



HOUSE OF LORDS

International Relations and Defence Committee

Corrected oral evidence: Defence concepts and capabilities: from aspiration to reality

Wednesday 22 June 2022

10.30 am

Watch the meeting

Members present: Baroness Anelay of St Johns (The Chair); Lord Alton of Liverpool; Lord Anderson of Swansea; Baroness Blackstone; Lord Boateng; Lord Campbell of Pittenweem; Baroness Fall; Baroness Rawlings; Lord Stirrup; Lord Teverson; Lord Wood of Anfield.

Evidence Session No. 11

Heard in Public

Questions 75 - 84

Witness

[I](#): Admiral Sir Tony Radakin, Chief of the Defence Staff.

Examination of witness

Admiral Sir Tony Radakin.

Q75 **The Chair:** I welcome to this meeting of the International Relations and Defence Select Committee Admiral Sir Tony Radakin, who is Chief of the Defence Staff. Welcome to you, and thank you for joining us to give evidence on our current inquiry, which examines the defence concepts and capabilities of defence from aspiration to reality.

I always remind witnesses and Members that the whole of the process is broadcast and transcribed, so it is on the record. We will go through the questions. I will start by asking a general scene-setting question before turning to my colleagues for more focused questions, and I anticipate that they will wish to ask a related supplementary. If time remains at the end of our session then I will invite colleagues to ask further questions that may range much more widely.

The first, rather general question is: what are your main priorities during your period as Chief of the Defence Staff? How do those priorities align with those set out in the Integrated Review and the Defence Command Paper published last year?

Admiral Sir Tony Radakin: Good morning, and thank you for that welcome. In some ways, it is relatively simple at the stage we are at: it is about delivering to the Government on the Integrated Review and the Defence Command Plan. We are the beneficiaries of an Integrated Review and defence command plan that were matched by additional resources in the form of the additional £24 billion that accompanied both those papers. That is significant because that additional money was provided towards the back end, or arguably in the middle, of the pandemic and the economic uncertainty that existed then. So I think it feels more balanced than previous reviews and some of the anxieties that went on with them.

It was a substantial review because it was so much more than just defence policy and foreign and security policy. It aligned with the need to be a stronger science power in a technological age; the need to express the ambition for prosperity and the agenda of going out into the world having left the EU; and the need to embrace climate security and health security. That feels to me like a broader review than some of the previous ones. That then translates into the clarity of the need to modernise our Armed Forces, the need for the Armed Forces to get out there into the world and the need to become more lethal and more deployable. That relates to individual measures, whether that is Future Soldier programme, the FCAS programme for the Air Force or the nuclear programme and the additional investment there. The job for me, David Williams and the chiefs is to deliver on that Integrated Review for the Government and deliver against the command plan.

The Chair: In your answer you have already given examples of the expensive and very necessary ways in which defence needs to be funded, and you referred to that funding. While we are pragmatic and understand that it was very welcome, we have heard evidence along the way that

there are still concerns about the immediate needs that may be faced by the Armed Forces. Some of my colleagues may wish to delve more deeply into that, but at this stage I turn to my colleague Lord Stirrup for the next question.

Q76 Lord Stirrup: Good morning, CDS. In 1991 we were involved in a major war-fighting operation in the Gulf. In those days we were spending 3.68% of GDP on defence and had over 300,000 people in the military. Today we have fewer than 150,000, under half that number, while spending on defence has not yet recovered to 2010 levels as a percentage of GDP and it looks as if it will struggle to stay above 2% in the years ahead. Yet we have an Integrated Review and a Defence Command Paper calling for a tilt to the Indo-Pacific; persistent overseas engagement; sovereign or partnered bases and installations; contribution to counterterrorism; and of course major war-fighting operations in the event of state-on-state conflict. How is all that to be done within resources that are so much smaller than we had in 1991? Even in 1991, we struggled; the Army, for example, had to strip out and cannibalise almost all its units in Germany in order to field an armoured division.

One of the things that neither the Integrated Review nor the Defence Command Paper did was to set out a strategy—that is, priorities and sequences of operations. Given the vast appetite being displayed by the Integrated Review and the, shall we say, beer money available to defence, how are you going to square that circle? What are the priorities going to be? What particular tasks will attract most attention and most effort, and which ones can you minimise or indeed even drop?

