy White Paper committed any subsequent attempts to revisit the option of nuclear new build to being accompanied by 'the fullest public consultation' (DTI 2003:12). When the New Labour government realigned its position on nuclear new build post-2003, it consequently issued the Consultation Document *Our Energy Challenge: Securing clean, affordable energy for the long-term* in January 2006 (DTI 2006a). Here again the positive nuclear security frame is immediately evident. The first page of the 2006 consultation document establishes the security frame in relation to both climate change and energy security, and a collective responsibility to act accordingly: 'we need to ask ourselves if we are doing enough to identify and manage potential risks in this new situation' (DTI 2006a: 1). Specifically, among its five public consultation questions *Our Energy Challenge* asked:

Q.3. The [2003] Energy White Paper left open the option of nuclear new build. Are there particular considerations that should apply to nuclear as the government re-examines the issues bearing on new build, including long-term liabilities and waste management? If so, what are these, and how should the government address them? (DTI 2006a: 7).

After setting out the practicalities of how to respond to the consultation, the document then went on to set out the overall context of the government's Energy Review process, and 'Progress so Far' on 'goals' and 'challenges' such as reducing carbon emissions (with projections on global climate change specified in detail), ensuring reliability of energy supplies, and addressing fuel poverty. In an annex to the consultation document, nuclear power generation was then reviewed as part of a more general 'Overview of Generating Technologies' as well as Carbon Abatement Technologies, Renewable Technologies, and Micro-Generation (DTI 2006a: 59-65), as well as summarising and presenting in tabular form assessments and information from multiple studies on the 'Comparative Economics of Different forms of Generation' (DTI 2006a: 66-69).

After the consultation document (DTI 2006a) was issued on 23rd January 2006 and the response phase closed on 14th April 2006, the DTI contracted AEA Technology Environment and Databuild to

analyse the responses to the consultation (AEA 2006). Taking this as a basis from which to 'clarify our position on new nuclear build' (DTI 2006b: 96) the subsequent Energy Review Report in July 2006 had notably evolved the title of the consultation document *Our Energy Challenge: Securing clean, affordable energy for the long-term* (DTI 2006a) into the Energy Review Report's title of *The Energy Challenge* (DTI 2006b) and endorsed nuclear new build. Notably, however, the framing of the *Our Energy Challenge* consultation document, and in particular the framing of question 3 as quoted above, was later challenged in the High Court by Greenpeace on the grounds that '...the consultation process leading to the decision was procedurally flawed' and that the government's decision to support nuclear new build as announced in *The Energy Challenge* was therefore 'unlawful' (as cited in Royal Courts of Justice 2007: 3).

The dissection and discussion of the case is detailed extensively in its recording (Royal Courts of Justice 2007), but, in essence, the challenge brought on behalf of Greenpeace questioned whether the consultation undertaken actually met the previously promised (DTI 2003: 12) standard of 'the fullest public consultation'. The discussion and conclusions of the case stated that '...the public had been promised not merely consultation but the "fullest public consultation" in respect of the new nuclear build issue' (Royal Courts of Justice 2007: 28/para 1). Instead, the court concluded that *Our Energy Challenge* more closely resembled an 'issues paper' and that 'The purpose of the 2006 Consultation Document as part of the process of "the fullest public consultation" was unclear [...] As an issues paper it was perfectly adequate. As the consultation paper on an issue of such importance and complexity it was manifestly inadequate. It contained no proposals as such, and even if it had, the information given to the consultees was wholly insufficient to enable them to make "an intelligent response". The 2006 Consultation Document contained no information of any substance on the two issues which had been identified in the 2003 White Paper as being of critical importance: the economics of new nuclear build and the disposal of nuclear waste' (Royal Courts of Justice 2007: 45/para 116, emphasis in original).

