

Defence Committee

Oral evidence: US, UK and NATO, HC 608

Tuesday 1 March 2022

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Members present: Mr Tobias Ellwood (Chair); Dave Doogan; Richard Drax; Mr Mark Francois; Mr Kevan Jones; Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck; Gavin Robinson; John Spellar.

Questions 1-27

Witnesses

I: Dr Jamie Shea, President, Centre for War Studies, University of Southern Denmark, and Associate Fellow, Chatham House; and James J. Townsend Jr, Senior Fellow, Centre for a New American Security, and President, Atlantic Treaty Association.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Dr Jamie Shea and James J. Townsend Jr.

Chair: Welcome to this Defence Select Committee hearing on Tuesday 1 March 2022. We will be looking at the UK and NATO, and their relationships with the United States of America.

We are delighted to welcome two witnesses who have worked with us before: Dr Jamie Shea, who is President of the Centre for War Studies at the University of Southern Denmark; and Jim Townsend, Senior Fellow at the Centre for a New American Security. Thank you both very much indeed for your help and support this afternoon. We will be focusing on the relationship of the United States and Britain with NATO, but obviously we are going to wander into the very topical issue of Ukraine as well. I invite Richard Drax to kick us off with the first question.

Q1 Richard Drax: Gentlemen, good afternoon. Since the June 2021 summit, we have seen NATO active on both Afghanistan and Ukraine. In your opinion, how well has NATO coped with each of these crises? Jamie, can I come to you first?

Dr Shea: You can indeed. Thank you for the question, Richard, and thank you very much, Chair—Tobias—for the invitation to appear before the Committee today. I hear on the grapevine that you are also going out to NATO in a couple of weeks' time, so hopefully this conversation will at least give you some difficult, tough questions to ask my former colleagues back at the headquarters.

On Afghanistan, the first thing is that NATO did stay the course for 20 years and did mobilise large numbers of troops; the bulk of Allies and many NATO partners participated in the operation. I do not think the rather chaotic withdrawal from Kabul back on 15 August should black out what was achieved in that time. Certainly as a military operation, I think it was successful.

Unfortunately, NATO went in rather casually in 2003; now that I am no longer a NATO official—I was for 38 years—I can say these things. I think it would have been much better, first, to have had a realistic estimate of the threat from the Taliban—the insurgency. It would have been better to have engaged regional partners, particularly Pakistan, earlier and more forcefully. The other thing that was lacking, particularly in contrast to the Balkan conflict, which I lived through, was the ability to co-ordinate with other international organisations—the EU, the UN, the international financial institutions—to make sure that they would be on the ground with their civilian reconstruction resources to the equal extent that NATO was there with its military resources.

I can recall a meeting with Ban Ki-moon, the UN Secretary-General, and my boss the NATO Secretary-General, soon after NATO entered Afghanistan, when Ban Ki-moon did not mention Afghanistan once in an



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hour-long conversation, implying, of course, that it was not the priority for the UN that it was for NATO—similarly with the EU, which was engaged in police co-operation in far smaller numbers. I think the lesson of the Balkans, which is that you need this broad, comprehensive approach and you make sure the whole team is on the pitch before you yourself enter the fray, is one of the lessons that NATO would have learned.

NATO, after 15 August, was about to embark on an extensive lessons learned exercise on Afghanistan, in preparation for the new strategic concept. Even though some Allies were saying, “We’re not going to do this again,” and even before Ukraine, there was a mood, I think, in the Alliance that a return to collective defence as the priority would be also the priority for the new strategic concept. That is obviously massively reinforced by what we have seen in Ukraine. However, I think that among other Allies, particularly France, there was the thought, “Well, we shouldn’t just let this go. We were there for 20 years, 4,000 allied servicemen and women lost their lives, thousands more were injured, \$4 trillion was spent, so we should do a proper lessons learned exercise.”

Obviously, the main avenues of that were pretty clear—what could have been done better to train the Afghan National Army, what could have been done better to form a viable partnership with the different Afghan Governments, particularly on the corruption front, and so forth. But as NATO heads towards the next summit in Madrid in June, with the overwhelming emphasis now on Ukraine and everything that has to be done to bolster NATO’s defence, the question is: will there still be the space and time to do a proper lessons learned exercise on Afghanistan?

I think that is useful. I just remind the Committee that NATO still has a mission in Iraq—a training mission for the Iraqi forces. It is not, of course, of the same ampleur as the mission in Afghanistan, but NATO recently took over much of it from the United States and set up regional centres, and the NATO Secretary-General has spoken—again, before the current Ukraine war—about NATO stepping up its role in defence capacity-building efforts and training, for example in north Africa. NATO has even offered help to the G5 Sahel coalition that the French and the Europeans have been supporting. So I would not say “never again” when it comes to NATO assisting local military forces, and therefore I do believe that there is scope to have a proper lessons learned exercise regarding Afghanistan.

I have probably spoken too long for introductory remarks, and I see Jim Townsend ready to go as well, so I will stop there for now.

Q2 Richard Drax: No, Jamie, that is fine. I will bring in Jim in a second. You have not touched on Ukraine. So NATO lessons to be learned from Afghanistan, if I may paraphrase you very briefly; you did not touch on Ukraine. How is NATO doing so far on Ukraine?

Dr Shea: I was just mindful of not speaking at too great a length.

Richard Drax: You can now answer very briefly.



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Dr Shea: Right, I will. Lessons learned from Ukraine: obviously it is very difficult to stop a dictator like Putin, who is not going to accept any diplomatic off-ramp—several of which were offered, of course, in the months leading up to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, including quite significant offers by NATO when it came to arms control talks, transparency measures—we can go into these in detail if you like—which Russia had been asking of NATO for several years: moratoriums on missile deployments, and so on.

So NATO was definitely in the mix. There was a big meeting of the NATO-Russia Council, attempting to avoid a Russian invasion of Ukraine. I also think NATO did a good job of calling it. At a time when many were still believing that some of the Russian troop re-deployments might presage the end of exercises and the return of troops to barracks, I think NATO was consistent in calling it the way it eventually happened.

Q3 **Richard Drax:** Sorry to interrupt you, Jamie. Time is pressing. May I just have your view, if I may? You are saying that NATO read it well. Some are saying that NATO did not move fast enough. We should have put troops into Ukraine, some would argue; there should be a no-fly zone over the skies, some are arguing. Do you think NATO got it right? Having read it well, we are now sitting here watching the innocent people being killed.

Dr Shea: As you know, Richard, NATO is a consensus-based operation, so it can only operate if all 30 Allies say yes. Whatever we may think personally—I have my personal views and no doubt you have yours—there was not going to be a consensus in NATO, and President Biden has made that crystal clear on so many occasions, as have other European Allies, that they would not put NATO troops on the ground in Ukraine, or provide a no-fly zone. Several Allies, though, the UK of course also as you know very well, in the lead-up to the invasion have supplied Ukraine with weapons.