Admiral Sir Tony Radakin: I shall reflect on the context, and we may want to talk about some of the other aspects that you mentioned. On the Indo-Pacific, “tilt” is almost a strange word to describe a policy position but I think it is quite accurate. We have to be clear that the Integrated Review is anchored in the Euro-Atlantic, and the foundation for that is NATO and collective defence, which we can come back to.

The tilt to the Indo-Pacific has been strengthened by AUKUS, which clearly was after the Integrated Review and the defence command plan. It builds on existing relationships in the Indo-Pacific, and we can do that from resources. Going from west to east, it builds on the fact that we now have a base east of Suez in Bahrain; we have always had Diego Garcia; we are investing a bit more in Kenya; and we are leveraging off the investment that has been made into both the port and the training facility in Duqm in Oman. Then, further east, there are our facilities in Singapore, Brunei and the Five Power Defence Arrangements. There are also other conversations, such as the desire to have a stronger relationship with Japan for FCAS.

There is tactical activity such as the carrier, which is the result of previous investment that is now starting to come to fruition. Then there is the permanent presence of two Batch 2 OPVs, which are additional in some respects when you look at all our OPVs because the Navy was asked to run on the Batch 1 OPVs until 2028. And then you have to put

that in the context of wider government, our relationships in the Indo-Pacific and the fact that, even since the Integrated Review, we have become a dialogue partner of ASEAN and have put forward our application to be a member of the CPTPP. To me, considering that the Integrated Review was last March, that is, just in terms of the Indo-Pacific, quite a rich seam regarding the Chair's opening remarks on aspiration into reality. Although some of that is because of previous investment, the language of a "tilt" is quite strong but it feels comfortable.

Coming back to the main part of the Euro-Atlantic, regarding your challenge from 1991, I would also put it in the NATO context, and again this is where the Integrated Review tried to be clear. In the last seven years NATO spending has increased by \$270 billion, and the aggregate of all NATO spending is now approaching \$1 trillion.

In the security lane, we were clear about Russia being an acute threat. Two things flow from that which continue despite Ukraine: first, the importance of collective defence, so our response to the major threats is absolutely nested in our NATO relationship, and, secondly, the need for us to be a strong nuclear power.

The Integrated Review, possibly more than previous reviews, spoke a lot more to nuclear and the need for us to go back to a traditional nuclear policy that has a lot more ambiguity, while recognising that if it is such a crucial aspect of UK defence policy then it needs additional investment. To me that feels stronger than previously in terms of the nuclear investment, and NATO is stronger. We can talk about where NATO is today and the NATO summit that is coming up.

To your point about how we can do everything given the percentage of GDP being spent, there is a live debate, with the NATO summit coming up, about whether 2% is the right figure, how we ensure that all the other nations play into something that has been agreed by NATO, and how fast everyone can get up to the 2% mark. At the moment there is an internal discussion about whether 2% is the right minima, given where we are with Ukraine, and whether the threat perspective has changed. If it was an acute threat then what does it look like in future? We might want to discuss that further.

For me, the other piece is whether it should be purely a numbers game or whether we should be demanding more out of our Armed Forces. Thinking back to my time leading the Royal Navy, part of that argument was about delivering more from what we already had. I am wary—for me, this goes to the modernisation agenda and so on—of us as senior players in defence getting into a position where we say, "We will deliver more if you give us more people and more money." There is a valid debate going on about whether with more modern equipment we can adjust the way that we operate in order to have more of our people further forward. To stay with the Navy example, yes, the Navy gets the benefit of two aircraft carriers, enormous investment in nuclear and increased investment in shipbuilding, but the real difference is that, as we

grow from 19 frigates and destroyers to 24, and as we go from an availability of about 50% to closer to 85% with modern ships and so on, that is a 100% increase in what you can actually have out on operations with your frigate and destroyer force.

We are also investing in space. We are investing £6.6 billion in R&D. We are clear that we need to invest strongly in the Army because of the risk of obsolescence, so £40 billion is going into the Army. In capital terms, the investment in the Army is the aggregate of the capital investment in the Navy and the Air Force. Again, it feels to me that that matches what the Integrated Review and defence command plan sought to achieve. So then the question is whether that investment leads to a better deployable and more lethal force, and whether that blends with the NATO plans for our most serious threats.

Lord Stirrup: Can I just press you? You talked about getting more out of our people, and of course no one could argue with the incentive to be more efficient, but you, as much as or better than most, will realise the importance of training in delivering military capability, particularly in high-end war-fighting—not just individual training or unit training but formation training, of which these services have been very short in recent years. If the fewer people in defence are to do all these additional tasks, where is the time and resource going to come from for that intensive formation-level training that is so crucial to an effective war-fighting capability?

