HOUSE OF COMMONS

Defence Committee

Oral evidence: NATO, US and UK Defence Relations, HC 1187

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Watch the meeting

Members present: Mr Tobias Ellwood (Chair); Stuart Anderson; Sarah Atherton; Martin Docherty-Hughes; Richard Drax; Mr Kevan Jones; Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck; Gavin Robinson; John Spellar; Derek Twigg.

Questions 40-84

Witnesses

I: Heather A. Conley, Senior Vice President for Europe, Eurasia and the Arctic, and Director, Europe, Russia and Eurasia Programme, CSIS; Dr Rob Johnson, Director of the Oxford Changing Character of War Centre, University of Oxford; and Professor Wyn Rees, Professor of International Security, University of Nottingham.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Heather A. Conley, Dr Rob Johnson and Professor Wyn Rees.

Chair: Welcome to this Defence Select Committee hearing, in which we will be looking at US and UK defence relations. We thank the witnesses very much indeed for joining us today. Heather Conley is senior vice-president for Europe, Eurasia and the Arctic, and director of the Europe, Russia and Eurasia programme, at CSIS. Dr Rob Johnson is director of the Changing Character of War Centre at the University of Oxford. Professor Wyn Rees is professor of international security at the University of Nottingham. Welcome and thank you very much indeed.

The purpose of this session is to consider the strengths and weaknesses of the UK-US defence partnership, to explore the concepts, doctrine and capabilities required to pursue shared objectives in different theatres, regions and domains, and to inform scrutiny of the Integrated Review and a future inquiry on NATO, US and UK relations. Thank you once again. Can I hand over to John Spellar to kick us off?

Q40 **John Spellar:** The opening question is really about what the US is actually expecting from us. Part of that, of course, is this: how reliant are we on the United States, and to what extent are we too reliant? But also, what do they expect in return? As a scene setter for that, Lord Darroch, our previous ambassador in Washington, made it very clear that he was very worried about a reduction in the size of the British Army and said he had had it made very clear to him that reducing to, say, 80,000 would be seen as a sign of Britain's weakening commitment and would adversely affect the view held in Washington. How do they see us from Washington?

Chair: Heather Conley, do you want to respond first?

Heather A. Conley: Of course. Thank you so much. It is a great privilege and pleasure to testify before you this afternoon.

I think that the United States is very eager to see, as I am sure members of this Committee are, the Integrated Review. We are eager to see what the UK is thinking about its future foreign, security and defence posture. I want also to acknowledge that trust has been severely damaged between the United States and Europe, and it is going to take a long time—far beyond one US Administration—to rebuild that credibility and that trust. We have to work very hard to rebuild that trust. But as I look at the US-UK defence relationship, this relationship transcends any one figure in the White House or in No. 10. It's too strong; the sinews run so deep. And so that is a strong foundation to rebuild that trust and credit, and capabilities that I am sure we are going to speak about today.

Very briefly—we can get into this in further questions and comments—I see really four key areas where the United States and the United Kingdom need to engage more deeply in the future. Quite frankly, much as I do

respect Ambassador Darroch and his views, I don't think this relationship hinges on the fact that the UK will maintain an 80,000-member Army; it is wider and deeper than that. Of course ground forces are an important element—I do not mean to detract from that—but it is not the essential point.

Very briefly, my four areas are these. The first is continued strong engagement with nuclear modernisation, particularly as we embark on a new arms control framework. The United Kingdom is an essential ally in that conversation as we begin New START treaty extension talks with Russia and think about how to engage China more in that arms control.

The second area is sub-threshold warfare. The Russians term this as "new generation" warfare—hybridity, cyber; the US has just encountered the largest cyberattack, SolarWinds, from Russia. It is comprehensive and complex. We have seen the use of chemical agents—Novichok—on UK sovereign territory. We know, of course, about the suite of disinformation and illicit financing. These are the tools of adversaries that cannot meet us on the battlefield but are going to reduce us from within.

The third area—I really hope we spend some time on this—is enhanced UK leadership in NATO, and not only NATO's modernisation, but NATO's political dimension, which is something that Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg has put as a primary focus. The UK very much needs to lead that conversation. We can talk about enhancements in the north Atlantic, in the Arctic, in the Eastern Mediterranean and in the Black sea.

Finally, we need the UK to maintain power projection capabilities. This will be essential in the Indo-Pacific, and the two aircraft carriers will play a great role in that potential in reach and supporting the United States in the Indo-Pacific.

I know we will have lots to dive into, but those are my opening thoughts on how to strengthen a strong relationship, acknowledging that trust has been broken.

Dr Johnson: Thank you very much indeed for the invitation to address the Committee. I think it is pretty clear that the United States does expect the United Kingdom to lead on regional defence, along with France, and by that I mean a section of the North Atlantic, in particular while it pivots to a much stronger focus on China and East Asia. It expects the United Kingdom to have rapid reaction forces. The UK has always had an expeditionary posture throughout its history, and I think the United States would expect that.

I think we can be absolutely clear that the United States would expect the UK to maintain that very expert Five Eyes intelligence relationship, and to continue to see the nuclear deterrent. Those things are absolutely clear.

I certainly agree with Heather on the points about how you can afford modernisation, cyber-capability, preventing the spread of weapons of

mass destruction more generally and competing in this sub-threshold information area.

I think the significance of your question, with reference to whether there is too much dependence, is underscored by one very important fact: the priority for the United States over the next 12 to 18 months is going to be domestic, and particularly economic. If it is interested in foreign affairs matters, it is going to try and take a very different approach from that of the Trump Administration, even though there will be consistencies and enduring elements of that foreign policy. So I think there will be a much more low-key approach.

The implications of that, of course, are that if we are dependent on the United States, we are going to have to look to our own immediate region and our own capabilities. I think for that reason I would certainly emphasise the importance of the UK's air and maritime capabilities and the nuclear deterrent. On the question of the land environment, that is a very interesting point, which I hope we get to delve into in some detail. Although our instinct in the United Kingdom is to look at European continental defence as a natural extension of the Cold War period, there is a question that could be asked: is that the best role of the United Kingdom's land expeditionary capability?

The big argument from the United States over the last 20 years has been for the Europeans to step up in NATO and enhance their own defences, in order to be less dependent on the United States. Why should the United States do the heavy lifting and pay the money for that degree of defence?

If that is true for the United States, that might also be a question that we should be asking ourselves in the United Kingdom. Why is it that we have committed a large portion of our land capability to the defence of continental Europe, when Europeans have more soldiers, for example, than the United States does?

The problem with the European powers is that they lack those capabilities for lift or surveillance, counter-electronic warfare, but it is incumbent upon them to do that. I think, perhaps, while the UK can contribute to that, we shouldn't see the land component as the main effort.

Professor Rees: Thank you for your invitation today. I agree with all of what has been said thus far. We in the UK offer the United States a kind of "full spectrum defence" set of capabilities, in terms of land, sea and air. I think they take all those as being important, and they value the professionalism and skill that the UK devotes to defence.

As I think some of my colleagues have just mentioned, we also offer an expeditionary capability, which is important and is flexible, and we have proven ourselves, over the years, to be a significant and reliable ally of the United States in a variety of different circumstances.

I think, in all those sorts of ways, the US values what the UK offers, even though we are often only a 10th of the size in terms of our actual

contribution in any particular operation. It is that ability to be able to rely upon the UK to be there to offer the US a degree of legitimacy and support—a continuing kind of global supportive role—that I think they take very seriously.

Q41 **John Spellar:** But if we are cutting back on that capability, do you think we would still be able to fulfil that role?

Professor Rees: I think it depends on what kind of an operation you are involved in, and I think that is what the Integrated Defence and Security Review is trying to wrestle with at the moment—the kinds of operations that the US and the UK may be involved in.

As you well know, for a long period of time, when the US has called upon the UK in high-intensity operations, it has valued the UK's ability to deliver a divisional-sized contribution—an armoured division. I think that is increasingly under pressure now, in the face of the kinds of challenges that the UK has, in terms of both modernising its future capabilities and thinking through exactly what size of force it can offer to a US contingency kind of operation. That is where the rub is, at the moment.

Some people have talked about the UK being capable of delivering a more specialised, fully capable, brigade-sized contribution. I think that's going to be a hard one to sell, because I think that the traditional model, of the UK offering a division inside a US corps, has been a kind of way of measuring the UK's contribution up until now.

Chair: Thank you, John. There is lots to unpick in those initial three contributions. Let us start to build a picture. Derek, can you take us forward on existing arrangements?

Q42 **Derek Twigg:** Thank you, Chair. I will first ask Professor Rees a question. What existing arrangements make the greatest contribution to the UK-US defence relationship? For instance, could arrangements for embedding personnel be improved? Is more joint training and exercise required? Are co-basings sufficient?

Professor Rees: We have a very significant footprint in the United States. I think that is incredibly important, in the sense that we have personnel in various US commands, in all sorts of training establishments and doctrine centres, and so on. That ability to learn more about what the US is doing—how it is thinking and how it is shaping its forces for future operations—is integral for the UK to be able to plan how we want to be able to operate alongside it.

I think there is the other dimension that comes out of a major series of conflicts, such as Afghanistan and Iraq, where a close proximity between US and UK officers and personnel has developed very strong bonds of relationship. Going into the further distant future, those often bear fruit when people reach senior positions and command responsibilities. So you then have a strong institutional network within the US-UK relation within the military, and then the personal bonds and things, which inevitably degrade a little over time as people leave the military and so on. However,

those friendships, those experiences of working together can prove extremely valuable in the longer term when people come to senior positions of responsibility. They can ring each other up and there is trust and bonds of friendship there that are really valuable.