Now, you could argue a couple of things. Yes, that maybe, after Crimea in 2014, NATO should have recognised, particularly with the Russian incursion into the Donbas and the lack of any kind of move towards a settlement there, that NATO Allies, or NATO, should have had a policy, perhaps, of stepping up assistance to the Ukrainian forces much earlier on. A lot of the equipment arrived late and we are now in a situation where, as you know, much of the equipment will be arriving in an active war zone, where there is a chance that some—25% according to some estimates—could be lost due to Russian interdiction. So that effort should have started earlier.

Secondly, you could argue that NATO could have helped Ukraine even more in dealing with hybrid challenges like cyber, although, at my time in NATO, I was involved in quite significant efforts to help Ukraine in that particular department, through provision of equipment, rapid response teams and so on.



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Perhaps the most important thing is that after Crimea and Georgia, recognising the build-up of the Russian military forces and the possibility, if not likelihood, that Putin would attempt further territorial aggrandisement, perhaps we should have had something like CoCom, which existed in the Cold War, which was an attempt to deprive the Russian military modernisation of the kind of technologies that it would need for its militarisation.

That is being talked about now, as you know; it has come out. But maybe that was an effort that should have been made sooner, in at least an attempt to level the playing field between the Ukrainian and the Russian forces. But again, it is all right being wise in hindsight, but if you have someone like Putin who is determined at any cost to his country to use military force against another, short of being willing to go to war yourself in Ukraine, which I argue has not been an option, then I think we are looking for those other workaround strategies that I have described.

Q4 **Richard Drax:** Jamie, thank you. Jim, did you hear the question?

James J. Townsend Jr: No, I did not. Is this a better hook-up in terms of my audio for you?

Richard Drax: The sound is good and I can see you clearly. The question was simply, since the June 2021 summit, NATO had been involved in Afghanistan and Ukraine. In your opinion, how well has NATO dealt with both, in brief?

James J. Townsend Jr: I would say in terms of Afghanistan that NATO was caught, like the United States, in a very embarrassing show of not anticipating what was going to happen on the battlefield. I am not an Afghanistan expert, but certainly in Washington, as we had to deal with the uncomfortable position of having the peace treaty that was put together by Donald Trump, a change of Administration right after that peace treaty, the decision to carry on with what Trump had done and then not judging and not understanding how quickly things were going to collapse, it gave us a situation, in terms of the Biden Administration, of great embarrassment globally, so the Administration came out with a big black eye and a lot of things to learn.

I think NATO was hostage to that; NATO was hostage to not just what happened in terms of the collapse, but the United States. I think we were keeping NATO involved to as great a degree as we could, in terms of what was happening under the Trump Administration with that treaty and then how the US was going to deal with it under the Biden Administration.

But I think at the end of the day that wasn't enough. I think at the end of the day it was really NATO being hostage to decisions and moves made by the United States and having to catch up. So it was not a time of glory for the United States whatsoever. I think NATO caught the blowback from that as well and NATO did about as good as it could do, given itself as an organisation and given that really it was the United States driving things and that some bad decisions were made earlier on.

Q5 Richard Drax: And what's your view on Ukraine and NATO's role there, Jim?

James J. Townsend Jr: I think on Ukraine both the Biden Administration and NATO have recovered, a bit, some of their reputation. Some of this is actually based on lessons learned.

I think that for the Administration particularly, working with Allies, working with Allies frequently, consulting genuinely—I think the Biden Administration, Washington, has upped its game in terms of being able to work with the Alliance. I think NATO has turned around and has reacted to that, has embraced that, helped by what it is seeing with Putin and what it is seeing in Ukraine. And I think that as there was this unity, that surprised Putin; it surprised Washington. I think it surprised many European nations as well that, as the horror unfolded, we got closer together as an alliance, and NATO was able to muster those 30 votes to do the NATO response force.

That was a big deal. I didn't think that NATO would be able to do it. I thought Hungary would veto it, but in fact NATO has done it. It is doing other things in terms of supplementing allied forces. It is not going to do a no-fly zone over Ukraine; it is not going to put NATO forces into Ukraine. Neither will the United States. Perhaps there will be a coalition of the willing at some point that might do it. But in terms of protecting the Alliance, of moving against Putin, of disinformation and particularly of showing unity in Europe and in the transatlantic community, NATO has played a great role.

Q6 Richard Drax: What about our defence, Jim? NATO needs to have ships, tanks and all the rest of it in the event that it has to defend itself. We have been made to look a little bit threadbare, haven't we? Is it not time for the other NATO members to start spending 2% of their GDP at least? Germany is waking up to this now.

James J. Townsend Jr: You know, it's interesting. There is nothing like fear to not only pull an alliance together, but to get nations to do the right thing. The great example of that is Germany.

The job for us is to make sure that no matter what happens in the future concerning Putin and what he is doing in Ukraine, we can't let Allies—particularly Germany—walk back promises of doing more in terms of their defence. So right now, Putin has done a great service to NATO and a great service to the West by putting the fear of the wolf inside the house in the hearts of a lot of Allies who were doing things—unfortunately, it is threadbare. There isn't enough armour. There isn't enough ISR. The US is putting in forces, but we've got to worry about Indo-China as well.

I think for the future we are going to have to really put the screws to all the Allies to try to make sure that we have what it takes to deter Putin—assuming he even stays around. Putin could disappear as well. We don't know what is going to happen to him, we don't know his fate, but I think we have to assume that he will be here, which calls for Allies to do a lot more than they are doing now. Germany will have to lead the way.



Q7 Mrs Lewell-Buck: Good afternoon. As you are both well aware, individual states have provided weapons and training to Ukraine. What more could have been done to provide security assistance by the UK either alone or as part of NATO; and, crucially, what can the UK and NATO do now?

James J. Townsend Jr: Thank you for that question, which is the appropriate question for us to think about. Speaking for the United States in particular, we were too late—much too late—to supply lethal equipment of all types to Ukraine. We lost four years after 2014. I don't want to get political here, but during the four years of the Trump Administration, while I applaud their starting to provide lethal weapons—the Javelin anti-tank system—there was much more that the Ukrainians needed. They needed air defence and a lot of other things that I can talk about if you wish. Our problem going in was that we assumed that Putin would never do this.

The last number of years have been marked by our totally misreading Putin's intent, particularly after the invasion of Georgia. There was a lot of wishful thinking in the United States and the Trump Administration was totally distracted, but even when the Biden Administration came in, the focus was on China, not on Ukraine. When we began to get serious about providing a full range of lethal equipment, we were perilously late in doing so, and so were the other Allies. We did not think Putin would do it.

When Putin began the attack, certainly for a day or two it was assumed that the Ukrainian military would not hold up, would collapse, and so would not do any good, and we did not want to provoke Putin to begin with. As time has passed, what has inspired everyone to do things is that the Ukrainian people as well as the Ukrainian military have stood up and are fighting. That has inspired us to give them weapons and the idea that, rather than provoke Putin, we should hold back is out the window.

You have that happening and you have weapons of all types coming in from all areas, but you could almost say it is too little, too late. We will have to see, but we have to learn from this that we can be misled by false assumptions into not doing something, and when we wake up to the fact that we were wrong, usually it is too late. If you look at the United States' actions since 2014, we did not do enough, and when we started doing things, it was a bit late.

Q8 Mrs Lewell-Buck: Before you come in Jamie, on the back of what you just said, Jim, about it being too little, too late, we are watching people being murdered on our television screens every day and people are saying that we need to more. What more can be done?