Admiral Sir Tony Radakin: I would say that we are already on that path but it is definitely not complete, and we are in an enormous transition. To look at this in big terms, over the last 20 years the focus was on Iraq and Afghanistan but we are shifting now to state-based threats, so much more to what you and I would have understood in terms of our earlier careers. Does that then link to much larger exercises with NATO? How do we get back to divisional manoeuvre? We have just participated in an exercise that was all about divisional manoeuvre within NATO but our contribution to that is relatively small. That has to grow over this decade.

We are reasonably strong in the maritime space because the carrier journey has enabled that. We are reasonably strong in aviation because, again, the construct that we have to enable us to operate at scale feels much more comfortable when you are plugging into big NATO. For us, that is the journey that we are on.

I think that is reflected in aviation, where the enormous thing is going from a fourth generation Air Force to a fifth gen and the benefits that that gives you. Then add Rivet Joint, the E-7 and the arrival of the P-8s. Yes, we have a transition as we go from the C-130s to the A400M, and inevitably such transitions are not always smooth and comfortable. That to me is where it adds up, but it is not a “ta-dah” moment when we go from an Integrated Review to suddenly everything being aligned. If we are being honest about the next five years, there are substantial adjustments to be made. Some of them are down arrows as we pay off

old kit and introduce new kits, but it feels to me that this matches additional ambition with additional investment with the need to modernise.

The piece that I am less comfortable about is whether we can really match the pace of technology and our ability to introduce it when some of our processes and systems make that uncomfortable, to the point where sometimes the technology is changing at a faster pace than we are able to assimilate within the department. That feels strategic and difficult.

Q77 **Baroness Blackstone:** Could you elaborate a bit more on what you have already said by telling the committee what you see as the main challenges for the three arms of the British armed services—namely, the British Army, the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force? In particular, could you tell us how you would identify those challenges in terms of both their ability to fulfil the objectives of the Defence Command Paper and their role as vital national institutions?

Admiral Sir Tony Radakin: All three are undergoing significant transitions. The largest one is in the British Army with the Future Soldier programme, which has to be embraced much more strongly as a defence programme that is being delivered within the British Army. The reason why I say that is the scale of that transformation and the adjustments. That matches the significant investment of £41 billion, and the scale of it means that almost every unit in the British Army is undergoing some kind of change. At one end, the question is how we get deeper fires, if you compare our AS-90 and our artillery at the moment with some of the modern systems. The desire to be able to fire at longer range while maintaining precision is another marker of part of that investment programme and adjusting to a PrSM programme and much longer range.

Then there are the vehicles. Again with regard to the scale, we have over 500 different variants but over the next 10 years, as we introduce the family of vehicles and so on, we will be adjusting closer down to 60 variants. That is the right way to be going but it is an enormous change.

There will also be adjustments in the infantry as we make changes to a range of battalions. We recognise that actually some battalions are understrength, so how can we compensate for that? Where do we need to invest more strongly?

It is the enormity of that laydown. I visited Andover early on, and the big takeaway was that this could not stay in Andover; it had to come back to big defence. All of us, regardless of colour of cloth, are behind the Future Soldier programme.

I mention that because—to come on to nuclear—there has always been the debate on nuclear about whether too much has been resourced to the Navy and whether it is a big defence programme. It feels as if that is much more strongly a defence programme, and that is the dominant piece for the Navy. Again, there is a significant transition there. The Navy is continuing its journey with the Air Force of bringing the carriers fully

into service so that it becomes a full operational capability in the next couple of years. It has the benefit of capital investment that is starting to mature in terms of the frigate programme, the Type 26 and Type 31 frigates, over the next decade. There are also transitions as we pay off the Type 23s and so on. Again, there is a push for more lethality. When are we going to get land attack in our ships? The Mark 41 launcher that we will have in Type 26 enables that capability to come forward. Do we want to have the Mark 41 launcher in the Type 31s?

Those are some of the decisions, but the big one is around nuclear. We have a fleet of Astute, a full fleet of seven boats, but the most significant transition is going from the Vanguard class to the Dreadnought. We have four SSBNs, so you are generating three from four at different readiness levels in order to have that assurance that we always have one at sea. That is an extraordinary task in itself.