Q43 **Derek Twigg:** Do Heather or Dr Johnson have a comment to make on that?

Dr Johnson: I agree entirely with Professor Rees. I would suggest a couple of practical, evidence-based examples as well. American aircraft can fly on and off UK aircraft carriers with impunity, with no difficulty whatsoever. Our doctrines for land operations and for air operations are absolutely the same, which makes integrated operations much smoother. If you look at the headquarters of the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps of NATO, it has a British commander and American subordinate commanders directly within it. There is a seamless series of activities. I visited them when they were doing some support for the Romanians only last month, and I have to say that they were absolutely professional; you simply could not tell the difference in what was being delivered there.

Where I would say we need improvement, which is the basis of your question, is that I would suggest probably we need to consider two areas. One is technology sharing. There is still some great room for improvement. There is a risk that the United States will forge ahead in certain areas and we will end up with burdens of cost of repeating the same kind of development. Particularly when it comes to new tech, we should be absolutely clear that there are no prizes for second best, particularly in the race for artificial intelligence development and its application to the military environment. It was only yesterday that Robert Work and Eric Schmidt produced their final report on AI. It makes for some sober reading and the recommendations are absolutely vital. If the UK is going to play a leading role and keep up with the United States, it must play a very full part in that AI development.

One thing I would therefore recommend very briefly is that we look within defence at how we can better share our own artificial intelligence development with the United States and equally look for ways of working with them when it comes to how you apply it. In the UK, for example, there is some excellent work going on with how you use artificial intelligence to reduce the burden of data processing in various headquarters, both at sea, in the air and on land, and in the joint space. That is the sort of work that we shared, of course, with the United States, but I think we could save a lot of money on both sides of the Atlantic if we were able to make that a very integrated activity.

Q44 **Derek Twigg:** Thanks. Heather, do you have anything to add?

Heather A. Conley: What we want to achieve is the closest possible integrated operating picture across domains. How do we mesh that information sharing, base collaboration and co-operation on platforms—that seamlessness? That is going to require the US to rethink on defence exports, which is something we have wrestled with unsuccessfully for

many years. We need to rethink that proposition to make sure we have exactly, as Wyn and Rob have said, this seamless operating picture. As I was saying, where the US and the UK have the close response is in these high-end capabilities and that is where the UK has already made the decision, in my view, to stay with the United States in that high-end department. Many of our NATO allies can only be on the low end of the spectrum and that is the imbalance we have to work with.

However, as we are focusing on high-end tech, I would just remind the Committee that the challenges we are seeing from our adversaries in electronic warfare is to diminish that capability of integrating in the tech. While we are building these extraordinary high-end resources, we do need to pay equal attention in trying to protect them, because that is our advantage and that is where asymmetric electronic warfare can eliminate those capabilities very swiftly, and then we are flying blind and operating blindly, and that is what we have to avoid.

Q45 **Mr Jones:** We now have an Administration in Washington that purports not to have the "America First" rhetoric of Trump. You talk about technology sharing, but the US haven't got a very good track record on this, have they, in terms of ITAR regulations and others? What has to change to get to the point that you want to achieve, Dr Johnson, which I agree with, in terms of being able not only to import military technologies but to gain the benefits from both in that technology?

Chair: Heather, do you want to start with that?

Heather A. Conley: Absolutely. This is where, in much of the work that we are doing at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, we are urging the Administration that they can't continue on as they have in these pathways. I think, in some ways, as we are rethinking how to have more successful and purpose-driven Alliance-based policies, it can't just be that the allies accept US policy and that's how we work with allies. We have to change how we think about this, for our own cost-benefit analysis as well as for a much stronger allied approach, so there have to be changes to US policy that, quite frankly, are very difficult. I don't know whether the Biden Administration—a very new Administration that is just standing itself up—will be able to get to these issues, but that's the only way we drive to a new place. The UK and our other European allies are also going to have to make some important changes that are going to not be easy as well, but that's the only way we get to a new place, instead of spinning our tyres, which is what we have been doing for the past 15 years.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed. Can we move to the Euro-Atlantic scene and Stuart Anderson?

Q46 **Stuart Anderson:** Thank you, Chair. Welcome, everyone. I would like to direct this first question at Heather Conley. What role does the US expect the UK military to play in the Euro-Atlantic?

Heather A. Conley: I would like to offer my wish list of places where I would like to see a much stronger UK presence. Let's begin with what,

truly, is homeland security for the United Kingdom—the North Atlantic—and that is also extending the North Atlantic, the GIUK gap, into the Barents Sea and the Arctic. This is where we see what we call a new ocean unfolding before us. The United States has already worked closely with the UK in doing our freedom of navigation operation, to make sure that we have routine access to the region. We have seen Russian military modernisation and enhancement of capabilities on the Kola peninsula, with Russian submarine activity—in fact, you have just escorted very recently Russian submarines that are moving to different theatres. This is where the UK has already, over a decade ago, started to think about northern Europe and the security of northern Europe more fully. This is where, to get to the expeditionary part, the Joint Expeditionary Force—the JEF—the Northern Group stitching together the seams of NATO and non-NATO members into enhanced deterrence, with greater integrated air and missile defence capabilities. I would love to see the UK continue to take a leadership role across northern Europe. That would be my first wish.

The second would be looking much more fully at the Black Sea Turkish straits in the eastern Mediterranean. Again, we are seeing Russia's enhanced military posture across the eastern Mediterranean. We have a very challenging NATO ally in Turkey, one that we must re-anchor to Euro-Atlanticism. How do we work through those challenges within the Alliance? We need more maritime and air capabilities and perhaps more expeditionary forces.

As you can tell, what we would like to see is the United Kingdom play a much more concentrated role in the flanks of NATO—northern and south-eastern flanks. This would be an extraordinary help, but also we want to have the UK retain capabilities to be able to project power when needed—and, of course, I am speaking of the Indo-Pacific. So, the North Atlantic, the Arctic, the Black Sea, the eastern Med—a lot of concentration there to restore flanks—and then, of course, the Indo-Pacific, where there are limited capabilities.

Q47 **Stuart Anderson:** Thank you very much for your answer. The comms are quite intermittent at my end, so please excuse me if I missed a few of those points. Before I expand on this with your colleagues, you've illustrated the areas you would like us to operate, but do you believe that we need to significantly increase the defence in those areas, particularly the High North, the Black Sea and the Baltic regions?

Heather A. Conley: What I am seeking a great deal more of is maritime capability, of course, and I think that is where there is natural UK leadership and presence. I think there's also more leadership in thinking about how to lead NATO operations and engage more fully in exercises. This goes back to the earlier question of we how can integrate more completely and have US forces enable UK forces, and vice versa, in those regions, so I would see an enhancement.

Underlying all of that, it's also an enhancement of the political dimension working these issues. Of course, there is a military security core to this,

but it's the sharing of the political dimension, enhancing UK leadership in the region, which would also be very helpful.

Q48 **Stuart Anderson:** Thank you very much. Would any of your colleagues like to add anything?

Dr Johnson: Thank you for that great question. Thank you very much to Heather, too, who has covered the key ground. All I would add is that cyber early warning is going to be crucial. I think the mobility of maritime platforms is absolutely crucial, but clearly there needs to be the ability to operate in that area. The United Kingdom does not have a very large—it has one icebreaker vessel. Canada has more, and the United States has more. That suggests to me that if we are going to be operating there, we absolutely have to work together in order to function in that area at all.

When it comes to the UK's commando force—the new commando concept—that's absolutely vital for rapid reaction capability, along with that of the UK Special Forces. Our air capability is improving after the fiasco of 2010, in which we destroyed that maritime patrol capability.

I think the final points—apart from the obvious one of submarines, and the need to have a presence of a fleet in being to cover that area—are also what you might call the automated elements of this: the new tech potential. It is now possible to have loitering surveillance both in the sea and in the air. That will assist the whole network that we create in that region to make sure that any hostile underlying moves are dealt with very swiftly. By that I mean, for example, the possible but perhaps unlikely scenario of Russian marines seizing one of the smaller islands of Svalbard to create the sort of difficulties that China has created in the South China Sea—they've taken that model. This is the point that Heather was making earlier about the way that malign or hostile powers will try to manipulate the law and international agreements, and exploit that grey zone in the sub-threshold environment. Those are the ones I'd add.

I think that in order to get that sort of automated presence right in those very harsh conditions of the High North, we need to be looking, as a country, at establishing a sort of new tech competitive taskforce in the way that has just been suggested in the United States. We need to do that with our American partners, and other partners of NATO who are willing, particularly in the north of Europe, just as Heather has been saying. I think there are some risks that if we start to generate obsolete technologies, they will be useless, and we will waste a lot of money. If we are going to do it, let's get ahead of the pack and make sure that the UK is leading on that initiative, as it leads within northern Europe.

Stuart Anderson: Thank you. I will hand back to you, Chair, because I know we will come back for more questions.

Chair: The melting of the ice and a new ocean appearing poses some big questions. I remember when one of the private islands of Svalbard came up for sale when I was a Foreign Office Minister and I tried to get the British Government to purchase it for £250 million. Unfortunately, they

decided it wasn't good value. Unfortunately, I think China is now about to take ownership, which of course they will take full advantage of, if the South China Sea is anything to go by.