James J. Townsend Jr: At a minimum, we have to keep supplies of all types moving. Allies, particularly the United States, need to keep moving forward. We have sent in a shipment of Stingers, but we were late to provide things like that and we need to do more.

We have to be concerned about the resupply routes: it does no good for us to send in equipment if we cannot get them in via a secure land route or something along those lines. We have to increase sharing whatever intel on targeting we can get with the Ukrainian air force and land forces.



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We and other Allies can supplement what we see through our national technical means and get that to help Ukraine to target the convoys coming in from all directions, as Putin really begins to tighten the screws.

We have to worry about humanitarian side as well. We are seeing the murders you spoke about, and the shelling of the centre of Kharkiv was horrible, so we have to get humanitarian assistance in there as well. We will need to handle refugees as they come out.

We can't have a humanitarian tragedy in Poland and other countries as they are overwhelmed by that.

At the same time, we have to figure out an off ramp for Putin. Talks have begun, and although I do not see that they will not necessarily go anywhere, what we don't want is Putin trapped if things don't go very well. We don't want him to be a wounded animal; we have to figure out a way to help him to de-escalate. It depends on what the fighting is like in the next few days; we don't know. If Ukraine collapses, game over, and we will have a rabid Putin on our hands to deal with. If the fighting stalemates, if the Russians cannot make progress into Kyiv and if they suffer major reversals, that will give us a different set of situations to deal with vis-à-vis Putin and trying to get the fighting to stop somehow if he figures out either that he's not going to meet his military objectives. Even if he does, what is he going to do with a nation that is furious and armed and has an armed insurgency going? How does he expect to keep a puppet in Kyiv? How is he going to occupy that country and not have it be a very painful experience?

For us in the West, it is not just the fighting we have to worry about; we have to worry about what comes afterward. How can we deal with a Putin who is now aggressive? That takes us to NATO—what does NATO do in the future if we have a rabid Putin on the continent? We are going to have to redo our priorities for NATO action in the future.

Q9 Mrs Lewell-Buck: Thanks, Jim. Jamie, do you want to come in on that?

Dr Shea: Jim has said so much and made so many of the points that I would have made that I am trying to think of anything I could possibly add at the margins.

I too would have started by saying that making sure that weapons get in to Ukraine and are delivered to those who need them will be key. Especially once the Russians have the ability from the air to see them coming in, night operations, when there is less visibility for the Russians, will be key. Also, send in the weapons in very small quantities, so you don't have a 30-truck convoy going along a road, which would be an easy target.

I agree with Jim that it depends largely on the configuration of the resistance. If you still have a Ukrainian professional army constituted in some organised way, you can talk about heavy equipment—counter-battery radars, that kind of stuff—but if you are dealing with an insurrection and a popular resistance, you have to give weapons to people



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with very little military training that are easy to use. In those circumstances, you won't be sending in Patriot air defence systems, which take a good deal of training to use. As Jim rightly pointed out, we have to make sure that any efforts are attuned to the situation on the ground.

We may also have to recognise that as Poland is likely to be the country that serves as the conduit, because it is the easiest way into Ukraine, Poland is likely to come under extreme pressure from Putin once he picks that up. Also, we have to be prepared for the conflict to spill over on to NATO territory. It is not necessarily probable, but we do not have the same assurance on that that we had a month or two months ago. NATO has to plan for that.

The other thing is intelligence. I have no doubt that intelligence gathering is going on at the moment to help the Ukrainians with situational awareness. Ukraine has good cyber capabilities—it always has. The Ukrainians have always been very good in the computer sciences, as I found out, and with a community of hackers, even decentralised they can keep going with some sort of impact, so I would highlight cyber tools. The UK is extremely proficient when it comes to strategic cyber effects, as we well know.

Jim is right that we need to be forward planning. Some time ago, when we still hoped for a solution in the Donetsk area, the Donbas, it was proposed that some sort of UN or OSCE peacekeeping force be deployed. Experts have different views on the wisdom of doing that—do such forces really help or do they play into the hands of one side? I will not answer that question. All I will say is that we need to start thinking about the possible shapes of things to come and how we can avoid a Cyprus-type situation, where a force goes in and simply cements a division that continues for a long, long time. What would be our diplomatic terms at the end of the day?

I think we also have to make sure that life is difficult for Putin. If we are not going to intervene in a military sense, then keeping up the sanctions that have got off to such a good start is absolutely key. I mentioned my idea of looking at the Wassenaar agreement—an agreement of 64 countries that followed COCOM, which I mentioned earlier and was an instrument in Paris in the cold war that denied advanced military technology to the Soviet Union. There is now a successor to that called the Wassenaar agreement, which began in 1996. It has 42 countries, and I am sure that many others—the Taiwanese when it comes to chips, or the Japanese and others, as they have indicated already—would join in that. We now have to make it very difficult for Putin to modernise his army in the way he has done.

There is also, of course, the next phase, which is the information war. Putin is trying to keep the reality of Ukraine away from his people, and we have, of course, the social media still largely free in Russia, where a different story is being conveyed. It is all very well to stop RT and Sputnik and take them off Facebook or off the Meta platform. I am all in favour of that in our countries, Western countries, but the more we can bring home



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to the ordinary Russian the truth of what is going on and expose Putin's lies, the better—not easy in the totalitarian media culture that he has fostered, but that is something where we are good. We have very clever people at that. The truth is also the best propaganda army you can possibly have, and we need to keep that ever up. If there are body bags coming back, we need to make sure that the pictures of those body bags and the plight of the ordinary Russian conscript in Ukraine, who has no reason why he is there and has been lied to as to the welcome he would receive, gets across.

The other thing, of course, is Georgia. Georgia has hardly been talked about in this conflict, but as you know, ma'am, NATO also gave a commitment to bring Georgia into NATO one day, on the same day that the commitment was made to Ukraine. Russia is obviously occupying two parts of Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and we do not want the same scenario there to replay in the way it has done in Ukraine, so let us at least try to think about preventive actions and preventive diplomacy when it comes to Georgia. However, I am afraid there is no quick fix, and I certainly am not going to be able to offer you one today: we are in this for the long haul, and it is really going to be a question of how we try to reduce our vulnerability to the Russian threat in future.

As Jim has rightly pointed out, NATO's first priority is to bolster its own defences, and I am sure we can speak about the modalities of how that is going to be done, but the most important thing with Ukrainians is to make sure we give them the type of assistance that is compatible with their needs. For example, you asked about the UK. When Ben Wallace had a couple of trips to Kyiv before the invasion, the UK was offering to give Ukraine a lot of assistance in developing its maritime capacities for the Sea of Azov and the Black sea: provision of corvettes, construction and so on. That was admirable at the time, but now that obviously Ukraine has lost control of the Sea of Azov and parts of its Black sea coastline, the maritime dimension is probably less important than the air and land dimension.

Mrs Lewell-Buck: Thank you, both. I will hand over back to you, Chair. There is a lot there; thank you.