We need to have a crew for our first Dreadnought, and that crew needs to start to come together in the next couple of years even though the first patrol is not until the early 2030s because of what the programme of bringing on a new SSBN submarine means. That means more submariners, and it means delivering on crucial industrial capability. Are we getting that right when some of the decisions around nuclear were delayed for political reasons, and therefore we are running on the existing nuclear submarines much longer than we had previously envisaged? If you had the First Sea Lord here, you would see that he is very strong on all of that, and that is an imperative.

The Air Force, as I mentioned earlier, has the transition from the C-130 to A400M and introduced the F-35 as fifth generation. It continues to invest in Typhoon because of its importance and the need to modernise it, whether in avionics or weapons. Then there are two exciting pieces for an Air Force that is reaching up more into space. That needs additional investment but the substantial part of that investment is in the latter half of the 10-year period, which I think is about £1.5 billion. Some £2 billion is being invested in the FCAS as the sixth-generation fighter, so what does that start to look like? How do we ensure that we have an international partner? For that decision to be taken, we probably need an international partner to accompany us on that sixth-generation journey.

That is how it feels to me in terms of the three services. I should mention the fourth, which is Strategic Command. How does Strategic Command help us when we now say that there are five domains? In my career, I would claim to be a joint officer, involved with being able to employ at a tactical level land and air forces for operational and strategic effect. Our successors are going to have to be as comfortable as a modern joint officer with these two additional domains, space and cyber. How do we then run that across the whole of defence? Hence the language of integration. Does that properly get into the bloodstream, and is that again matched by investment? Does that reflect a modern way of war-fighting? That means we have to modernise in terms of digital and data and our use of it, and whether it flows around the system. We have some

good examples of where that is happening. There is an enormous push to deliver on that and to put substance on what can sometimes feel like buzzwords. What does it actually mean to tactically employ cyber, and where is that tactical employment going to happen? We need to work our way through that. Those would be my big handfuls across the suite of the four big commands.

Baroness Blackstone: It sometimes used to be said, although I am not sure if this was fair, that there was more competition than collaboration between the three main branches of the armed services. I do not know whether you can comment on that and tell us a bit about how you see greater integration happening. Is that through the work of Strategic Command, or are there other ways in which there could be better collaboration leading to more efficiency, better deployment of people and so on without needing Strategic Command to intervene?

Admiral Sir Tony Radakin: It is hard to tell. It feels to me that we have a bunch of chiefs that get on well and can have tough conversations between each other but not fall out. However, I would not want to deny that between those big institutions there is always competition for resources; that is to be expected, and it is normal and healthy. I am conscious that it probably feels more comfortable than it might have done in the past because we are on a rising tide. What I recounted to you is a reasonably positive story across the Army, the Navy, the Air Force and Strategic Command. Unsurprisingly, it is easier to be friendly and collaborative when it is a positive tale of fighting for additional resource, as opposed to when you are in decline, when you are in a much tougher fight.

On the integration point, the crucial piece is that Strategic Command, all the single services and the whole of defence are on this integration journey. That is helped by all the chiefs seeing that this feels slightly different, in that we have these additional domains of space and cyber, and we have to encompass them into modern war-fighting. Everyone feels the enormity of technological change, and we have to do better at being more modern and embracing that. Like most large institutions, that translates into digital and data, and bringing that in. Can we then flow that around across the whole of the war-fighting space and put it into effect?

What does it mean when you can better share the overall intelligence? Some of it is relatively basic. Maritime and air have far more access to secret and above-secret systems than the land environment. Given the F-35 and what it is able to Hoover up, if you are the land component then you want that data and that information. At the moment, it is a big enough task to try to get that flowing into the maritime and air domains, never mind the land domain. We do not need Strategic Command to do that; all of us should be chasing that journey.

How can we have greater integration rather than constant competition? To take the chequered history of bringing the aircraft carriers into service as an example, Mike Wigston—and this is not meant to criticise his or my

predecessors as First Sea Lord—and I tried to say that this was a defence capability.

How can we quell some of the tension and antagonism that existed between the Air Force and the Royal Navy to introduce this amazing new capability, the F-35 and all that that means? How can we work on that in future? There are those levels of integration. Then there is the role of Strategic Command to try to be even more focused on this, cutting across everything. It is much closer to GCHQ and the cyber aspects, so can it help to grow a national cyber force? It has the responsibility in terms of communications, satellites and the digital agenda, so can it help modernise the whole of UK defence in a digital way? I am just conscious of not outsourcing integration to one command, so it is all of us but with an additional emphasis from Strategic Command.