Q49 **Gavin Robinson:** I will come back to you, Heather. I want to explore whether you believe that there are other countries within Europe that we should be striking bilateral relationships with. Are there countries in Europe that the US firmly believe that the UK needs to strengthen its relationships with at this time?

Heather A. Conley: Again, the UK is already forging those bilateral defence co-operation agreements. I will start in the North Atlantic with the UK-Norwegian agreement. We would like to continue to see that strengthened. Of course, the UK-France Lancaster House agreement has its 10th anniversary. Really, in some ways, we need to ensure that the NATO members that do retain more full-spectrum power projection capabilities remain very closely aligned with each other on security posture. I would encourage continued UK outreach, particularly along the eastern flank of NATO—Poland and the Baltic states. Again, we are already seeing UK leadership with the NATO battalions. The US has obviously strengthened its military posture with Poland. Poland's modernisation effort should again be something where we should ensure that there is full integration.

Non-NATO member Sweden and its increasing defence spending on maritime and air capabilities is another opportunity. We have to overlook the institutional barriers and start looking at the regional defence posture and how to make that much more comprehensive.

As we are seeing in the NATO 2030 reflection process, as much as there is a concept of global Britain, there is a concept of global NATO. This is where NATO and the US are strengthening defence relationships with the Indo-Pacific quad. Again, I think particularly Australia and the Commonwealth countries and the UK can continue to strengthen those relationships.

We really have to think about this global western alliance—working together against adversaries that are working not only externally and challenging international norms and rules and laws, but inside our countries with malign influence, to reduce our capabilities and capacity to defend ourselves. We have to look at the inside as well as the outside of that. That is really the challenge we have today. So, strong northern Europe relations, and we mentioned the eastern Mediterranean: UK-Turkey, UK-Greece, and looking at the Aegean more comprehensively. Working with Romania and the Black Sea partners, and Bulgaria—that is a weakness. And then, of course, the Indo-Pacific.

Q50 **Gavin Robinson:** Just before you go back on to mute—I think you almost felt you were going to escape from the questions—you mentioned Lancaster House. Members of this Committee know that relationship well. As part of it, we engage quite frequently with our counterparts in France. You also mentioned Poland. I suspect that there is probably less

awareness of the agreement that was reached between the UK and Poland in 2018. When we look at how to build and strengthen those relationships, have you had the chance to assess what was agreed with Poland? Do you think the UK is making the best of what was agreed in 2018? Or, while it might have high-level aspirations, are we seeing the benefits of the outworking of that agreement in practice? Is that a lesson for future engagement with other countries—that it needs to be much more than paper based and principled?

Heather A. Conley: I apologise for not recognising the UK-Polish defence agreement. I would like to take a closer look at it. I can simply describe that I have watched the US-Polish security relationship evolve since I was a Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the Bush Administration, so I have watched a 20-year security and defence relationship prosper. It involves deep-seated investment, military-to-military education and training, and officer corps training. It deals with, obviously, military equipment procurements—the F-16s, which would be leading to the F-35s. The equipment binds the priceless relationship of that operation. Then, of course, there are extensive exercises and training.

As you note, it is not just the paper that you write; it is how you live and breathe that relationship every single day. It is very difficult. I would be the first to tell you that the US-Polish defence co-operation relationship is a difficult relationship to maintain. It has been very rewarding but really frustrating. You need to dedicate a significant amount of resources to make that relationship come to life. I would love to study that more and I could offer you a better critique, if I had a better understanding of the UK-Polish defence relationship.

Q51 **Gavin Robinson:** Thanks kindly for that candour. Professor Rees, is there a danger of having the aspiration of building numerous bilateral relationships but not putting the emphasis, the importance or the practical application on those arrangements?

Professor Rees: That is genuinely a good point. Britain does have an opportunity now, particularly in the light of Brexit: we can recommit. I think there is a very strong attempt on the part of the British Government to recommit to NATO, to leadership, and to some of the things that Dr Conley was talking about, in terms of galvanising other European countries to take the NATO commitment more seriously, to increase their defence spending, and to put in place a kind of infrastructure and various other practical measures that will make NATO a more capable alliance, and show the United States that we are bearing a fairer share of the burden, which we haven't been doing as a European collective group within NATO for a long period of time. In that sense, it is an opportunity for the British.

Where I might differ a little bit from one or two of my colleagues is that I think the British also have to be a little bit aware of not being spread too thinly, or trying to do too much. Because we do take the American relationship so seriously, and because it is, in our eyes, so integral to our future defence and security plans, there is a risk that we can try to be almost too eager to help in too many areas. I may differ with some people

on the Indo-Pacific area. I am highly wary of Britain sailing carrier groups to the Pacific region to try to contribute in that regard, when we have urgent tasks in the NATO area and we can help fully backfill where the US may be devoting some of its strength to that region. The US has strong partners in that part of the world, like Australia and Japan and others, who are much better placed to deal with some of those issues relating to China, perhaps, than we are in this country, by comparison.

Q52 **Gavin Robinson:** Thank you, sir. I see nodding assent from our other witnesses. Dr Johnson, I am not sure if you wish to come in at this stage or whether I will pass back to the Chair, but if you have a burning reflection, I am sure we have time for that.

Dr Johnson: I agree with Professor Rees about spreading ourselves too thin. That has certainly been an evident problem for the United Kingdom over the years. I disagree politely with the idea that we should not occasionally be in the Indo-Pacific. One looks at what are the biggest threats to our national interests or national security objectives, and the fulfilment of those objectives. Committing more to Europe seems to not be enhancing at all what we already have. We often talk about what the UK contributes, but we don't always ask the question. We are going to commit to Poland, which is great, but what is the commitment from Poland to the United Kingdom? You could argue that it is holding the European continent against otherwise malign actors, but Russia would be pretty foolish to endeavour to seize any part of Polish territory. It would have a very serious set of repercussions. That is possibly throwing yet more money at a problem that should already be solving itself and that is a European responsibility. We can contribute to NATO, but the UK contribution to NATO will be the one that Heather has just talked about, which is a High North/North Atlantic regional air defence and an expeditionary capability.

The great thing about an Indo-Pacific commitment is that the new carrier strike groups give us the flexibility to be mobile. It is not as if we are fixing the United Kingdom to any particular location, as we do with Poland, Estonia and so on. It is a much more flexible and, therefore, politically attractive way of providing presence and reassurance, with the fleet being a force that you hope you will never have to use for hostile purposes, but it is there if you really had to. It also sends a very clear signal to the primary threat that is emerging to the United Kingdom's national security objectives, which is what Heather has also been talking about: China. We should begin to realise that China is now a very prominent threat to the United Kingdom's way of life and our national security objectives. If we continue to hope that the United States, Australia and the south-east Asian states will carry the can for us, we might need to think about that again. I know I am on the record, but I would suggest a series of critical questions that MPs can pose about exactly what we are doing. If the Integrated Review ends up being a retread of what we have had before, we will be missing a trick here, because we probably have a decade left to make a significant difference. Otherwise, we will lose the lot.

Q53 **Gavin Robinson:** Chair, I hope you recognise that the conversation has moved slightly from where we started, but it neatly brings me to a

question that I was going to raise later. It may be more poetic to deal with it now, if that's okay. I will go back to Professor Rees. How do you balance the competing commitments from Europe and with our European allies and nations that are threats to those within the Indo-Pacific or the Asia-Pacific?

Professor Rees: That is a really challenging issue, and we have been wrestling with it for a fair amount of time. Where are you best postured to make a meaningful contribution? I agree with Dr Johnson that China is a significant challenge to the West. It is growing, certainly in terms of its military capabilities and so on. I don't underestimate that in any shape or form, but we are perhaps better at contributing to our traditional area of expertise, which is the threat that Russia poses to us and the European continent. In terms of where we have things to offer the United States, it is about balancing and taking the pressure off them in some of those areas, so that they can devote proportionately more of their resources and their formidable capabilities to addressing the challenge from China. They do that best in conjunction with allies such as Japan, Australia and South Korea. I don't see a carrier contribution by Britain as being the answer—it takes a long time to get out of that region. We don't have a lot of naval assets, apart from the carriers, to contribute to the protection of the carriers out there. In those ways, I am less convinced of that. I think that is more about making symbolic contributions. It may please the United States and the US Navy to watch a British carrier join them for a period of time in that region, but in the long term, I don't think that is the best use of resource. I would prefer to see Britain mobilising its efforts in conjunction with its European allies.

Q54 **Gavin Robinson:** Thank you very much, sir. Dr Conley, to tie this off, you have heard the different and competing views and perceptions of our capacity from two Brits. What do you have to say about that? I know you would love us to do all three, but do you recognise the tension there and how does the US believe we should be balancing our posture?

Heather A. Conley: Not only do we recognise the tension; the US, even though it has an abundance of capabilities, also feels that stretch and that tension of having to put a carrier strike group in the North Atlantic for dynamic force deployment, but it really wants to stay focused on the Indo-Pacific, so, of course, that is an absolute natural tension. I guess I am going to play the part of the diplomat and I would say that the compromise that I would humbly recommend is probably a 70:30 split, meaning 70% of the UK's military capabilities and, hopefully, enhancement of its maritime presence. Just to get back to something Dr Johnson said about ice strength, hulls and icebreakers. I assure you that the United States is not a great maritime power in the icebreaker department. We have one, which was built in the 1970s. We are straining. That icebreaker goes to Antarctica; it does not typically go to the Arctic, but because of covid this year it was able to be deployed.