Philip Johnstone argues in his assessment of the court's conclusion that it indicates that 'The rhetorical framing of this significant question cast doubt as to the extent that the [consultation] process was in fact "open ended"' (Johnstone 2010: 95), with question 3 in the consultation reducing to process to considering issues associated the 'option of nuclear new build', rather than posing, or allowing the opportunity to respond to, a substantive question on the nuclear 'option' *itself*. The security framing of (taking) the nuclear option, was arguably intended to make governmental consideration and selection of that option more defensible and robust in the face of

such critiques. Appearing on BBC TV News in the wake of the court's findings, Prime Minister Blair on 28th March 2007 declared that 'we may have to conduct the public consultation again, but that won't change the policy' (as cited in Wynne 2011: 14). As Blair's statement indicated, consultation processes have since taken place again (see, e.g. DTI 2006c; DTI 2007b), although some have argued that '...the process was simply repeated with an increasing rhetorical entwining of nuclear with climate change in an attempt to influence an outcome of "reluctant acceptance" towards the nuclear option' (Johnstone 2009: 96-97).

Consistent with the argument made here, the point might be made that the purpose of renewed consultation may actually be considered to be restatement and reiteration of the 'positive nuclear security' frame, rather than convincing an audience or 'winning' consent per se. Subsequent policy and consultation documents in the wake of the High Court judgement still continued to reiterate the positive nuclear security frame, which comes to be a point of certainty within the policy case for new nuclear even as other issues – such as nuclear waste and geopolitical change – are associated with greater uncertainty. The 2007 DTI White Paper *Meeting the Energy Challenge* provides a representative exemplar in this regard. On the issue of nuclear waste it referred (although without specifics) to '...technical solutions for waste disposal that scientific consensus and experience from abroad suggest could accommodate all types of waste and from existing and new nuclear power stations' and promises consultation on long-term waste disposal in a geological repository with attendant opportunities to '...discuss the ethical, intergenerational and public acceptability issues' within the 2007 White Paper's own outline of its consultation framework and questions (DTI 2007a: 185-186). Before it moved to outline the consultation questions, though, the DTI 2007 White Paper firstly and crucially reiterated the overarching (energy) security case for new nuclear within an 'uncertain' global environment:

We face a great deal of uncertainty about our energy supplies over the next couple of decades. Most obviously the pace of climate change and geopolitical developments. But there are also uncertainties relating to future fossil fuel and carbon prices; the speed at which we can achieve greater energy efficiency and therefore likely levels of energy demand here and globally; the speed, direction and future economics of development in the renewable sector; and the technical feasibility and costs associated with applying carbon capture and storage technologies to electricity generation on a commercial scale [...]Tackling climate change and ensuring energy security will require action on many fronts: both supply and demand, engaging individuals and business. Unnecessarily ruling out any of the options available is likely to increase the risks of not achieving these objectives. Our

preliminary view is that preventing energy companies from investing in new nuclear power stations would increase the risk of not achieving our long-term climate change and energy security goals, or achieving them at higher cost' (DTI 2007a: p.186-187).

This representation of the problem effectively restates and reiterates the positive nuclear security frame immediately prior to specifying the consultation questions on the issue of nuclear new build: nuclear new build on this view *adds* to the UK's overall security in the longer term with respect to tackling global climate change (and its potentially catastrophic and calamitous geopolitical effects) and security of energy supply. The view is cast as 'provisional' and 'preliminary', which might indicate scope for revision and rethinking, but, simultaneously, the predicted dire consequences of not adopting this diagnosis and its recommended prescriptive actions leave little room for interpretive flexibility in that regard. The consultation question which was outlined then put the onus on respondents to either agree with or challenge the positive security frame:

Question 3: Do you agree or disagree with the Government's views on the security of supply impact of new nuclear power stations? What are your reasons? Are there any significant considerations that you believe are missing? If so, what are they? (DTI 2007a: p.190).