Q78 **Baroness Rawlings:** Thank you, CDS. As we all know, on a certain level the world has changed dramatically since the start of the war in Ukraine. I wonder what you think the messages from the Integrated Review have been, reinforced by what we see now in Ukraine, and in particular its identification of Russia. At the time it was published, that was not really so obvious to the general public as the most acute, direct threat to the United Kingdom. Following on from what you have just been saying, do you think the bet made by the Defence Command Paper to focus on new technologies, as you have just mentioned, and threats below the threshold of war, rather than on the mass of conventional warfare, should be revised in the light of what we are witnessing now in Ukraine?

Admiral Sir Tony Radakin: I will steal a phrase that David Williams uses. There is a risk that if you thought the Integrated Review was quite good, Ukraine affirms that position; if you thought the Integrated Review was quite bad, Ukraine affirms that position. In big headlines, with the identification of Russia and what it means in terms of a medium-ranking power, you combat that threat through collective defence. That is NATO, and the security and assurance that you get from being part of such an extraordinary military alliance. That feels really strong.

The other piece is nuclear: the ugliness of the Ukraine conflict and this thing called nuclear maybe being far more tangible, as you said, and much more to the fore than when the Integrated Review was published. The importance of being a nuclear nation and a responsible nuclear power, and of offering up our nuclear weapons as part of our partnership with NATO, feels very strong, and affirmed by the review.

As we approach 120 days, I am cautious of jumping to too many conclusions too early on some of the tactical aspects, whether that is tanks, drones, the absence of cyber being more strongly used than we had anticipated, the question of where space has been and so on. I just think that is the correct thing we should be doing: being cautious of rushing to too many conclusions in terms of Ukraine.

On the Russia piece, there is an affirmation there. Particularly if you look back over the last 20 years, with Russia's involvement in Chechnya,

Syria, Georgia, Crimea in 2014, the attempted assassination in Salisbury and then this invasion, I think the egregious nature of that, the scale of the invasion, the brutality, the violence and so on are even stronger than we had anticipated in terms of Russia's behaviour when the Integrated Review was published. That then leads into much bigger debates. Is this the end of the post-Cold War era? Regardless of what happens in Ukraine in the short term, are we seeing a Russia that in future might be even less predictable and even more vindictive? At the moment we have focused on a land war in eastern Europe. What is this really about? Is it actually about a challenge to the world order? The challenge for the NATO summit next week is recognising that that is what is going on. How do those leaders respond to that challenge to the world order and war in Europe? Nobody is predicting nuclear exchanges in terms of Ukraine, but just the fact that regular threats are made in a nuclear context is shocking. So how do people respond to that?

If you see through the Ukraine war, Russia will still have its full cyber, space and nuclear capabilities and many of its long-range missile capabilities. It already had a strong underwater programme, which we have identified as a threat. Again, that is my caution about focusing on just one domain, which for a lot of people in the public commentary has tended to be land.

The other piece is that the Secretary of State was really clear that we should be shaped by the threat. When you see through the Ukraine conflict, what will the threat be? Will it be in the land domain and further threats from Russia wanting to invade, or will it be space, cyber, underwater and nuclear? Those have not been used. If we look at Russia's land forces, we assess that their combat effectiveness has been exhausted or depleted to the tune of nearly 25%. So are some of those other capability areas going to be the more significant threats that we face in future?

Baroness Rawlings: Are they?

Admiral Sir Tony Radakin: We have to have that debate. The Ministry of Defence is going through its strategy stocktake. What was said in the Integrated Review? What was said in the Defence Command Paper? Where are we now in programmatics? Where are we in an intellectual sense of what Ukraine means? What do those threats look like in future? But let us not focus just on the Euro-Atlantic; let us look at our broader responsibilities around the world and what has changed there. I do not want to opine and say, "This is the answer". I am just saying that some of the public commentary has been very focused on the land domain, but let us not forget all these other capabilities that remain very strong and will be strong regardless of when Ukraine finishes or what appears to be the dominance of the land campaign in Ukraine.

The Chair: We have two questions left. In the interests of time, I will move on to Lord Alton.

Q79 **Lord Alton of Liverpool:** Good morning, Sir Tony. One of our earlier

witnesses told us that Stalin feared the United States less because of its nuclear capability and more because of its extraordinary industrial base and ability to manufacture weapons at scale and at speed. Can you give us your assessment of the UK's industrial capacity to produce weapons not only to supply Ukraine but to resupply our own stockpiles, which everyone has been saying have been horrendously depleted as a result of the proper decisions we have made about Ukraine, but also our capacity to develop future capabilities? What do you see as the main challenges and opportunities and, in this context, is there a danger of us taking our eye off other challenges such as China as we are so focused on Russia?