There are huge resources there. Seventy per cent. of UK time should stay in the region. North Atlantic, Arctic, eastern Mediterranean. There is a southern component to this that we can talk about a little further.

However, you cannot avoid the Indo-Pacific, so this is where periodic rotations—the jointness in the platforms—are going to be essential, as well as the UK strengthening its existing defence co-operative relationships with the Indo-Pacific Quad? That helps as well. So, think about more of a concentration, but we cannot escape the Indo-Pacific. The demand from the United States would just be too great. I think you have to set boundaries to it.

Gavin Robinson: Thank you very much, Chair. Thank you for the latitude and, colleagues, apologies if I skipped beyond the sheet.

Q55 **Chair:** Thank you for finessing that in. I want to segue us back to Europe. An interesting question that has been posed about China is that, without an absence of a China strategy, what purpose does sending the aircraft carriers to the South China Sea actually bring? Apparently, we have 10 years to answer that question, according to our panel today. We will certainly come back to that.

As we speak today, Foreign Affairs Committees and Defence Committees from across the EU are meeting virtually in Portugal for their annual gathering. I was invited to attend, but with observer status only. Does that not reflect the elephant in the room—or the politics behind European security, and the difficulties—post Brexit as to how Britain with its military might fits into the discussions on European security and the uneven overlap between NATO and the EU? If I can turn that into a question to Professor Wyn Rees. If Britain and France together have half of the military capability in Europe, should that not be a bilateral bond that would be worth exploring? If we pave the way from a European perspective, in the same way that the US and the UK do more internationally, we will encourage other nations to follow suit.

Professor Rees: Yes, there is a lot of truth in that. The British, as you well know, have long been the brake on European efforts to do more within an EU framework. The fact that we have now exited from that European Union defence framework gives the Europeans more opportunity to develop capabilities and co-operation in that regard. Where I think the British have been right to criticise, up until now, European Union efforts is that a lot of what some member states from the European Union have done has been to create institutional arrangements and flag-planting exercises, rather than investing large amounts of resources in capabilities. The European Union, in capability terms, still remains a disappointing actor in this regard and struggles, as we all well know, to find the kind of political cohesion when a particular security or defence task arises to be able to speak and act in a unified kind of fashion. That doesn't mean that Britain has not a role to play in complementing and working with its EU allies and friends.

As you rightly identified, France is the most significant actor. We have already alluded to the fact that the Lancaster House arrangement has given the British-French relationship an added kind of strengthened and more institutional significance. I am reasonably optimistic that Britain can work with its EU allies in European defence operations while at the same

time, as we have already said, Britain pushes harder on the NATO pedal to get more from its European allies into the NATO framework at the same time.

Chair: Richard Drax, do you want to pursue this further on the EU side?

Q56 **Richard Drax:** Yes, thank you, and welcome to the three very distinguished guests. I think we have been bombarding my question for the last half an hour in various bits and bobs. Heather, let me direct this at you, if I may. What would the US like the UK's future security and defence relationship with the EU to look like?

Heather A. Conley: Again, it is one of support to Europe's common security and defence policy. We just have to be extremely realistic about what an EU defence capability will and will not be able to do. It will, I believe, largely be used for military missions in Africa. Increasingly, we are hearing from our French colleagues who have played a prominent role in stabilising typically the Sahel. We are hearing that more and more from our German colleagues. They see this as a force of instability and migration, and they are going to concentrate future missions.

As the US does right now with French forces that are deployed in Mali and elsewhere, we provide enablers from airlift to intelligence. We support their missions. This is the role that I think the UK should look at, should it be given opportunities to do so. But this will not be something that will have overwhelming strength to be able to sustain significant forces for a long period of time. Even our French colleagues are extremely stretched right now with their deployments in Africa and are looking for co-operation and partnerships to continue to enhance that. So, we support them in their limited operations while reinforcing that a European capability must be highly complementary to NATO and not competitive with NATO.

Just a final comment: it is important to note that even France recognises the limitations of Europe's security and defence policy and capabilities. When it created the European Intervention Initiative, something that goes outside the EU structures, it was trying to create a strategic culture among 14 countries to be able to do humanitarian assistance and use that type of deployment. The UK is part of the EII. That's another opportunity, but, again, I think it speaks to the limitations of an EU-European identity. We are going to have to be nimble and flexible in how we can support Europe as it focuses on the areas of interest, and that will be very much in Africa, in my view.

Q57 **Richard Drax:** Heather, your reply was interesting. On talking about responsibilities, don't you think that the EU should start taking responsibility? With all his faults, Trump and many others have highlighted the fact that they are not paying their NATO minimum of 2% of GDP. Isn't it time that the EU, particularly with the UK leaving the EU, got its own house in order and took far more of an active role in looking after itself?

Heather A. Conley: I think the EU has been trying to do that for 20-plus years. From EU battle groups and the Berlin Process, we have seen many

initiatives and many papers written, but those capabilities are lacking. This is why I believe that the only way we support European security and defence is through strong enhancements of NATO. Of the 22 countries that are involved, we are talking about the same force structures and the same capabilities. We are creating these artificial borders between the two. Strengthen NATO, but where the EU is going to focus its capabilities, let's support that where we can, so we get out of this competition. We want to primarily strengthen NATO's role in European security—that is difficult for our French colleagues to accept, but we have to drive towards it—while we are supporting French-led initiatives or EU CSDP missions in Africa, to support where they are interested in, rather than getting into this competition. That is one recommendation that I would have.

Q58 **Richard Drax:** Dr Johnson, I saw your head nodding vigorously. Would you like to contribute now?

Dr Johnson: Yes, absolutely. Thank you very much indeed, because I think what you have asked is the central question, and as you said, we feel it has been bombarded, but I think it is very important. You have asked me as an academic to respond, so I am hopefully going to give you a fairly candid answer.

France has been looking for the leadership of the EU, and indeed to lead strategic autonomy of Europe, but one has to say that it has not succeeded in doing so. We have to be honest and say that the European Union's structures and approaches so far in terms of defence and security, particularly defence, have not succeeded; we need to be frank and say that they have not worked. PESCO, for example, remains work in progress, shall we say lightly. I heard a Turkish general officer two or three years ago speaking very critically of PESCO, and I think that is really where we are at the moment. From the strategic perspective, we have seen the European Union Commission forge ahead with signing the CAI deal with China before the Biden Administration had even taken office, abrogating a very important strategic lever towards China, which will of course exploit and utilise that position.

Just returning to France for a moment, I think the issue is not France: perhaps without questioning enough, the United Kingdom has allowed itself to work alongside France in West Africa. The question we have not asked ourselves is, how successful was the counter-terrorism mission launched by France in western and central Africa? Last week, I convened with a colleague from the Foreign Office a conference on counter-terrorism globally—where we are, and what things will look like in the next 10 years—and the entirety of the conference agreed that the policies had not been successful over the past 10 years, particularly in West Africa. What we in the United Kingdom have allowed ourselves to do is be drawn into a portion of the world with significant problems that will not be solved primarily by military means.

We need to start asking some questions about our relationship with the European Union's aspirations in defence and security, because it has set itself up as a competitor to NATO, but it is a lot less effective in that

competition than NATO has ever been. It goes to the central point that what we must demand of Europe is a much more robust posture within the NATO Alliance, in close co-operation with the United Kingdom as a NATO player, and in close co-operation with Canada and the United States as our other North Atlantic partners and allies.

Ultimately, the fallacy about Brexit and the Brexit debate has been, essentially, that it would all leave Britain isolated. Actually, I think the problem that the United Kingdom faces is that it has left Europe isolated through the European Union, particularly over China and increasingly over Russia, as we have just seen with the ambassadorial efforts towards the Kremlin. Right now, if you had to draw a line between who is performing in terms of being a good American partner, I think the United Kingdom is doing so; France is trying, but at the moment not succeeding; and the rest of Europe is frankly not succeeding.

Q59 **Richard Drax:** That is very interesting. Professor Rees, do you have anything to add quickly? I see that time is ticking along, so is there anything you would like to add on this question?

Professor Rees: Unfortunately, I do not agree with quite a lot of what Dr Johnson said on that. I am much more sympathetic to the European position than he appears. I absolutely agree with him that Europe does not spend enough on defence: you can look to countries such as Germany, which are very disappointing in that regard.

Having said all that, I think that some of the European Union operations that have taken place have been complementary to NATO. They have done things that are more specialised, are often rule-of-law missions or that don't seek to compete with NATO in a direct sense. I therefore think that you have complementarity between the two organisations.

I don't think you should necessarily see EU efforts as trying to take over from NATO. There is no sense from the European Union states that they want to be capable of undertaking really large military operations that would put them in competition with NATO in any shape or form. The very fact that France has rejoined NATO's military strategy is indicative that the old slightly false tensions between the organisations have largely been overcome. It is a pity that Britain has left that framework to be able to be part of the motivating factor within that, but we also have to say that Britain was never very helpful in developing European Union defence structures. We tended to be obstructive in those, rather than helpful.

Chair: I think the fact that we have two distinguished defence experts unable to agree even on what the problem is when it comes to European security illustrates the challenge that we face here in venturing forward and in where we should actually go.

The mention of PESCO reminds me that there are six types of helicopter that the military uses. The United States has around 40 variants. The rest of NATO—the European side of NATO—has four times that many. That shows you the difficulties of procurement.

Let us turn to the Middle East now. Sarah, will you take us forward on that?