The same White Paper also pre-empted the possibility of a negative framing of nuclear power by acknowledging the existence of 'risks' (DTI 2007a: 195) associated with nuclear power stations; but it simply states confidence in the existing national regulation in this regard, as well as pointing to sources of 'international scrutiny': 'Nuclear power stations pose safety, security, health and non-proliferation risks that need to be managed. Accordingly, there is a regulatory regime in the UK that caters for existing facilities and would protect against the risks arising from any new nuclear power stations [...] A recent review by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) concluded that the UK's regulatory regime was well advanced, flexible and transparent, and the inspectors were highly trained, well-experienced experts' (DTI 2007a: 195).

Framing the Public Interest

In the subsequent *Meeting the Energy Challenge: A White Paper on Nuclear Power* produced by the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR) in January 2008, Blair's successor as Prime Minister Gordon Brown cited climate change as '...quite simply the biggest challenge facing humanity' and reiterated the Government's determination to '...provide strong leadership in

meeting not only the challenge of climate change, but in addressing the imperative of ensuring secure energy supplies [...] That is why the Government has today concluded that nuclear should have a role to play in the generation of electricity, alongside other lowcarbon technologies' (Brown in BERR 2008: 4). In the same document, John Hutton, the Secretary of State for Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform, encapsulated the security argument for nuclear power in an even more fundamental way: 'Energy is an essential part of modern life. We need secure, clean and sufficient supplies if we are to continue to function as a modern society' (Hutton in BERR 2008: 5).

The consultation process on nuclear power between the publication of the DTI's White Paper on *Meeting the Energy Challenge* in 2007 and BERR's *White Paper on Nuclear Power*, and the government's response to it, is instructive in terms of how energy security and climate change are seen to favour new nuclear power in the UK. The BERR 2008 White Paper not only reiterates and establishes the problem framing familiar from the DTI 2007 White Paper, but also characterises, via summarization, the responses to the consultation questions outlined in the DTI 2007 White Paper and discussed above. Between them, then, the DTI 2007 *Meeting the Energy Challenge: A White Paper on Energy* and BERR 2008 *Meeting the Energy Challenge: A White Paper on Nuclear Power* top and tail this consultation process. Hutton begins by noting that 'We received 2700 separate written responses to the consultation. A further 1600 people participated in meetings up and down the country' (in BERR 2008: 5). He then goes on to argue that the results of the consultation process backs the government's initial endorsement of new nuclear power as 'low-carbon', 'affordable', 'dependable', 'safe' and 'capable of increasing diversity and reducing our dependence on any one technology or country for our energy and fuel supplies' (BERR 2008: 5).

Once again, it's not the case that official policy assumes that nuclear power alone can address these challenges; nor does it pretend that nuclear power is uncontroversial (see BERR 2008: 14). Hutton went on to note reservations expressed in some of the consultation responses on a wide range of issues that include 'the adequacy of protection in the areas of safety, environmental release of radioactivity and national security', 'the appropriateness of relying on energy companies for the construction, operation and decommissioning of nuclear power stations', 'the perception that investment in nuclear energy will "crowd out" investment in alternative technologies, particularly renewables', 'the argument that the contribution nuclear energy makes to the UK's overall energy mix is currently quite small, calling into question the materiality of any contribution nuclear might make in the future to tackling climate change and ensuring security of energy supplies' (BERR 2008: 5).

Ultimately, however, the positive nuclear security frame remains preeminent and takes precedence over such concerns as a matter that is in 'the public interest' (BERR 2008: 5; 7; 10). With regard to the creation of new nuclear waste, for example, as raised by some respondents to the consultation as an issue associated with new nuclear, BERR's 2008 White Paper states that 'The Government agrees that the creation of new waste raises ethical issues [and] has considered the comments that nuclear waste would be an unacceptable legacy for us to leave for future generations.' (BERR 2008: 97). But the Government's response again reiterates the priorities of energy security and climate change as trumping or outweighing such concerns: 'We have also noted the arguments put forward that nuclear power may provide significant benefits to future generations, particularly in terms of reducing CO2 emissions, as well as improving security of energy supply, which will help to ensure that future generations have access to the same or a better standard of living to the one that we currently enjoy' (Ibid). Similarly, the BERR 2008 *White Paper on Nuclear Power* reiterated the theme from the earlier White Paper that 'decisions on nuclear power are needed now' due to the lead-times required to build nuclear power plants and to allow for the necessary investment from energy companies (BERR 2008: p.13). And again, as in the preceding DTI 2007 White Paper, concerns about proliferation risks are assuaged by reference to external institutions and authorities (the IAEA and Euratom Safeguards (BERR 2008: p.78).