Admiral Sir Tony Radakin: For the benefit of the committee and for Baroness Rawlings, the other piece that I should have mentioned, which you have prompted, is: can we have the humility to look again at some of the assumptions that we have previously made? Stockpiles and rate of expenditure are an area that we are going to have to look at again. All of us, in our desire to modernise and to strengthen the capital investment in whatever area, recognise that we were probably taking a very conservative approach to our stockpiles and the ability for those stockpiles to be replenished. Ukraine is already demonstrating that the rate of expenditure, and then the industrial capacity to backfill, is a significant issue. In a way, that might sound naive, but in fact it is a strength of the manifestation.

There are three elements here. First, there is the backdrop over the last 30 to 40 years of a reduction in industrial capacity. Secondly, there is the positive picture where, okay, we are spending more on defence now so we have some additional investments, but when it comes to the Ukraine situation we have rightly been leaning in to provide more weapons to Ukraine. Then, as you look past Ukraine, there will be a need to assist that country in rearming. The Government's position is that we are in this for the long term. How can we ensure that Ukraine is even safer at the end of this and has a bright future? Thirdly, at the same time, there is the corollary of Ukraine: we have seen a whole host of European countries agreeing to increase their own defence spending. Does the UK not want to be a part of that, and are there export opportunities?

Put those three elements—backfill, rearming Ukraine and export opportunities—against the further backdrop of a limited industrial capacity. Take the complexity of not even our most sophisticated weapons, so NLAWs, Thales, Belfast and so on: Thales is the prime contractor but it has 15 main suppliers in order to have such an effective weapon. All these tensions exist at the back end of a pandemic and the global pressures that have come with that. Add in the semiconductor issue. I am saying that this is a significant issue, and you are probably seeing the debates in America that reflect that.

So what do we do about it? The answer is that this has to be UK defence and the Government working with those suppliers, and we are having those conversations. For example, earlier this week 12 of the larger defence suppliers were hosted at No. 10. The Secretary of State for Defence was there, and we were trying to work through those issues.

How much assurance do they need from us to invest so that they can start additional production lines? How quickly can we give them those assurances? Do they want a contract, or do we also protect our position? Is there a risk that, rather like PPE, there will be times when there is more demand than supply? Is the answer to that to buy options? Sometimes we are not fast enough in our contracting ability and competition. How can we support UK industry in the export market but do so in a complementary way? In a perfect world, we should also be a net beneficiary of that because sometimes the volume goes up and the unit price goes down, and which might mean that we can afford even more. What are our timelines for all this? All of that is being worked throughout the moment, but it is a significant issue.

Lord Alton of Liverpool: You have just mentioned semiconductors, and you are right. Is it therefore prudent to weaken our own industrial base by selling the biggest producer of semiconductors in the UK, Newport Wafer Fab, to a company linked to the People's Republic of China? That takes me back again to my question about Taiwan and what the future might hold.

Admiral Sir Tony Radakin: That particular issue is under review. I do not know enough about it to say more than that.

The bigger issue is the shaping of industrial capacity, and that is across everything. The example I am most familiar with is the metal bashing in modern warships: the real value is in the systems that you place in those ships and how sophisticated they are. It is about the growth of capacity pretty much across all domains to match the European piece. What does industry require in order to start up the additional production lines? That is what this means. Can we then be honest that we are talking in years? For modern weapons, you cannot whistle up quick production lines. Yes, you can churn out shells and artillery but even for modest weapons such as NLAWs, let alone the super sophisticated ones, it is going to take several years to get back to our original stocks.

On the Indo-Pacific, again, a whole host of analysis is required. One view is that what we have seen with Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the international reaction to it, especially in terms of diplomacy and sanctions, when you can galvanise the world and the economically powerful part of it then the impact is extraordinary. We are seeing a classical response, which is diplomatic alongside economic, competition in the information war and the military. Sometimes the military gets the most focus because it is more tangible, whereas I think the bigger longer-term impacts are in the diplomatic and economic spaces. Therefore the calculus of country X, which might be thinking of breaking the international rules to invade country Y, has probably changed, or at least there are a lot more factors. To me, the risk of breaking those rules and the way that the world reacts are a positive demonstration of the world responding to such a hideous breaking of these international rules, which always sound a bit boring but are utterly fundamental.