Q60 **Sarah Atherton:** Thank you, Chair. Those were some interesting remarks on Richard's comments. On the Middle East, the US withdrawal date from Afghanistan is being debated, violence is on the increase, despite peace talks, and we have a changing of the guard with the Biden Administration. Dr Johnson, what role does the US expect the UK to play in the Middle East as we go forward?

Dr Johnson: Thank you for the question. You are right to describe a rather deteriorating picture. On a slightly more encouraging side, as far as the US and the UK are concerned, we have still, despite all the differences, strong relationships with Oman, the Gulf states and Jordan, for example, and Israel. There still seems to be a degree of faith and hope that the UK and the United States will continue to partner with those nations, because there is a common concern about the way that Iran has operated over the last 10 or 15 years in the region.

In one way it surprised me that Iran has played such a low-key role in Afghanistan. Perhaps, like many neighbouring countries, it is biding its time. We have all seen how proactive Iran is prepared to be against the sovereign wishes of the people of Iraq and against the people of the autonomous region of Kurdistan, and how it has crushed nascent democratic aspirations in Syria. It has been a long-term sponsor of terror. The rather unfortunate consequences of the end of the Iran nuclear deal has essentially meant that they now look more to Russia as a sponsor and backer for them, so the situation has become much more difficult.

Your question is really addressed towards what is the US-UK position. I will allow Heather to say much more about the US position, but the Biden Administration has a very significant problem if it thinks it can simply resuscitate the nuclear deal with Iran. That isn't going to happen, because Iran has moved on. It is going to require an adroit rethinking of how that will operate, which may be slightly more pressure, if not maximum pressure—it is certainly going to be a form of pressure.

As you know, the UK has a strong presence in the Gulf militarily, from a defence point of view. It is a contributor in the air environment to Centcom's air forces that are based there. It has maritime aspirations—a jetty already in the Gulf, which you can dock into to reassure and work with allies and partners in the Gulf, which is right and proper. Beyond that, it is hard to see.

Iran is arming itself with capabilities that are going to make that operating environment much more hazardous. It still represents a significant artery for global hydrocarbons, which the UK and the US want to see out in the world market being sold—not to possess for themselves and in some mercantilist way but open for everyone to buy and keep those oil prices at a reasonable level until such time as more renewable energy sources become much more prevalent around the world, particularly over here on our side of the Atlantic.

I do not see a significant step change. I know there are critics out there who say that the UK should just withdraw lock, stock and barrel. Well, we tried that in the '60s. America did not take up that mantle until the '70s. If there was a wholesale abandonment of the Gulf region, all that we would see is Russia and China step in with much more coercive policies, trying to turn them into client states, with all the ramifications for the global hydrocarbon industry, and for global trade and commerce, and the extinguishing of human rights, nascent though they are in the region.

Our degree of presence is a significant influence, and it is very much welcomed. Every time I visit the region, I am struck by just how welcoming people are to the United Kingdom. Maybe we are not the global power, but we are certainly one that is seen as—it is an overused phrase—a force for good.

Q61 **Sarah Atherton:** Thank you, Dr Johnson. Dr Conley?

Heather A. Conley: Thank you very much. As you rightly said, the Biden Administration is undertaking a comprehensive review and it will be part of its global force posture review. It is my sense that the US will continue to look for ways to optimise and reduce its military footprint across the Middle East. I think you are seeing this even with the NATO defence ministerial the other week, where a NATO training mission for Iraq was enhanced. It is about reducing the US burden, sharing that burden with other allies.

I think what we will continue to see, whether that is in Afghanistan or the Middle East, is the focus on growing special forces capabilities and intelligence. As Dr Johnson said, we have to have a presence in the region, but we are not talking about heavy bases and forces; we are talking about forward operating bases to be able to meet an emergency need and respond to developments quickly.

Of course, the US Middle East posture, I believe, will be Iran-centric, so it will be dealing with the malign behaviour in the region, the ballistic missile defence capabilities. We will strengthen individual bilateral military relationships with those partners in the region. So I suspect US policy will continue to seek a withdrawal but not completely; it will maintain presence. Again, this is where interacting with the UK and with France, thinking about how we can share that interoperability for all of us to achieve cost savings, provide interoperability and effectiveness, will be the future.

Q62 **Sarah Atherton:** Thank you, Heather. Professor Rees, do you have any comments?

Professor Rees: I don't have very much to add, as I agree with everything that has been said by my two colleagues. Just broadly, I think the British have had a very active role in that region, and the United States can look at the role we have played there as one that has been very supportive of American policy. I don't think they have any grounds for being critical of us. I think we have done a pretty good job in the circumstances, if I may say so.

On the subject of Syria, I think no Western country saw any kind of meaningful part to play in that, apart from the role that we have played against ISIL. So in that sense, those people who at the time were arguing for some kind of greater intervention in the civil war in Syria, I think the events there have kind of shown us that we were rather wise not to try and tread into that very difficult circumstance.

Sarah Atherton: Thank you all.

Q63 **Mrs Lewell-Buck:** I think this question is probably best directed at you, Heather—good afternoon to the rest of the panellists as well. It is just a quick question from me. On Yemen, what impact do the UK's continued arms sales, along with the cutting of humanitarian aid, have in relation to the US-UK defence relationship?

Heather A. Conley: I would certainly encourage the UK, like the US, to really rethink its policy approach. We have seen very strong shifts in the Biden Administration's approach, particularly vis-à-vis Saudi Arabia and arms sales. Again, I think this is a great opportunity for close co-operation. The humanitarian needs in Yemen are going to be enormous and, if there is to be a peace process, how can we facilitate and support that humanitarian operation? So absolutely, in many ways Yemen is an international shame, for all of us, in terms of the support that we have provided. It is incumbent on us, and it is our responsibility, to be part of the humanitarian process, so yes—and I think our German colleagues also need to rethink many of their arms export policies. This is not about pointing fingers, because we all share a great deal of blame here. But we have an opportunity right now to be very swift in changing that policy, doubling down on a peace process and getting humanitarian aid to a famine-starved region.

Mrs Lewell-Buck: Thank you very much for that, Heather. There is a lot of agreement with your position in the UK Parliament, so thank you.

Chair: Thank you, Emma. Let's turn to space and cyber. Stuart Anderson, do you want to take this forward?

Q64 **Stuart Anderson:** Thank you, Chair. Dr Johnson, you talked about a cyber early warning when we were tipping into my first question, so I would like to expand on that and look at how the UK-US relationship needs to adapt to new domains of warfare such as space and cyber.

Dr Johnson: That is a very important question indeed, and I think it has taken a little while for us in the UK to realise just how critical the space environment is, first of all. The really worrying development in this is that while we have been busy investing, as has the United States, in a greater density of constellations of satellite technology, because they are smaller and easier to get into space, for our communications and navigation systems, for example—from a defence and security point of view, as you know, those satellite capabilities are crucial in order to complete the link between the surveillance sense of a weapons guidance system and its arrival on target so that it doesn't create any more collateral damage than

would otherwise occur with dumb weapons. It is obviously vital for navigation at sea, from a safety point of view, and so on.

We do know that China has now just completed, as of September last year, its own satellite navigation system, so it doesn't now need GPS, which was developed by the United States. That is an absolute game changer. I really hope that the UK realises just how serious that is. What it means is that China has the ability to manoeuvre space vehicles—as has Russia, by the way. They could easily, therefore, interdict western space assets, either by electronic means or by physical means. They could then continue to operate their own GPS system without any reference to any western damaged ones, putting the western world at a significant military disadvantage.

Of course, the West, and the UK and US in particular, have been lobbying very hard over the last few decades to make sure that space remains a pristine environment, like the Arctic—unmilitarised. I regret to say that I think we have been deluding ourselves. I think that age has already passed, and it passed last September. So I would urge a redoubling of efforts by the United Kingdom to examine how we protect ourselves from space. That is absolutely vital.

I will turn briefly now to cyber. I analogise cyber, because it seems to be a bit of a dark art to many people, in this way. If you can imagine, in the midst of the Second World War there were three major informational capabilities that we would have been aware of—and that have been combined in what is taken from cyber. One was intelligence, which would be Bletchley Park and the ability to read and decrypt codes. The second was mass communications, which we would get out to our own side—our allies and partners—and neutral countries, as well as the adversary, when we could reach them. The final part would be sabotage, so the ability to communicate with partisans and support them in the field, through the Special Operations Executive or the Political Warfare Executive, in the hope that they could tie down many, many Axis divisions.

Of those three, although partisan activity and mass communications were important, the one that was the absolute strategic game-changer was intelligence and decryption, and I think that is a very good analogy for the importance of cyber. We tend to spend a lot of our time talking about cyber-sabotage—the potential for a cyber-Pearl Harbor or Stuxnet, or those kinds of activities. However, Heather has already mentioned the importance of SolarWinds and these embedded route kits that can sit there for months—potentially years—gathering data, harvesting data and manipulating data, and then doing a sort of Cambridge Analytica thing, which is nudging populations by manipulation of that data and of sentient analysis. That is the sort of threat that I think is really important.

Now, in terms of how we counter it, we obviously have to counter disinformation—that is a subject in its own right, deserving of its own parliamentary Select Committee, I would suggest. However, from the perspective of how we protect ourselves, we can use passive information gathering to protect ourselves and create early warning. If we have a good

enough, dense enough and deep enough network, we will have some indication of what malign activity is coming in our direction, essentially even being able to anticipate certain types of cyber offensive action against the UK and the US. And because we are part of a Five Eyes team, the great thing is that with every contribution we make in this field, we are at the same time contributing to the United States, and vice versa, and indeed to the other Five Eyes partners.