- Q10 **Chair:** Thank you very much indeed—comprehensive replies. Can I just ask Jim, if he is there, when you compare Afghanistan with some of the other interventions that NATO has done—Iraq, Bosnia and Libya, for example—there is a pattern that develops: we defeat the enemy, but then the mopping up, the moving on, the stabilisation, the reconstruction, the peacekeeping and the nation-building piece does not go particularly well. Some may argue that is not a NATO job, but there is nobody else that immediately springs to mind that could then leap in.

Is there a capability that NATO perhaps needs to consider advancing, that when you defeat the enemy, you then learn more about the local requirements—the indigenous capabilities and tribal structures, for example—to know where infrastructure, development, governance and so on can be supported and advanced, to allow you to leave the country



much earlier than 20 years, as we did in Afghanistan?

James J. Townsend Jr: That is a question that has bedevilled the United States for years. I have been involved with every one of those operations from the Pentagon; I worked in Europe at NATO up until being made Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence. It is not so much what NATO—or the United States in a coalition of the willing—has or hasn't been able to do. The gold standard was set by the post-world war two recovery in Europe, in Germany and in Japan. There is an expectation that that kind of thing can be done again. I remember well that, as Donald Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz went into Iraq, they really expected not only to be greeted as liberators but to see the civil service and the military roll in—for it to be business as usual. They expected ex-pats to come into Iraq and for things to be great. What happened was the opposite. We saw the same thing in Libya. NATO rolled in, and we felt that we were doing the right thing. We felt that we had learned a lesson from Iraq and Afghanistan. Gaddafi was toppled and NATO said, "We are not going to come in and do what we've done in Afghanistan—run everything and become part of the problem. We are going to back out and have the UN and others go in and help the Libyan people sort that out." Of course, that has not happened very well either.

It is hard to find an example—whether it is NATO, a coalition or the United States by itself—where going in with military force and achieving a military objective leads to the society, culture and economy of a country flourishing afterwards. It just doesn't happen, and I think a lot of that is about the nature of the country and the region where the conflict is taking place, and the nature of the tribes involved. The United States learned that in a bloody way with Somalia, right after Desert Storm. It is something that we relearn over and over again. One of the lessons that we learn is that there is not one way to do it. When the US went into Somalia—and the Balkans in some ways—we went in thinking that we had the answers. We had the military go into Afghanistan; I don't have to go through with you all of the things that we tried to do—it never worked.

Q11 Chair: You are absolutely right to say that there is not one way of doing it; there will be various ways of doing it. There is a wrong way of doing it, and that is imposing western standards, values and assumptions on an area that has never had them in the past. Before I turn to Jamie, can I welcome some guests who have joined us in the Committee Room. There is a delegation from Jer—from Guernsey. I almost said the wrong word there, didn't I? My goodness, look at that—just caught myself in the nick of time. Ladies and gentlemen, you are more than welcome to join us this afternoon.

Jamie, I will turn to you on where we are. Have we just turned—or are we turning—a corner on geopolitical security? Is NATO going to have to redefine and reinvigorate itself with a sense of purpose, given where Russia now is, and where China is now going? Are you concerned about where the next couple of decades may be going, from a security perspective?



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Dr Shea: Obviously it is concerning when you get a massive use of force on this scale in Europe. We are only at the beginning in terms of what is likely to happen and the savagery of Russia's actions. Every day we read that they are bringing in more heavy artillery, thermobaric weapons and cluster bombs—very nasty things. Civilian casualties are going up, so God knows where we are going to come out at the end of all this. I fear that we are closer to the beginning than the end. The NATO policy towards Russia was, quite reasonably, to recognise the reality of the regime and be prepared to compete and push back. However, as you know from your experience of Afghanistan, it was also to look for opportunities to co-operate on Afghanistan, on counter-terrorism, on piracy in the Gulf of Aden and on the Iran nuclear deal, where my diplomat colleagues tell me that the Russians have been very helpful in bringing the Iranians back to the table. It was the idea of a compartmentalised relationship. I imagine that is also what the EU and NATO were looking for vis-à-vis China—a compartmentalised relationship. It would be complicated, but it would not be all-out confrontation; there would be lots of levers and we could balance across competition, constraint and co-operation. I think that illusion has gone—the idea that you can find a *modus vivendi* with the authoritarians, who seem much more interested in confrontation and the use of the military instrument. We are back to “might is right”, unfortunately.

I think this is a new world for NATO, although it is also an old world, because it was very much the paradigm that NATO was established back in 1949 to deal with, at the time of the Soviet Union, which was also a militarily enabled expansionist power in central and eastern Europe, trying to consolidate an imperium and threatening NATO member states, too.

The advantage, of course, is that plays to NATO's DNA—this is not the voluntary, “go if you like, don't go if you don't want to” type of mission that we had in Afghanistan—the so-called stabilisation operations. Everybody feels very much in the same boat, even those who are not directly in the frontline. The solidarity that we have seen in terms of the number of different countries willing to send troops to the east has been quite remarkable.

NATO, as you know very well, has been practising, rehearsing and exercising for this for many years. To some degree, you could argue that the wake-up call was more when Russia annexed Crimea back in 2014, and NATO once again put battalions on the territory of its new member states, looked at a reinforcement strategy, started to go back to major exercises, established the 2% of defence spending benchmark and so on, set up new commands in Norfolk, Virginia, for the Atlantic, the joint enabling reinforcement command that Germany set up in Ulm. A lot of the stuff already started then. What we are actually doing I do not think is reinventing NATO but building on it.

If I may, the big choice that the Allies will face is the following: do we believe that, notwithstanding what Russia has done in Ukraine, there is no imminent threat to NATO itself? Therefore, can we get away with a kind of



an enhancement of the rather thin line in the east—just the four battalions in Poland and the Baltic states, the four new multinational battalions in the Black sea region? And, as Jim said, the temporary—we'll see—deployments of the NATO response force.

But this is not cold war. This is not the 326,000 US troops that we had in Europe at that time, with the 7,000 tactical nuclear weapons and the 22,500 NATO tanks. We are very far away from all that. So, can we basically stick to the present strategy? That is, we have a sort of deterrent, but also a tripwire presence in the east, which is not provocative to Russia but which, none the less, demonstrates NATO's solidarity and could hold up a Russian attack in time for reinforcements to arrive. We basically stick to the idea that Allies would keep the bulk of their forces at home, apart from on the occasion of NATO exercises, and then, in a crisis: early warning, quick NATO decision making, quick implementation of the defence plan for the Atlantic area that the Supreme Allied Commander has drawn up, everybody gets into battle quickly, and that's fine. Or do we believe that, now the Russian threat to NATO has become so ominous because, whatever the outcome of this crisis, substantial Russian forces are going to be in Belarus, they will be in Ukraine, with heavy armour, with all the commander control? They will be much closer to NATO, giving NATO far less warning time of a major attack than we had after Russia annexed Crimea.

Therefore, we have to tear up the flexible reinforcement strategy, which allows you to keep your troops at home, ostensibly, to use for other purposes as well, in a flexible way—forces that do not have any preassigned task. It can be the Indo-Pacific, covid or whatever comes along. Or do we go back to the kind of standing defence plans of the cold war, where we say to every British regiment, "That is your location. That is your job, and only that job," as part of SACEUR's plan, and we put the bulk of the Armed Forces on the frontline, which we did in the cold war, with the understanding that we need a very heavy direct defence, and that the best reinforcement is to have the troops already there.