Lord Alton of Liverpool: Let us hope you are right.

Q80 **Lord Anderson of Swansea:** Admiral, good morning. Resilience is a buzzword much favoured by NATO—no doubt we shall hear it frequently mentioned at Madrid next week—thus the Integrated Review called for “greater national resilience to threats and hazards in the physical and digital worlds ... at home at overseas”. How would you assess the current state of the national resilience of our Armed Forces? Can we maintain that with current resources, both available and anticipated?

Admiral Sir Tony Radakin: I am conscious of making a categorical statement on something that is very hard to judge, such as in your question, so, if I may, I will make a conditional statement, which is that I think our resilience is stronger than it was several years ago.

I will give you some evidence for that. In the international space—I touched on this earlier, so I will not say too much about it—I think we are seeing a significant shift in NATO with a new strategic concept, the biggest shift in NATO since 1967; the extraordinary increase in NATO defence spending; and, potentially, the accession of Finland and Sweden and what that means for strengthening the alliance. We are also seeing the behaviour of the alliance and the unity that exists there. Yes, we have seen a manifestation of a threat in terms of Russia, but NATO’s response and the assuredness are positive. The presence of 3.5 million people under arms within the NATO umbrella and its extraordinary suite of capabilities ought to give people confidence in the external peace and our principal threat in the Euro-Atlantic.

In the domestic space, I would go back to the pandemic. Yes, it was a shocking pandemic and a dreadful period, but we have shown the nation’s ability to respond and manage some of the economic, human impacts. How could we as the Armed Forces support the Government in their broader aims? How could we support the principal line of effort, which was the health service, and help it with the extraordinary burden that it was under? And how could we carry on with all our security responsibilities at the same time?

To come to some of the other threats that you mentioned, our level of resilience regarding cyber feels stronger than it used to be. With the benefit of the National Cyber Security Centre, the relationship with GCHQ, the response to some of the attacks that have happened, whether in the private or the public space, and the drive to increase our cyber capabilities, we are better than we have been. Does that mean we are as resilient as we would want to be? No, we need to be more resilient in future because those threats morph and change. Are we investing more in that for the future? Yes, we are, and that should be keeping pace because there is always going to be competition.

A deeper point regarding resilience might be more the issue of industrial capacity. Is that a severe problem domestically, or is it mitigated when you extend your vision across the whole of NATO and suddenly see that, whatever environment you are in, the amount of overmatch within NATO to those Russian threats is extraordinary? Does that therefore give you the resilience and the comfort that you might be seeking?

Lord Anderson of Swansea: Is that a call for greater specialisation within NATO? What gaps have been revealed by the Ukraine conflict? You have already mentioned stockpiles and the industrial contribution. What about the debate on MBTs—that is, main battle tanks? I understand that Russia has lost more tanks than we currently have in our own Armed Forces.

Admiral Sir Tony Radakin: That is fair, but when you put that in the NATO context, the NATO overmatch is phenomenal. To me, the industrial example is where there is a slight frustration: there is a myth that Russia has some ability that means those industrial pressures do not apply, and they only apply to us. Actually, in one element you are seeing a logistics war being fought out in Ukraine. I would rather be in Ukraine's position, with the heft of the western world supporting it, than relying on Russia's position and narrow supplies. There may be deep stores but they are now having to bring very elderly weapons to the fore.

Hypersonics is one area where you could identify that Russia appears to be ahead of some of the western nations, but the western nations will catch up, while some of those nations' countermeasures and counteroffensive capabilities outmatch Russia. There is nothing that I think is a glaring concern, and I think that reinforces the power of collective defence and what that then allows you to bring to bear. That is the way to combat these threats.

The Chair: I am conscious of the time. If our next witness arrives outside, I will—with your permission, I hope, CDS—invite Lord Campbell and Lord Wood to ask their questions but invite you to respond in writing rather than orally.

Admiral Sir Tony Radakin: If I can respond now, I will. Actually, I suppose I should decide on that after I have heard the questions.

Q81 **Lord Boateng:** CDS, thank you for your service. Do you agree with General Stephen Townsend, who is the US commander for Africa, when he warned our equivalent committee in Congress last year that the threat from China may come not just from the waters of the Pacific but from the Atlantic as well? The People's Liberation Army is the fastest-growing military presence in Africa. Chinese companies alone spend more than £10 billion a year on their own security. China has a base in Djibouti. Since General Townsend warned Congress last year, it has in fact opened up a base in Equatorial Guinea. What is your assessment of China's threat and challenge to us in that regard, and how can we counter it?