Q65 **Stuart Anderson:** Thank you. Just touching on one of the points you made on the space side of things, would you say that the West has underestimated the significance of China getting their own satellite navigation system?

Dr Johnson: It is hard to tell at the moment, because it is so recent. There is not a great deal of literature out there yet, certainly none in the academic sphere as far as I know, although it is emerging in the policy domain.

A great deal more attention is being paid to it in the United States than in the UK. Of course, I am not speaking for any of the officials—I don't know what they are discussing. But I certainly know that in the open-source environment it has not been recognised yet, and I think it is going to need quite a lot of effort and indeed investment savvy. We can't do this on the cheap; we have to make sure that we understand how we can counter that.

Q66 **Stuart Anderson:** It's interesting to hear you say that—I know that you are talking about the open-source side—there is far more noise around this in the US. Do you think that the UK has the capabilities required to work with the US within these domains?

Dr Johnson: I think on the cyber front, yes. I think the recent development, last February, of the public announcement of the National Cyber Force, and before that the National Cyber Security Centre, and exchanges of personnel, one of whom I will be talking to later today, has been great. I think our own cyber-capabilities have been outstanding. I have nothing but praise for the way they have managed ours and particularly over how they managed to expose the atrocities of Daesh, for example, which was absolutely critical in deterring young people from going to join Daesh in Syria and northern Iraq. That was a very good performance there.

On space, I think it is very one-sided, because the United States is a long way ahead. Doctrinally, the UK has an understanding, but we haven't invested in the same way. I understand, from those I have interviewed in UK defence at the moment, that there is an aspiration to do more about it. I think that will probably be led by the Royal Air Force and by Strategic Command, quite rightly. Strategic Command has the ideas, but I think that what they haven't yet done—as far as I know, again from open source—is actually to implement them in manifest hardware terms. So I would be interested to see how that develops in the next few years. I

suspect that in the Integrated Review we will see a lot more reference to it than I am able to make.

Q67 **Stuart Anderson:** Thank you. Those are interesting observations. Specifically on the cyber, you talked about Bletchley Park and the early days. Even being on the Defence Committee in the last 12 months—just over 12 months—I have seen an acceleration in the interest in space; I have seen that rapidly move forward. That will be a very interesting area to watch as it develops.

That will be a very interesting area to watch as it develops. Thank you very much for your in-depth answers.

Q68 **Chair:** May I just probe a bit? You said that this weaponisation of space is relatively new, but during the Cold War, the Soviets took a tail gun of the Tupolev bomber and put it on the Almaz satellite programme. Now we see dual-purpose satellites in abundance, and our own satellites suddenly stop working and we do not understand why. It is already happening, yet there are no rules up there at the moment. This is not a new phenomenon that we are waking up to today.

Dr Johnson: That is correct, although I draw a line between the Cold War period ending in 1991 and that rather halcyon decade just after. There was an aspiration, because of the development of the International Space Station programme and NASA's reorientation away from military capabilities. I think there has been a dip, if you like, in the optimism about space. Certainly, I think that just came to an end, and that is really what I was referring to. The Cold War days were very different; I think we are back there already. When people say to me, "Let us not pursue this possibility lest it lead to another Cold War", well, unfortunately, I think the writing is already on the wall.

Q69 **Chair:** In the Cold War, you had weapons systems trained at Washington, New York, London and so forth. Do our adversaries not now have weapons systems trained at the GPS constellation of satellites and other communications, to completely blind us and our ability to even use our smart missiles to communicate and actually take the fight to the enemy?

Dr Johnson: That is my understanding, yes, but I do not know the detail of it.

Chair: Okay. Well, that's a happy thought. Let us move forward to Kevan and the sub-threshold threats.

Q70 **Mr Jones:** Dr Johnson, you have already mentioned this in terms of the effects not just of fake news and propaganda but of the West being behind the curve on a lot of this, given the way that Russia and others are using it. What more can we do with the United States to counteract that ever-increasing effect, which is being used quite effectively by our opponents?

Dr Johnson: That is a great question, and you will be pleased to know that I spend a lot of my time pondering that very question about how the UK and US can operate together. I had the pleasure just this morning of

speaking to the UK Defence Academy, again on this question. The good news is that we are not dependent upon the military instrument of national power alone. There are lots of other ways we can approach this particular problem. Really, the UK led with American approval in the response to the attempted assassination of Sergei Skripal a few years ago, in that the UK did not respond militarily to what was an unlawful use of force against the United Kingdom on our sovereign territory, but actually chose instead to take a scientific data approach to get the UN office for the prevention of chemical weapons involved, to consult with allies and partners, and then to conduct a wholesale expulsion of diplomats who we knew were involved in things they should not have been, which was reciprocated across Europe and by the United States. That indicates the sort of way you counter those kind of hybrid forms of offensive, sub-threshold attack.

The way that I would describe it is that ultimately what you are trying to do is to deny your opponent the fulfilment of his ends, and you do that by compelling him to make a choice. Compelling him to make a choice means you are imposing various forms of friction and cost on your adversary, this malign actor, to make them cease and desist. Certainly, the expulsion of diplomats by the UK and by our allies was a shock to the Kremlin, and they did change the policy and their decision-making calculus quite significantly. I think that is the sort of approach that I would suggest we take—that the whole aspiration of the United Kingdom is to have an integrated approach to the instruments of national power, be they economic, military, diplomatic or informational. I think that is exactly the route we should take, to avoid over-reaction, take a calibrated and calculated set of decisions based on the evidence and to figure out ways of compelling our opponents to make choices to cease and desist, by imposing some forms of costs upon them—but not necessarily through escalation. It needs to be done through tilting, probing, off-balancing your malign actor. I think that explains the policy.

Q71 **Mr Jones:** Can I ask Heather—increasingly, a lot of the threats we face now are not military; we have had the issue around Facebook, for example, in the last few weeks, which has been in the news. How, in terms of working with the US, will the UK be able to counter some of these threats? Clearly, the Trump Administration did not want any involvement which would have seen limitations on these platforms, but they are increasingly going to be used by our opponents. In what way do you see that developing during the Biden Administration?

Heather A. Conley: I actually see a couple of great opportunities. The first one is actually on anti-corruption illicit financing. This is going to be, we are told, a focus of the Biden Administration. It is something we have studied at CSIS through our series of reports called "The Kremlin Playbook" where economic influence amplifies, purchases, political influence, which is very, very difficult, once it is infiltrated, to unravel. So I think we could do a lot here and this is where the UK can be a leader, needs to be a leader, because of its role as one of the central locations of international finance; so if there is one plea in the sub-threshold warfare

department it is making sure that adversaries do not use our financial system and our banks for their illicit ends.

The second is exactly to Dr Johnson's point on both the command of intelligence and getting better indications and warning of malign influence operations. They are complex; they work across boundaries and networks. How can we, perhaps using the military analogy—UK military officers are embedded in our military—figure out a way for there to be some law enforcement embeds? Particularly, the US and its taskforces against malign influence, as it looks at this complexity: can we share in even the law enforcement and the intelligence? It is very sensitive because, again, the adversary works in a strategic scene that the United States has very important laws that prevent our intelligence agencies from looking inside; and those are very important. But it is that domestic international scene in which the adversary works, and exploits: how can we create fusion centres as we do for counter-terrorism and financing, on this malign influence pocket?

Obviously, Russia is the most skilled at these sets of tools, but the Chinese are quickly learning this so really the frontline of our national security are our democratic institutions—and the fact that they are transparent and have rigorous oversight and that the rules that we have are implemented and prosecuted even if they touch the highest levels of our political offices. That is where we have to go and it is going to be obviously the most politically challenging for all of us to do that. Cyber-manipulation, the deepfakes—this is getting to how we interact with technology companies: we have learned a lot since 2016, and how that interference picture looks; but the adversary continues to evolve tools and tactics.

It is very important to understand that elections or referendums are not the only—the focal point is our campaigns that are designed to exploit and probe weaknesses throughout. They are opportunistic; they are tactical; we give them the challenges; they exploit the weakness. So we really have to think how we can do rapid attribution and push back, because as we saw in the Skripal case, this is flooding the zone of potential explanations for things. We have to, in unison, and quickly, beat back all of those conspiracy theories. Of course, in Europe we are going to see German elections this year and French elections next year. There is a huge amount of opportunity here for adversarial manipulation.

Finally, I always say this to Members of Congress when I testify on this subject, we have got to have an offensive plan. I have just described the defence and what the adversary is doing to us. The offence is regaining our confidence, as democracies, to bring our strong voice of transparency, openness and civil society. The dynamics in Russia, Belarus and elsewhere today speak to a new fear. We also have an offensive policy that says that democracies are different. We are flawed, but we speak to the dignity of the individual. That, for far too long, has been missing from our arsenal of policy tools.

Mr Jones: Professor Rees, do you want to add anything?

Professor Rees: I don't have anything to add on that, no. Thank you.

Q72 **Chair:** Pursuant to Kevan's question on the sub-threshold war, does article 5 need to be updated, Professor Rees?

Professor Rees: Does article 5 need to be updated? As my colleagues have mentioned, I think we have come to an understanding that this is a growing area of challenge. The UK, in its latest announcement about increased defence spending and recent defence increases in cyber and other domains, seems to have got to grips with the sense that there are these growing areas of challenge, and that we need to develop new tools and new ways of dealing with them. I think we are very much alive to them.