With the *Draft National Policy Statement for Nuclear Power Generation (EN6)* the Department of Energy & Climate Change (DECC) reiterated the view that nuclear power 'could bring significant benefits in meeting the government's climate change and energy security objectives' in its 'Appraisal of Sustainability' (DECC 2009: 3). Acknowledging that government 'cannot rule out' that designated 'European sites adjacent to or at a distance from' new build sites might experience 'adverse effects' at some point, a consideration required by the European 'Habitats Directive'⁶, the Draft NPS indicated that the government had accordingly presented a case for 'Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest' in relation to nuclear new build. Here the positive nuclear security frame remains crucial as it ultimately underpins DECC's interpretation of 'Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest'. The Habitats Directive makes allowance for conditions under which a project can proceed even in spite of potential for 'adverse effects' if a case can be made that there are imperative issues at stake in relation to human health, public safety and environmental benefits.

⁶ 'Council Directive 94/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Flora and Fauna' - full-text available at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CONSLEG:1992L0043:20070101:EN:PDF> [accessed 29 January 2013].

Consequently DECC argued that: ‘To maintain levels of energy security similar to today, and because electricity is an essential component of any modern society, there is a need to replace capacity. The option of not doing so is not tenable. This is because of the harmful impacts on human health that could arise as a result of interruptions to essential services such as hospital equipment, water and sewage treatment facilities and public safety arising from interruptions to traffic and train signalling infrastructure and security systems’ (DECC 2009: 8; see also DECC 2011d: 2). DECC (2011d: 5) even made the case, again consistent with the positive nuclear security frame, ‘combating climate change...will have beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment’, thus offsetting the potential for adverse environmental effects on habitats adjacent to nuclear power stations against the greater environmental good of combating climate change. Once that initial frame has been set, the remainder of these voluminous documents (see DECC 2009, 2010a,b,c, 2011a,b,c,d) are dedicated to the practical implications of assuming this as policy, in relation to issues such as planning, siting and local impact of new nuclear power stations.

‘Positive Nuclear Security’: Consolidation and Counter-Frames

The analysis offered above suggests that the positive nuclear frame has by now become ubiquitous within the UK’s energy policy discourse. Even in terms of the ordering of policy texts, the positive nuclear security frame tends to be articulated within the first paragraphs and pages of nuclear new build policy and policy consultation documents, wherein nuclear power is linked in an associative chain to broader efforts to combat climate change, energy insecurity, as well as economic benefits and mitigation of fuel poverty. Negative connotations tends to occupy a more marginal and subsidiary position, usually being discussed within the finer details of those documents after the initial framing has already been set, and are frequently only ‘acknowledged’ as subsidiary to the overarching positive nuclear security frame. The positive nuclear security frame is consequently important as it seeks to trump any potential arguments against the expansion of civil nuclear infrastructure by prioritising climate change as the ultimate, longer-term security threat facing the UK⁷, and energy security as a matter of overriding public interest that requires a ‘facilitating’ role for

⁷ A logic that even some prominent environmentalists appear to have adopted – see as a prominent and oft-cited example in the UK, Monbiot (2004) and (2011); and more broadly, Brand (2009).

government. The employment of the positive nuclear security frame also means that the UK's nuclear policy is necessarily internationalised in nature, and is not conceived of as a purely 'national' issue: both energy security and climate change invoke a global context and rationale for the UK's future development of its nuclear infrastructure.