I think that is the big choice that NATO has to make as it heads towards its summit: whether it just enhances the existing mobility strategy or whether it goes for heavy divisions. The problem is that the Americans won't supply those, for the reasons Jim pointed out, because I do not think they will deviate from the long-term Indo-Pacific task of dealing with China. That's why the news from Germany is so welcome, because the problem is that no European country can put an armoured division of about 25,000, with all of the logistics, in the field. Germany was able to put three of those into the field during the Cold War. I am not suggesting that we go back to that—of course not—but I am suggesting that the onus will fall on the Europeans much more than during the Cold War to provide the bulk of this heavy armoured defence.

- Q12 **Chair:** Finally, very quickly, Jim, clearly the Russian advance has not gone according to their plan. The Ukrainians have done an incredible job, but there is a worry that it is going to get very ugly now and that Russians



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will turn and utilise cluster munitions or other methods of attack, which will hit the civilian populations hard. Is that a concern of yours? How should the West respond?

James J. Townsend Jr: That is a very great concern of mine and how the West responds is going to be tricky. There will be a feeling among the people of the West, which I am getting from the United States—actually, I am in Paris right now—and from Washington. The questions I get from American journalists are, “Why doesn’t NATO do something? Why doesn’t the United States do something? We should go in there and stop these guys from suffering this brutality.”

We remember those pressures during Balkan wars, when artillery rained down on the streets of the Balkans and killed civilians, and there was a lot of pressure on NATO to do something there, but there is a difference between NATO or the United States doing something in the Balkans, versus with a nuclear power like Russia.

Putin, who is wounded, is now doubling down on his operation and is rattling his nuclear sabre. This is a whole different set of concerns, so I don’t see the United States or NATO rolling in. I think we are going to have horrible sights on television, and we are going to feel the pressure, but the question then becomes, “What can we do?” Is it a coalition or just resupplying equipment until the Ukrainian resistance stops? Is it a matter of being humanitarian and we just have to help the patient feel better as it is being destroyed by the Russians?

This is no time to negotiate, with a gun to their head, so frankly I don’t see that there is an easy solution to this that we can take off the shelf. We are dealing with a nuclear power, and we are trying not to provoke the worst of his irrationality. We are going to have to think anew.

Chair: Thank you for that.

- Q13 **Gavin Robinson:** Good afternoon, gentlemen. Jamie, I am going to come to you first, but with slight trepidation in case I encourage you to keep going for too long and Jim has little to say afterwards. Jamie, I want to turn your focus to Agenda 2030. I think that taps into some of the comments you were making about ripping up the tactics of reinforcement and so on. Do you think Agenda 2030, with the focus on strengthening deterrence and defence, stands? Or do you think there is going to have to be a complete reappraisal of all that was considered in there, about keeping the edge of technology and all the rest of it?

Dr Shea: Thanks very much for that; it is a very good question. My sense is that it will keep going, for two reasons. No. 1, the Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, who is still there until October—when he moves, as you know, to the Norwegian Central Bank—has put his personal imprimatur on it. From what I understand from my old boss and from NATO, he is not going to want to give it up because obviously, although we are now dealing with Russia and Ukraine, and rightly so, what is going on in the rest of the world is not stopping either.



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Henry Kissinger used to joke, "There cannot be a crisis next week. My schedule is already full." When we look at all the challenges in Africa, the Mediterranean, the Middle East and the Indo-Pacific, including the return of jihadism to large parts of the world, we know that they are not going away. So the Secretary General will fight hard, despite the urgent need to bolster NATO's defence and deterrence in the east, for NATO to go into the Madrid summit, for the new strategic concept and for keeping that NATO 2030 broad agenda that he has set out.

For example, we heard from the UN yesterday—that was the only other story that made the BBC evening news, apart from Ukraine—that the International Panel on Climate Change has just come out with an even more alarming report about half the world's population now being severely impacted by climate change. Again, a Secretary General with his credentials as a former UN climate envoy is not going to want to drop all the work that was done on that in the past.

The Allies are not dropping the work on China either. You saw, at the last summit in June, that they put together two paragraphs on China that push the cursor forward in terms of how NATO engages with and analyses China vis-à-vis what we had before.

Looking at what's been happening in the Sahel, with the Wagner Group moving in as the French end their operation in Mali, I don't think that we can just see Russia in terms of Ukraine or eastern Europe. Russia has become a global challenge to the West: the way it operates in Syria; the way it is still interfering in Libya; the way that its Wagner mercenaries have put the West and the Europeans under pressure in Mali, Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic and elsewhere. There is the energy story; there is the hybrid warfare that we talked about earlier.

Beyond Ukraine, NATO will also have to use 2030 to think of a global strategy towards Russia, and not just in terms of the post-Cold War animosities in Europe. You mentioned the new technologies; they will become even more vital. If we're going to spend a hell of a lot more money on defence—and the Germans are going to apparently spend €100 billion—we have to make sure that we get bang for the buck in terms of transatlantic defence co-operation: promising new technologies, overcoming bureaucracy, looking to the civilian sector for those new technologies and getting them to the frontline quickly and affordably.

All the work that NATO has not always done brilliantly in the past—let's be honest with ourselves—steps up to the plate as well. On resilience, in recent years, in the UK and elsewhere, before the Ukraine crisis, we've seen our forces being used more at home than abroad. Jim is in Paris; if I was there for many years, I would see as many French soldiers on the streets of Paris or Marseille, guarding railway stations or public buildings, building covid hospitals, taking covid patients from one place to the other or dealing with floods or extreme weather events; I'd see as many soldiers in European countries deployed on the home front, asserting resilience, as there would be deployed on overseas missions.



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Russia is going to come at us in the hybrid area with cyber-attacks and provocations whatever the outcome of the conflict in Ukraine. Some of this agenda, if you look at cyberspace, is also linked to Russia and Ukraine. Others are part of what you might call a global security agenda. I think, if NATO's worth its salt, it has to be able to walk and chew gum at the same time, as it were. It will come back. It's in Iraq; it still has forces in Kosovo; it's still running a maritime mission in the Aegean, together with EU Frontex, to deal with the refugee crisis there. It still has training centres in Kuwait, Jordan and Mauritania to look at defence capacity building. It is still helping the African Union, for instance, with the African Standby Force and all of that. These things still serve western security interests. Many Allies, particularly in southern Europe, notwithstanding the tremendous anxiety over Ukraine, will not want NATO to simply abandon that agenda.

Equally, NATO has started the dialogue on China. The Secretary General has met Wang Yi, the Chinese Foreign Minister, twice. There has been lots of engagement, if only to try to prevail upon China not to support Russia over Ukraine—not altogether successful, right? There are Indo-Pacific countries that are partners of NATO: Australia, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea—you know them. NATO has even started a dialogue with India, which had an interest in that as well, to compare notes with China.

The question, really, is whether NATO now sees China as a kind of Tweedledum and Tweedledee—if I can be forgiven the expression—with Russia; whether it is aligned in every way so that, in a way, there is not much point in dealing with China, because it has now sided with Russia as an antagonist. However, when I meet the Chinese, they say, "We're not Russia! Don't compare us to Russia. We're totally different. Engage with us on our own terms, as China, because we want a dialogue with NATO."