I echo what Dr Conley said in terms of some of the experiences we have had from a counter-terrorism domain, of dirty money, of people using technology for purposes of disinformation and creating contacts across the internet, which lure people into those sorts of radical activities. We developed mechanisms between the United States and Europe to help to address some of those challenges. I think we are in the right place and working together on those issues, so I'm pretty confident that we are getting to grips with them.

Chair: Let's move on to the Integrated Operating Concept. Sarah, over to you.

Q73 **Sarah Atherton:** We all understand that the old distinctions between war and peace, foreign and domestic, public and private are quite out of date now. With the Integrated Review pending, it is suggested that the UK armed forces will need to integrate across the five operating domains if we are going to counter these hybrid challenges. Do you feel that there has been any thought about the future relationship with the US, with the UK's shift towards an Integrated Operating Concept? Rob.

Dr Johnson: That is a great question. To reassure you, there has been a lot of thought about it. Indeed, this coming week an exercise is going on with UK forces in the land environment participating with the American Army on precisely this. Although they are land forces, they are orchestrating, in an exercise, informational effects, practising cyber effects, looking at the joint air-land battle space, and so on.

This is precisely what is going on across the British armed forces too. There has been a real commitment for years, as you know, towards joint operating—people from the Air Force working with the Navy and so on. That is absolutely seamless. I am pleased to say that, for example, the Royal Marines, have a very close working relationship with the US Marine Corps. They have a similar way of thinking about the future. The future commando force of the UK replicates, almost identically, what the US Marine Corps has in mind.

I have already mentioned American aircraft flying off UK aircraft carriers. You can do it the other way around, too. British pilots can fly on and off American carriers, as can French pilots. When it comes to our air forces, I

saw absolutely no difference at all. When I visited Centcom a couple of years ago in the Gulf, and I went inside to have a look at their operating headquarters, it was absolutely seamless. Indeed, what was really striking was the fact that there were sometimes British pilots in the air controlled by Americans, and the legal adviser who was helping people understand whether the targets were legitimate or not was also British. Again, this total integration is really very encouraging and exciting to see. When we talk about the operating concept, there may be one or two glitches still to iron out. It is all still quite embryonic; we are still working it all the way through, and one of my roles is to help them think critically about what it is they are doing, but it is encouraging and it is looking good so far.

Q74 **Sarah Atherton:** Thank you, Rob. Heather, can I just ask whether the US's equivalent of an Integrated Operating Concept is the network-centric warfare, or is that something different?

Heather A. Conley: I couldn't agree with Dr Johnson more. The US challenge continues to be the challenge of this cross-domain work, breaking down silos and looking at this integrated picture. I think that is different from the network operation, because as we work in combined operations across domain, the challenge—going back to an earlier comment—is whether we have a common operating integrated data picture. Are we all seeing the same information? Can we plug in and play different information: allied information, US information?

The complexity right now on the battlefield is information overload, but it is also information synthesis and integration, so that in the battlefield space they do have what they need to make those decisions. In my mind, those are two separate questions. The cross-domain picture is essential, and exercises and integrating officers, and we are struggling with this as much as the UK is. We can learn best practices from each other. My understanding is that that network-centricity is how we plug that data in and figure out together what that common operating picture is: from space, from the intelligence on the ground, the whole suite. I hope I explained that correctly.

Q75 **Sarah Atherton:** Thank you, Heather. Wyn, do you have anything to add, please?

Professor Rees: Yes, if I could. This is a really fascinating area, and I do not disagree with what my two colleagues have said already, but the British have always accepted that they are a more junior partner of the US in this regard, and the amount of spending we can deploy in these areas is obviously much less than that of the United States. In terms of network-centricity, we went for network-enabled, and we were seeking to use integration to the point that we needed to to be able to work alongside the US and be capable of being interoperable with them.

The British military deserve huge credit for being able to operate so effectively alongside the US in these things, but the challenge for the future is sometimes more complex than we credit. It is not only working with the US currently on a day-to-day basis but working out where the US

is going in some of these areas and the kinds of capabilities the US is seeking to develop with their much larger resource base, and then thinking through what we need to be able to do to be interoperable with them at a lesser level. In this very fast-changing environment of technology, this is a hugely challenging task, and we need to be as supportive of the military in this regard as possible, because it is so difficult to stay alongside a superpower in relation to some of these challenging areas.

Sarah Atherton: Thank you all. Time is a limiting factor, but thank you.

Q76 **Chair:** Can I just check with that? Are we trying to create an Integrated Operating Concept with the United States, or are we trying to elevate this up to NATO? If you go back to Operation Ellamy against Libya, we had the Qataris as part of that coalition, and I can think of other operations and exercises: we have British troops under Chinese command in the Sahel right now. I think my question is this: at what level are we seeing this? Is this a high-risk but low-probability event of having network-centric warfare where this comes into the fore, but 95% of the time we are going to be doing stabilisation and other more manageable operations that won't require such an in-depth coordination?

Dr Johnson: I am really glad you asked that question. I will be brief because I am conscious that the time is ticking away. The Integrated Operating Concept is best applied to what the military call war fighting—so the high-end, high-intensity activity. It was very striking to see that when the Chief of Defence Staff of the UK gave his speech at the Royal United Services Institute in December of last year, it very much mirrored the six key points laid out by the United States only a few months before. I think that shows that there is a general feeling that these two things are aligned, at least in that environment.

We need to be aware that what you describe as sub-threshold and low intensity are political decisions, not military. The way that you operate, for example, to counter malign Russian influence through the Wagner group in the Central African Republic is not going to be through a high-end war-fighting concept. It's going to be a set of political decisions taken by MPs in Parliament and by the Government of the day. That means that we would row back from the full exposition of the Integrated Operating Concept to selecting those parts which have the appropriate effect in the context in which they are faced.

Chair: Thank you for that. Let us turn to NATO and see how things are operating there.

Q77 **Richard Drax:** Do the UK and the US have a shared view on what changes need to be made to NATO's strategic operating concept?

Dr Johnson: Yes, they do. I did briefly refer to a visit I took out to Romania, courtesy of the Royal Air Force—thank you very much to them—and the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps of NATO, staffed by a British officer, with an American team and also a European NATO contingent within that headquarters. What was really striking was that in the discussions that

went on for a few days there was no difference whatsoever in the advice being offered by British military personnel—defence personnel—and that offered by American personnel. It was really striking, and it was actually quite a relief, because I was a bit worried that we might see differences.

The Romanian team were absolutely fantastic; they were able to explain from their side the very specific context they had faced, what their concerns were locally within south-east Europe and the wider region. Those concerns were taken on board very much by the American and British team, and I thought they were responding very professionally to those desires. If that is a case example, anecdotally, of how it works, I am sure it is replicated in Poland, and I am sure you would see that in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. I think this is the real characteristic of how this is actually playing out on the ground empirically, despite all the doubts we might have as analysts back in the UK or the US. I think what we have seen on the ground is really quite effective.

Professor Rees: My answer takes us back to some of the things we talked about at the outset of these discussions—that is, that the US and the UK are so institutionally interlinked with one another. They embed officers in each other's militaries, their whole military arrangements are very closely linked together, they talk to each other and share ideas and threat perceptions. It isn't very surprising that we think very similarly as a result about these kinds of issues going forward. As Rob said, we share the whole future direction that NATO needs to take, as well as the sense that Russia has become, once again, post-2007 and post-2008—in terms of its defence spending and military modernisation—a significant military and political challenge to the West. As a result, we need to be very active in our efforts to address this.

Q78 **Richard Drax:** Heather, lastly I will come to you. Can I just specifically ask you—the shared view, I think, of your two predecessors is that it is all working very well—what changes, if any, need to be made to NATO's strategic operating concept?

Heather A. Conley: I agree that militarily, we are right on the same page. Politically, I think that we have a balancing act that we have to perform. I believe that we both agree that we need to make NATO a much more robust political forum for discussion of issues across the world that address our security—whether that's in the Indo-Pacific, the Middle East or the Arctic.

The US is going to push NATO more towards the Indo-Pacific, to think more broadly about that—the work on emerging disruptive technologies is, of course, a shared goal. I think the UK's role in NATO's strategic concept, as we prepare for that, is also, while the US is looking farther afield, that it remains more focused on the northern, eastern and southern flanks. This is absolutely what Dr Rees was saying—that we are back to the beginning again, where the UK's role is ensuring that both its role and in NATO is a stronger home team focus, while the US is going to keep tacking to the away game in the Indo-Pacific.

They have to make sure that they work together, because we need NATO to think more deeply about China, but we also need NATO to do more regionally, and the UK can be the practical implementer of that. I see the strategic concept—never anyone's favourite exercise because there's no agreement among the 30 on threat perception, threat assessment, and, of course, we have the hardy perennial defence spending challenges.

My concern is that, because the US has now moved so far in the high-end capability, and so many of our NATO allies can only really engage at the low end—low-end capabilities. We now have to be very mindful of US power and presence in NATO, to make sure that it remains balanced, and the UK can be essential in ensuring that continued balance.

Q79 **Chair:** Thank you. If we can turn to the force structure that Britain might consider, we are being teased as to when the date of the Integrated Review will be—we hear it might be in the next couple of weeks—but there is a drip-feed of news that seems to be coming out through the media.