As an 'interpretive package' (Gamson and Modigliani 1989), then, the positive nuclear security frame is characterised by a number of recurrent themes and features over time and across policy documents. Nuclear power is acknowledged to bring attendant risks – health, security and environmental – but these are seen to be offset by the overriding challenges of energy (in)security and impending climate catastrophe. Within that larger frame, security risks associated proliferation and terrorism are deemed 'manageable' within existing regulatory frameworks, backed up by invocation of approval from external agencies such as Euratom and the IAEA as authoritative voices. Health and environmental risks are acknowledged, but are offset against a wider conception of 'the public interest' and, latterly, 'Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest'. Ultimately, it is claimed, 'modern life' and 'modern society' (as in BERR 2008: 17) are at stake.

Critical assessments of the nuclear new build policy case in the UK are consequently obliged to challenge the argument on these terms, and often do so by trying to invert the positive nuclear security frame by not only questioning the environmental and economic case for nuclear power but also by identifying negative connotations with respect to 'security'. Thus, for example, Watson and Scott argue that though 'a new nuclear power programme may be able to help reduce some specific energy security risks [...] we are not convinced that there is a strong case for new nuclear, especially if the costs and risks of strategies that include new nuclear are considered alongside those of strategies that do not [...] The evidence shows that nuclear power may *not* be able to mitigate some of the neglected risks such as domestic terrorism and civil unrest' (2009: 5103 emphasis in original). Similarly the Oxford Research Group's *Secure Energy? Civil Nuclear Power, Security and Global Warming* (Barnaby and Kemp 2007) inverts the order of the positive nuclear security frame by discussing proliferation and terrorism risks before moving to discuss climate change, and questions the basis of the policy case for new nuclear (specifically as articulated in DTI 2006b). It does so by citing other UK governmental and intelligence assessments of the threats posed by nuclear proliferation and by terrorism at a more general level. In what might be considered as a countervailing 'negative nuclear security' frame, they make the overall contention that 'a civil nuclear power renaissance would: increase the risk of nuclear terrorism in the UK; make efforts to

control the spread of nuclear weapons much harder; make an insignificant contribution to lowering CO2 emissions; make a negligible contribution to energy security' (Barnaby and Kemp: 7). Notably, this counter-frame introduces questions of weaponization in a much more explicit way, which, though sometimes referred to indirectly in relation to proliferation risks in the policy case for nuclear new build are generally absent or only minimally discussed (a similar strategy of counter-framing is often employed by anti-nuclear campaigns and advocacy groups, for example, no2NuclearPower (2007)).

Although counter-frames such as these can be identified, one of their most notable features is the fact that they are consciously directed at the dominant positive nuclear security frame, which thus already sets the terms of the framing 'contest' (Krebs and Jackson 2007: 38). This is significant, for, as Krebs and Jackson argue '...rhetorical maneuver can prove critical to success in political contests *even* when one's opponents have no internalized the promoted values. While claimants may deploy arguments in the hope that they will eventually persuade, their more immediate task is, through skillful framing, to leave their opponents without access to the rhetorical materials needed to craft a socially sustainable rebuttal' (2007: 36, emphasis in original). With the fate of 'modern life' and, modern society' argued to be at stake in the UK debate on new nuclear power, the scope for critics to rebut the case for nuclear new build in the UK is radically undercut. Wider research into 'how citizens may respond to this particular reframing of policy' (Bickerstaff *et al* 2008: 147) is potentially instructive in this regard. By employing use of a range of multi-method approaches to gauge public attitudes (inclusive of focus groups, surveys and polling), particularly of those living in and around existing nuclear power stations, this research suggests 'reluctant acceptance' (Bickerstaff *et al* 2008: 159; see also Pidgeon *et al* 2008; Corner *et al* 2010) of the positive nuclear frame. The important caveat noted in the terminology here, though, is in the use of the word 'reluctant', with the findings of Bickerstaff *et al* suggesting that many respondents exhibited significant ambivalence and uncertainty about nuclear power, and only reluctantly accepted it when it was framed (as in the policy case) in relation to risks associated with energy security and, particularly, climate change (see Pidgeon *et al* 2008). Indeed, the authors suggest that several respondents in focus group discussions, for example, found the idea of a 'trade-off' between nuclear power and climate change 'deeply problematic' and were 'not at all comfortable with what they saw as an overly simplistic either/or choice' (Bickerstaff *et al* 2008: 160).