I think what NATO has to say about China—whether it is on a separate track or is increasingly paired with Russia—in NATO 2030 is important as well. I think your question is excellent. Balancing the immediate crisis with the longer-term comprehensive security approach is going to be the challenge for the next few months.

Q14 Gavin Robinson: Thank you very much, Sir. I want to come to Jim very quickly—actually, that is not fair. You take as much time as you like, Jim. Do you agree with that? Do you think Agenda 2030 stands? Do you think there may be an aspiration to try to accelerate some of the key components, or is that realistically a difficult task when you're dealing with 30 Allies?

James J. Townsend Jr: I agree with Jamie; I have never disagreed with Jamie and I agree with him at this time as well. However, I will just underline one thing. I think the 2030 agenda and the strategic concept that will spring from that agenda will be important, and I think they will have to rearrange and strengthen language in terms of dealing with Russia, depending—again—on what happens with Putin. If he is going to be around six months from now, with Ukraine in his fold, he will be isolated, he will be angry and he will feel aggressive. If that is what we are

going to deal with—some variation of that—then NATO for sure will really have to reorient its approach in terms of its mission.

However, I want to underline something that I think is even more important; it is more than that 2030 agenda and it is more than the strategic concept. It is really a question of what our countries—the United States, Germany, the UK and France—are going to do in terms of forces and defence spending and really manning the ramparts up in the north against Russia. We will have to pull Poland in there, of course, but it will really be our nations as the leaders and those that can provide that defence capability.

It will be a political thing for us—for the United States, for Germany. It will be key to keep the Germans on task here, because it will be us who will be able to provide that defence, so that the 2030 agenda can do climate and we can deal with China, and we can deal with all these other new things—resilience, and all the things that Jamie pointed out. We won't be able to do those things if we cannot muster the political will in these capitals to do a lot more on defence and do it quickly. If we can't do that, then climate and all of that doesn't matter, because we have got a weak hand to play with an aggressive Putin running around Europe.

So we have to focus on that, and that's not so much what is signed out at NATO in terms of agreements as it is among us as nations. It is the US, the UK, Germany, France and—again—Poland sitting down and figuring this out, and going to the alliance as a group and saying, "Look, we're going to commit and we're going to bring in the equipment, and you are Allies too, but we know we're the drivers and we're committed to doing this."

If the United States doesn't do that—if we get a President in two years who is like Donald Trump, then God help us. But the UK is big on this, and particularly Germany. We cannot let this new coalition Government say, "Well, that was then, this is now," in terms of defence spending; they've got to keep going with what Scholz said in the Bundestag that he would do. This coalition has got to follow through and they cannot take their time; they will need to do this quickly.

So we have to focus on that political part in the leading nations, to make sure that we buy time for that 2030 agenda.

Chair: Thank you for that; it was very comprehensive. John, over to you.

Q15 **John Spellar:** First, Jamie, you talked about the Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls, or COCOM, during the Cold War and its role, and the need—possibly—to recreate it. However, hasn't that really been complicated by the industrial and technological rise of China?

Dr Shea: Good afternoon; it's good to see you again, of course. Yes, you are absolutely right. Of course I think Putin is very much hoping that the relationship with China will bail him out and that China will become, if you like, the International Monetary Fund to rescue Russia, in terms of making finance available. The Russians hold quite a lot of Chinese currency; they



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have got a lot of gold. They are obviously also trying to look at cryptocurrency markets to keep them going, but of course it's also the big energy deals with China as well.

However, remember that Russia sells its military technology to China, so I would argue that it goes the other way, Jim, if I may; it is Russian airplane engines, Russian aircraft carrier designs and Russian fighters that in the past have considerably helped the Chinese. Also, Russia helped with Chinese missile development. So, to some degree, it is the Chinese who have benefited from the Russian military-industrial complex, as have so many others, rather than the other way round. Nevertheless, I certainly think that, yes, the Russians will be looking to China. Whether China and a little bit of black market dealing can really substitute for Russia being excluded from the international financial system, I very much doubt.

The other thing to remember is that the Russians¹ now have got Putin over a barrel, given the collapse of the economy. Even Russian oil prices today are declining—not because oil overall is declining, but because so many people doubt the ability of ships or insurance companies to get the oil to market as a result of these sanctions—so if there was ever a time for the Chinese to demand tiny gas prices and to bail out the ailing Russian economy, that would be the case.

Secondly, I think the Chinese will be hesitant, because they know that the power of the sanctions from the international community goes so far. Even Switzerland is joining in. These sanctions could become secondary sanctions that could be applied to China, and China is already under a series of EU and US sanctions. The EU has frozen the comprehensive agreement on investment, so China also has to worry. President Xi would probably like to support his authoritarian friend, but he has to think of the interests of China first, in terms of not being dragged into a new Cold War confrontation. My Chinese interlocutors tell me that they do not want that. They want to avoid secondary sanctions that could result if they are seen to be undermining western sanctions. Of course, the Chinese have never been kind to the Russians when it comes to wanting the best value for their money and driving a hard price, and a weak Russia ultimately means that Putin will become even more subservient to Beijing if he relies on China to bail him out of this crisis. Is that what he really wants, given his own power pretensions? It is complicated, and I don't take anything for granted.

- Q16 **John Spellar:** Turning it slightly round—not to a denial of technology to Russia, but to building or maintaining our own technology—an issue that is going rapidly up the agenda in a number of NATO and other friendly countries is the question of supply chain resilience and the ability to maintain any equipment and, indeed, our forces. Jim, how do you see us identifying that, including not only NATO but AUKUS and other similar arrangements?

¹ The witness later clarified that he had been referring to the Chinese rather than the Russians.



James J. Townsend Jr: I think it is something that has surprised a lot of people. You mentioned the supply chain and a lot of things that we took for granted. Covid really pulled the veil from how vulnerable we really are when it comes to things like the supply chain and where certain vital industries are located, in terms of being manufactured. In the United States, a lot of our PPE was coming out of China. I think we have uncovered, just through the covid experience, how off balance—at least in terms of the United States—our economy can be.

When it comes to what we have uncovered from Ukraine, there are some similar things there too. We have seen the fragility of ourselves. As I think the Chair said, the cupboard was bare. We were looking a bit threadbare in our moment of emergency, because we were not keeping up with the technology and a lot of things that the 2030 agenda is trying to get at, which is incorporating high technology and incorporating the advances in warfare that a lot of nations just have not done.

China is an interesting player in all this. I think there is an assumption—I certainly had this assumption too—that China and Russia were closely aligned in supporting something like the invasion of Ukraine. It has been interesting, because even the Chinese abstained at the UN Security Council. They did not exercise their veto, along with Russia, of their condemnation of what the Russians have done. In a lot of ways, we do not quite understand the Chinese. We made bad assumptions about Putin, and we can also make bad assumptions about what is driving Xi and China. We are finding that what Putin has done in Ukraine is bad for Chinese business. Jamie said a lot of this and I don't want to have to repeat him, but I think there is some surprise in some capitals that the Chinese are not in the full-throated cheerleading section for Russia right now. They are, in fact, a little worried about what is going to happen in the global economy—certainly in the European economy, which impacts on their trade. A lot of what you have said about China and the logistics of our trade in this day and age—we have learned a lot, and we have been surprised over the past year. It is not so much a NATO thing, but it is certainly a transatlantic thing. We will have to get on top of the surprises that we have found out about ourselves from covid, as well as from Ukraine and Russia.