Last week, we saw the intention to reduce our main battle tank to 150. I think this would allow two regiments to provide two armoured infantry brigades. Bizarrely, the plan is also to remove Warrior, the armoured fighting vehicle; that is to be distinguished from an armoured personnel carrier, which just carries our troops to the frontline, perhaps armed with a GPMG. It is a bit like Lancasters going out without Spitfires or Hurricanes; it seems odd that the MoD is choosing to retain tanks but not having any armoured fighting vehicles to provide that support.

The bold question is: should we go the way of the US Marines and get rid of the main battle tank completely, if the financial pressures are such, and opt for a more agile, mobile, day one capability using Ajax, Boxer, and indeed some form of armoured fighting vehicle? Let's start with Dr Rob Johnson.

Dr Johnson: I feared you might. I have to confess a conflict of interest here, in the sense that I began my military career, many years ago, with armoured vehicles called Warrior, so there is a degree of nostalgia in my answer.

There is always a trade-off, in very high-intensity land combat environments, between protection, mobility, firepower and communications. The danger is that we make our judgments on the basis of the conflicts that we have just been fighting, which were conflicts against forces with significant mine capability, but no real heavy armour, no combat aviation, no air surveillance capability. They were not a serious military force; they were a serious political force in both cases.

These calls for the abolition of the main battle tank are, as I think the Chief of the Defence Staff said recently, premature. That is partly because although traditionally tanks were the best things to destroy other tanks, that is no longer the case. Missiles can do that just as effectively. They serve other roles, and they are a protected mobility platform that allows

you to assert a presence and dominate a battlefield in ways that all lightly protected, but relatively fast, vehicles can do. If you are in an urban environment, it is no good having a soft-skin vehicle with firepower in front and good mobility, because you cannot move very far anyway. It is all about protection, and there have been some catastrophic cases in the UK's recent history where we did not protect our forces as well as perhaps we could have done, because we were in too much of a hurry and we were deploying with the forces that we had.

Personally, if you ask me what the United Kingdom needs, it is not just one or two war fighting divisions; it needs a war fighting corps. In that corps, it needs the flexibility to act in an expeditionary way. It needs the protection of fire power, mobility and communication systems. As the Chinese have just been demonstrating and, indeed, as the Russians have done with their T-90 and Armata, the next generation of main battle tanks is not just a platform like the old ones but slightly upgraded. You need a proper weapon system. All the debate is about whether Challenger 2 should just be upgraded for the time being. Yes, for the time being, in the short term. Longer term, you are going to need something that is even better than that, and that includes heavy armour.

Q80 **Chair:** Thank you for that. Anything to add, Heather?

Heather A. Conley: I support the "agile" and "mobile" points, but protecting and being able to be in an environment where the communication and the integrated operating picture can be infused into that, is going to be essential on the battlefield.

Chair: Professor Rees?

Professor Rees: No, I thought Dr Johnson's response was absolutely spot on.

Chair: Can we look at personnel? Emma, do you want to take us forward on that one quickly?

Q81 **Mrs Lewell-Buck:** Initially this is to Dr Johnson, and then potentially to Heather as well. I want to revisit some of the issues that we have already discussed. I know that earlier there seemed to be a consensus that we are at risk of spreading ourselves too thinly. With that in mind, how should UK defence balance its development of high-end capabilities with the ability to deploy mass?

Dr Johnson: May I say something briefly about that? Mass has a quality all of its own, as they say. There is no doubt that, at the moment, the United Kingdom is not equipped and not prepared for a major conflict. I think we could manage a minor conflict or, indeed, what you might call disruptive threats to national security objectives. But actually, we are currently at risk of not achieving our national security objectives, because we are not defending ourselves properly.

When it comes to mass, there has been a promise that in the near future we will use much more robotic systems and automated systems to protect ourselves, to advance our national interest and to substitute manpower.

The experience of the British Army and the British armed forces' history has been that the moment you introduce new technologies, you need more technical staff—a bigger tail to support the teeth at the front—and I don't see that diminishing. For every fighting soldier in the second world war, I think I am right in saying there were at least seven to nine technicians and supporting personnel. It increased to about 15 for every fighting person by the 1980s. It is more than that today, and I think that will still be the case.

Where we therefore go is that we prioritise teeth arms for fighting capabilities and combat personnel, and we look to civilian sources to help us with all the other elements of that and make this a truly national effort, because if we had a major conflict, it would be a truly national effort.

The other thing we might have to start thinking about, which is something we have talked about for years, is what we call the cadreisation of parts of the armed forces—the ability to mobilise, by having the skills and capability sets, particularly in the technical sphere—so that we can, if necessary, bring people in, much in the way that we did with medical service personnel during the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. We were absolutely dependent on brilliant Reservists, many of them drawn from the NHS. Imagine trying to conduct the covid campaign and countering that and, at the same time, trying to depend on NHS personnel serving as Reservists overseas. I think that would be critical.

Q82 **Mrs Lewell-Buck:** Thanks for that. In terms of the increase in defence spending, will that be enough for us to do those things to be able to defend ourselves properly or not?

Dr Johnson: Defence spending is really interesting. I looked at the National Audit Office review of our defence spending projections and they said that we are going to massively overspend if we try to service everything that the MoD wants to deliver. We have a crisis, which is a decision for Parliament to resolve, rather than relying on Ministry officials to think they can work it through and produce the magic.

We really need to have a serious discussion about how we staff the new technologies we need and the technical staff we need at a lower cost. We can't go on having one third of all Defence contracts being uncompetitive, handing them out to the same defence industries. We have to embrace the new tech industries that are prepared to take higher risks. They know they might fail, but they are prepared to have a go.

If we do not transform that defence industry construct, we are not going to be able to afford what we need and we will go on cutting down and cutting down capability, until eventually there is nothing that is going to be worth its salt.

Q83 **Mrs Lewell-Buck:** Heather, can I just ask a quick follow-up? At the start of the session, in answer to my colleague John on a question about cuts to personnel, you said that that would not be the be-all and end-all in terms of being viewed by Washington as something hugely negative—I

can't remember the exact words. However, coupled with the rumours that we are hearing around cuts to our frigates and tanks, which the Chair has already mentioned, how would that be viewed by Washington? That is cuts to three major areas.

Heather A. Conley: Let me begin by saying how much we welcome the Government's decision to increase defence spending. We were assuming that that may not be the case, so I want to say, first, that that was a strong signal of commitment, despite enormous strains on all of our economies.

I am going to go back to what we have all said. It is going to be essential to prioritise—to not spread oneself too thin or to try to please all constituencies all the time, because you will end up pleasing no one and finding yourself stretched too thin.

What I have heard from the last two hours is that there is a commitment to be more in sync with the US on high-end capabilities, when it comes to cyber-intelligence technologies, but that there is an acceptance that we cannot stay in lockstep—that we are going to have to choose the areas that we feel are most important.

We set out a range of issues. Clearly, one is the North Atlantic—the maritime component. One thing we learned from the 2010 SDSR is that when you devastated your maritime control, your aircraft, your MPAs, that was a devastating decision, which you had to course correct very quickly, and now we see this very strong trilateral co-operation between the US, UK and Norway, in enhancing our maritime surveillance—a very important area for the defence of the United Kingdom and the defence of the United States. It is going to be making those decisions and, as I said, focused closer to home.

When you look at the NATO treaty, article 3 is about ensuring the territorial defence and integrity of every NATO member. We need you to do that and that is how we enhance collective defence.

I would add one final thought, an add-on to Dr Johnson's. I have been looking very closely at some of the Swedish and Finnish total defence concepts. I think that is something that the United States needs to start embracing a little bit more. Of course, we have that high-end capability; our military is at the forefront of defending us. But every citizen has a responsibility for defence. When it comes to public literacy on disinformation campaigns—attacks against our democracy; that is how the adversary is working—every citizen has a responsibility to contribute to our national security and our sovereignty. If we look at that holistic picture, we can combine the high end and the defence and territorial integrity of the nation, but also bring the citizen into figuring out and supporting the strengthening of democracy and how the adversary is trying to weaken that. That is a picture we should start moving towards. Every citizen has a responsibility for our future defence, and our cyber-hygiene is certainly an important element of that.

Mrs Lewell-Buck: Thanks very much for that. Thanks, Chair; I will leave it there.

Q84 **Chair:** Thank you, Emma. Heather, quickly, on W93, a year ago I think one of your admirals spilled the beans in recognising how we are now reliant on our nuclear warhead upgrade. It came to Congress, and the Biden Administration were not sure whether they were going to go ahead with this programme. There are massive implications for our continuous at-sea deterrence. Can you just quickly update us on where things are with that programme?

Heather A. Conley: I am sorry that I do not have the latest information, but I assure you, particularly from a think-tank perspective, we are focusing very much on this. There are going to be some very serious negotiations on Capitol Hill between those. Again, if you remember the origins of the New START treaty and ratification, it was an agreement—the nuclear modernisation process with ratification of the New START treaty. Those are linked politically for us. I think there is support. Because of the Biden Administration's allied approach to this, you will see great deference to making sure our allies are engaged fully in this. However, there is a political tug and pull of our nuclear modernisation and the cost. Of course, that is reflected in the UK debate as well. I think, though, the allies are so important right now to the Biden Administration that there will be great understanding and, hopefully, not division on this particular issue. We are watching it very closely.

Chair: We hope so, too. Thank you very much indeed to Heather Conley, Dr Rob Johnson and Professor Wyn Rees. It has been a really informative session looking at US-UK defence relations. That is an important relation that we have—the most important that we have, from a security perspective. We are very grateful for your contributions. Thank you also to the Committee and to the team here that made this happen. That brings us to a close.