Admiral Sir Tony Radakin: There are two main points there. First, the Integrated Review was correct in having very different language to describe China from the language it used to describe Russia. While there is clarity in the language around Russia as an acute threat, I think it is more accurate to describe China as a challenge.

Lord Boateng: So you do not agree with General Townsend in that regard?

Admiral Sir Tony Radakin: America uses different language for China from the language that Britain uses. We have to reflect the UK position in the UK language, and that feels correct for us. Where I think General Townsend is right is the notion that the challenge from China is far more than the military/security space. This is where it links to Ukraine and what Russia has done, which is a challenge to the world order.

It is about the normative concept of what the West is. We view the West as being about our values and our principles, the rules-based international order, and that is what is at issue in both the challenge by Russia and the competition from China. The response therefore has to be in all domains, economics and international institutions as well as our security position. The question is how we compete with China and respond to its challenge. We should do so on the basis that we acknowledge that China is expanding but we also recognise that America itself probably has 180 bases around the world. Let us be responsible in how we balance these issues and how we respond. The response has to be in more than just the security domain.

The Chair: Lord Campbell, I invite you to ask your question for answer now, but our next witness is waiting outside so I shall ask Lord Wood and Baroness Fall to ask their questions as well today so that we can take a record of them and provide them to the CDS's office.

Q82 **Lord Campbell of Pittenweem:** We have a particular relationship with the United States when it comes to military matters. In the course of this morning, we have discussed nuclear. Can we still put an armoured division in the field and how long would we be able to maintain it, giving due account to the question of resilience, which we discussed just a moment or two ago? As I understand it, the Americans set great store by that. So I am asking about both nuclear and whether or not, if the balloon goes up, we can be there and helping at division strength.

Admiral Sir Tony Radakin: The relationship with America is about the intelligence relationship, the ability of fast air on day one and definitely our nuclear submarines and the nuclear deterrent. You are correct in saying that it is also about whether we are ready to fight alongside them at divisional strength.

We still remain at divisional strength—that is our ambition and part of our offer to NATO—but we have to be honest that with our investment in the Army we are regrowing to a much more orthodox divisional strength and manoeuvre. Yes, we can put out a division, but the division that we want to put out is one where we have longer-range fires and much more modern vehicles, whether that is the Challenger 3 upgrade to our tanks or the introduction of Ajax and Boxer.

To Lord Stirrup's point, we can put a division out, but the division that we want to put out is a much better one in five to 10 years' time, with the right capabilities that America would want fighting alongside it, that is able to operate at the pace and lethality necessary to keep up with America in the battle.

It is a sort of hedging answer to say that yes, we can put out a division now, but we are really focusing on getting back to whether we have all the elements that we would expect in a modern war-fighting division and whether we have practised and trained it. We are regrowing our capability to have the one that America would expect alongside it.

Lord Campbell of Pittenweem: Five to 10 years?

Admiral Sir Tony Radakin: In terms of our ambition, and to be at the right qualitative level, and for us to be practised in the art and to acknowledge how complex and difficult that is, that is in the five to 10-year space. We can throw out a division now but it is not the division that we would want, and I do not think it would be of the quality that the US would expect alongside it. We are on the journey to strengthen that.

The Chair: I am going to invite Lord Wood and Baroness Fall to ask their questions now because that then goes on the record. We will make sure that we liaise with your office for the answers.

Q83 **Lord Wood of Anfield:** My question might not be amenable to a written answer. In light of what you have said, which has been fascinating, what are one or two things that we currently do that we will no longer be able to do in five to 10 years? You have made a good case for maintaining existing activity but responding to new activities, but the sums suggest that we are going to have to stop doing some things and I wanted to hear your view about what they might be.

Q84 **Baroness Fall:** That is an interesting question. Thank you for an interesting session. In the Integrated Review we call China a systemic challenge, yet one of the things that worries me is that we do not offer a systemic approach to countering it. You mention how you thought there were issues in, for example, industrial challenges. What do you as a military leader think we can do to take a more holistic approach to our China policy?

The Chair: I add my thanks to those of my colleagues for your evidence today. You have certainly given us a rich seam of information to mine. As we continue to work through our evidence, I have no doubt that some of your responses will be examined in detail and perhaps used as a springboard for further questions to the Secretary of State for Defence when we see him.