Q17 **John Spellar:** Jamie, any observations on that?

Dr Shea: Yes. Thank you. Also, I now understand your question better; maybe I didn't answer it properly the first time around. I think, obviously, that we have got to protect ourselves by determining the key materials that we need. That is also for our civilian economy—for greening the economy—as well as our military technology.

One thing that is often talked about is rare earths. I know that the Committee has done work on that in the past. Don't ask me to pronounce the names, but I am talking about those 19 or so precious minerals that are important for semiconductors, batteries, communications gear, and so on.



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China produces 90% of those, not necessarily because it has 90% of the underground reserves, but because it has the production facilities and is prepared to take the environmental risks—you need a lot of water to process these things—that maybe others won't. Therefore, we will have to look at how we go back to ramping up production of those rare earths. Greenland has lots of them, and, of course, climate change can have—at least in that respect—a beneficial element, because it helps with drilling and accessing them. The Americans have one plant, I think in Idaho—Rocky Flats—and are looking to open more, but we must try to reduce dependency on China.

For example, there is a lot going on in the US at the moment, which Jim knows more about. Congress has passed the CHIPS Act to relocate silicon chip production—which had almost left the United States—and semiconductors home. TSMC, a company in Taiwan that produces a lot of those, has agreed to open up a plant in the United States. There is a lot going on in terms of screening of direct foreign investment, and diversification of supply chains, which Jim mentioned. France, for example, even stopped manufacturing paracetamol, and only discovered that when the covid crisis came along. We used to do this, then, of course, with globalisation, we stopped doing it.

Of course, that does not mean that we have to bust globalisation and go to autarchy; that's not going to be good for the global economy. However, like in the energy area, we just have to see how we diversify, how we build in a margin of security, how we ramp up domestic production, and how we can have a stockpile—of gas, oil, rare earths, and so on—so that we can withstand those kinds of pressures.

There is quite a big thing in both Washington and Brussels at the moment called anti-coercion instruments. Lithuania is invoking the EU anti-coercion instrument after being bullied by China when it allowed a Taiwan representative office to open in Vilnius. The US Congress is also passing anti-coercion instruments.

In other words, what is the toolbox that gives us the ability—without necessarily entering an economic war—to push back against countries that are clearly manipulating supply chains and the export of rare earths and raw materials? Jim will remember that a few years ago China stopped its exports of rare earths to Japan for some period of time. What kind of instruments do we have to push back against that kind of behaviour? Without going too far beyond the defence realm, the whole issue of the reform of the World Trade Organisation to deal with anti-coercion economic policies is quite an interesting debate at the moment.

- Q18 Mr Jones:** Jim, as I think you mentioned, Germany's announcement in the last few days has taken us all by surprise. Clearly, with John and David sitting on the NATO PA, and knowing our German colleagues, it will be interesting to talk to them when we meet. However, there is a fixation on the size of defence budgets when it is actually about how they are spent. I always think that 2% is a little crass, really. It is held up as a holy grail, but, really, I am more interested in how it is spent.



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Quite clearly, innovation will be important in how that money is spent and what we spend it on. That varies between NATO countries, clearly. I just wonder what your thoughts are on the defence innovation fund and the defence innovation accelerator, in terms of trying to ensure that all NATO Allies not only get the equipment needed but are actually thinking forward to the next generation of equipment.

James J. Townsend Jr: Thank you for that. I applauded NATO understanding and seeing that it needed to play a role in making sure Allies kept an eye on the future. It is too easy for a lot of nations to sleepwalk through their defence concerns. They are happy with 1970s technology, and defence is not a priority for some Allies. Being off the Defence Planning Committee at NATO for about four years, I saw this.

One of the fears since we have had this revolution in military affairs, with artificial intelligence and all that we know, is how do you integrate that into a nation's military force when it has trouble spending much on its military to begin with? It then loses its interoperability and cannot really function with Allied forces, like from the UK or the US, so how do you deal with that? I am glad NATO has jumped in to help not just by raising the alert and advising nations on what they have to, but by having a fund to help jumpstart some of this. The EU is doing something similar with EU nations—the PESCO process and that type of thing. Both institutions—the EU and NATO—are trying to get members to do the right thing and make it as easy as they can for nations to understand what they need to do, as well as the help to get them started.

At the end of the day, it is political will. We can have all kinds of things, such as the Allied Command Transformation in Norfolk that has been working on this. We could have the DIANA there at NATO headquarters. I talked to the Dutch leader of that a few months ago and was very inspired by what they are trying to do. There is scepticism coming out of the Pentagon. Some of my former colleagues there, who I have been very hard on, are saying, "You can't throw rocks on the one hand, and then tell NATO to get out of the business because you don't think NATO is up to it". It is going to be a bumpy start, and they just started, but they need to do that. It really does take Putin to put the fear of God into a lot of these nations to understand they cannot take things for granted or think this will be someone else's fight if it comes to them—"Well, the Americans are going to take care of it" or "It's what the Brits do. Let the Brits do it". They have got to do this too.

Like you said, it is not just about spending 2%; it is what you spend it on and your willingness to use it. On spending, NATO can play a role not just in terms of defence planning and getting capability goals to nations, but saying, "Look. We need you to provide this capability, and it has got to be interoperable and comparable with modern warfare. You have got to spend the money, this is what we think you need to spend it on, and this is how you can come up to snuff"—whether it is the use of drones or other kinds of technologies that have just come down the pipe. They cannot assume someone else is going to do it, so leadership will be critical from this section. As we look for the next section, it will have to make it a



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priority—going to these allied capitals and giving them a political push. The Americans will have to do this and the UK as well. We will have to go in and say, “This is not hard to do. We can provide the advice, but you must have the political will if we are going to deal with someone like Putin”.

Mr Jones: Jamie, any thoughts?

Dr Shea: Yes. Again, Jim has systematically stolen my thunder, but he says it so nicely and eloquently that I am only too happy to follow. I think the first thing is that we have to study the Russian military machine and its strengths and weaknesses—we should have been doing this from Syria onwards, from Georgia. You design capabilities not in a vacuum, but to fight and prevail against a given adversary. Knowing strengths and weaknesses is key; that is the first thing.

No. 2 is that we see the Russians are very strong in conventional armour, which of course works against inferior opponents, as in Syria. Obviously, the Ukrainians are brave and plucky, but in terms of equipment and numbers, they are not at the level of the Russians—we know that. The question for NATO is: given we are up against a rather classic military force, should we be building tanks, armoured personnel carriers and rocket launchers just like the Russians do? How much heavy armour do we need to defeat that kind of force, or can we do it with new-fangled technologies—cyber, drones, interventions from space, hypersonic missiles? At the end of the day, there will probably be a mix of the two, but what should that mix be? It is no good spending, as Jim pointed out, billions of dollars on manned aircraft, manned ships or tanks or aircraft carriers—Apache and the two aircraft carriers that the UK now possesses, one of which has already been on its maiden voyage. We have to be very clear that we do not spend billions on exquisite luxuries that are going to be taken out very quickly with cheap drones and cheap standoff missiles. We have to invest wisely, and that will require NATO to do serious intellectual work.