Conclusion: Security and 'Closure' in the policy case for new nuclear power?

In the analysis of policy framings, Carol Bacchi argues, ‘the goal is to understand how policy decisions close off the space for normative debate because of the impression that indeed they are the best *solution* to a problem. The focus is then on the closure effected by a model of policy making as decision making’ (1999: 20, emphasis in original). As is detailed in the analysis above, a strong argument can be made that the terms of the policy debate on nuclear new build in the UK since 2003 strictly delimits both the conditions under which that ‘debate’ can occur, the means by which it can take place, and the substantive issues to be discussed. In relation to the case for new nuclear power Teräväinen *et al* contend that since the Energy Review of 2006 (DTI 2006b) developments in UK energy policy ‘consolidated [a] return to a more exclusive orientation, with the government using symbolic participation to justify its policy decisions, while, at the same time, reducing possibilities for public involvement in energy infrastructure planning’ (2011: 3436). This is not simply an issue of (the number of) opportunities for ‘public involvement’ though. By framing new nuclear power in primary relation to imperatives of energy security and climate change (and thus ultimately to the long-term security of the UK) even those processes of public consultation become subservient to governmental efforts to address those challenges. In this sense, the symbolic participation alluded to by Teräväinen *et al* and exemplified in the public consultation processes in this case takes on a different importance. Government responses to consultations acknowledge instances where issues that run counter to the positive nuclear security frame are raised – cost, safety concerns, waste, proliferation and terrorism risks – but that acknowledgment is itself then always framed in relation to overriding imperatives.

On this view, an implication of the analysis offered here is that the employment of the positive security frame in the UK’s new nuclear policy discourse may be geared more towards ritualised reiteration (of the overall policy case) rather than necessarily ‘persuading’ a public audience. Even leaving aside the detail of the complaints lodged by some respondents to these consultation processes (Royal Courts of Justice 2007; Dorfman 2008), the framing and undertaking of those consultation processes may ultimately tell us more about the constitution of political authority in this case than anything else. As Brian Wynne argues in his extensive and thought-provoking account of the Windscale Inquiry of 1976, ‘...it follows from the social constitution of technology that decision-making institutions (including public inquiries) are intrinsically bound up in ritual to defend their own credibility and authority’ (Wynne 2011: xxii). Whilst ‘public involvement’ in consultation might well be described as symbolic participation, then, the performance of these consultation ‘rituals’ (to borrow Wynne’s terms) becomes a self-referential part of the positive nuclear security policy framing: White Papers and Energy Review reports refer to these processes of consultation as

indicators of legitimacy and as a way of bolstering their conception of the public interest, and consultation documents refer back to White Papers and Energy Reviews to set the context in which consultation questions are asked.

Ultimately, the idea of 'new nuclear' providing 'new security' for the UK remains the central frame, established and reiterated via key policy texts and policy consultation exercises. At a policy level at least, positive nuclear security now appears to be the established 'common sense', and is constantly reiterated as such (self-citation [add later] 2010: 41-44; Weldes 1999: 225-229). Crucially, in terms of the study of security, the invocation of 'security' here makes a key difference: by associating nuclear new build with energy and environmental security imperatives, the scope for 'socially sustainable rebuttals' (Krebs and Jackson 2007: 36) becomes radically circumscribed. And yet, the continued presence of potential counter-frames on the margins of the formal policy debate indicates both that the 'case' for new nuclear power in the UK is not entirely closed, and that the invocation of 'security' is not of itself a guarantee of complete closure. In this and in other cases, critical approaches to the study of security might usefully address the politics of what is in frame and what is left out of frame when 'security' is made central to policy debates.

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