You know the advert for Heineken beer—“Get the head right and the rest will follow.” If we do not get the analysis right in terms of the strengths and weaknesses matrix, we will waste a lot of money. In defence, as this Committee knows, it is very, very easy to waste a lot of money and write off programmes 10, 20 years down the line when you realise that you can’t deliver the technology, or the programme is obsolete because things have moved on, so we are going to need a much, much closer relationship between NATO and the private sector. The private sector has to know where we are going so that they can start building that future world for us already, and we have got to put the money up front.

I was at a meeting the other day looking at whether the UK should have a hypersonic missile capability or whether it could depend on the United States, and industry was clear: “Unless you put the money up to show you are serious, we are not going to divert millions of pounds to look at design teams and bring in expertise that you may or may not want”. We have to go far more upstream.



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- Q19 Mr Jones:** But, Jamie, this is not going to be just a political decision; it is going to be a cultural decision in some of our Armed Forces as well because generals like tanks and like mass. It will be difficult enough in one nation, but across NATO, especially among some of our eastern European colleagues who have a fixation on heavy armour, for example, it will mean a huge cultural change.

Dr Shea: Yes, that is a very good question. You're right, it is a cultural change. NATO is 30 Allies, and of course at the end of the day Allies buy what they want. Jim will remember this, but a few years ago Canada decided to increase its defence budget—at NATO we were cock-a-hoop—and then it announced it was buying diesel-powered submarines, which were not a NATO requirement, because it wanted to put them up in the Arctic at a time when it had a disagreement with the United States on the definition of borders and so on, so, yes, it is all very well to spend more money, but if it does not meet NATO's requirements, and shortfalls, it will not be easy.

The other thing that NATO can provide is the kind of enablers that small countries really can't build for themselves. You remember the term "smart defence" that was around a few years ago, and pooling and sharing. NATO can come up with technical and budget solutions that at least make it easy for countries to cross the Rubicon, because you make it affordable. For example, a group of I think 13 Allies—Jim will correct me if I am wrong—in NATO's Alliance Ground Surveillance system bought the Global Hawk observation drones. They paid for that, and NATO pays in collectively to operate ground-based terminals, to produce the analytical teams and to operate the aircraft out of the signaller's air force base.

You are familiar with these, of course. There are lots of good examples of pooling and sharing arrangements that allow countries to come in, precisely because you can give them an attractive offer. That is really the role of NATO. But we need to change the culture in terms of failure. Somebody told me—Jim will correct me if I am wrong—that one of the highest paid employees of DARPA, the US Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, is the chap who has the most failures every year, not the one with the most successes. They think that the guy who has the most failures, recognises that, and moves on in favour of the successful technology, is the guy who really understands what innovation is all about. We do not have that culture in NATO at the moment.

- Q20 Dave Doogan:** Gents, how effective is the current NATO-EU relationship? When we say "current", let's stick to the last couple of weeks rather than the last couple of years. Things have clearly changed as a result of what has been going on in Ukraine and, more specifically, in the German Government. In your responses, could you touch on some of the relationships that exist within that dynamic—such as Ireland not in NATO but in the EU, Norway in EFTA and NATO but not the EU, and the UK not in the EU but in NATO? How do these dynamics play out positively for the relationship?



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James J. Townsend Jr: Wow. It is a great question. It's interesting. In terms of the European Union itself, over the past few days a couple of things have happened. One is that they really proved that they could do some very difficult things together. It is ugly getting there, and it takes all night, but I was pretty surprised that they were able to pull together quickly and do things like sending lethal weapons to Ukraine and that type of thing. I was pretty surprised by that. But it took the fear of Putin to make that happen, and we will see how long that will be around.

The second thing is that their argument about strategic autonomy was undercut a bit. When suddenly the wolf was at the door, all eyes turned to NATO and the United States—the UK as well—to come and help. It is not that the EU ever said that it was their job to handle Russia; they were always saying that a high-end conflict belongs to NATO—it's not an EU thing. But that fear of Putin and the end of the sleepwalking, which I hope is going to last, is hopefully going to make the EU-NATO relationship more efficient when it comes to procurement.

The EU, with its PESCO and its processes, could really pick up quite a bit as nations try to improve their militaries, and they are going to use that PESCO system. It has to be done in collaboration and co-operation with NATO. We do not want nations to go off with two sets of instructions and two processes—one NATO and one EU. It has to be complementary. We have to push for that aspect of the NATO-EU relationship.

There are still age-old problems that we have with the EU, such as Turkey, Cyprus, and all the problems that that causes within NATO. We have to deal with that. We've reached a time in dealing with Putin such that, if we are going to deal with him efficiently—Jamie was talking about wasting money in the past—we have to do it in an efficient manner, and not let politics divert us into places that have us do really stupid things. I am fearful that we're not quite at a place where we are going to be able to address that. Politics is politics, but we have to redouble our efforts if we are going to spend a lot of money on defence. We have to do that, but we've got to do it smart. That calls for leadership.

- Q21 **Dave Doogan:** Okay. Just expand on that point about expenditure. The smaller NATO states are all in Europe, and they come with smaller budgets. On that question about the relevance of the 2%, is it not more appropriate for NATO to try to deliver for these smaller states with smaller budgets a significant competitive advantage in niche areas, or in areas that are becoming increasingly less niche, such as cyber, hybrid, hypersonics, space and various other elements of that? Would that not allow a welcome aspect of relevance for smaller states that are never going to achieve or compete on the front of mass?

James J. Townsend Jr: In the defence planning world, we used to call it the division of labour: "Shouldn't there be a division of labour? Understanding that some nations will not be able to do it all, can they not be given some specific tasks?" Now that time has moved on, and I have become a little older, I would say that, yes, there is a role for that. It cannot totally take over our military capability to the degree that, if an Ally



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decided it did not want to get involved in a particular NATO operation, and therefore its niche capability was not provided, NATO would be undercut a bit.

The US, the UK, or somebody else would have to fill in the gap left by that nation not contributing.

At the same time, you are right about the smaller budgets and the smaller Allies. In terms of the European Union, that is where PESCO can help, but in terms of NATO, a division of labour probably needs to play a bigger role in our defence planning. Again, it is about spending this money smarter and being more creative, like with the division of labour. Niche capability is something else we have called it. Maybe we need to do more of that.

Q22 Dave Doogan: Thank you very much for that. Jamie, did you want to speak to either of those two points? It would be helpful to hear your view.

Dr Shea: Being Brussels based, as you can imagine, sir, I will have a few things to say about NATO and the EU, but I will try to keep it brief. The first thing to say is that clearly, when you have had a big military crisis as we are having, NATO is going to be in the lead. That is obvious: it is the military organisation; it has the US, the UK, Turkey, Norway—a number of critical non-EU countries who you need in the mix. The Canadians are backing Europe, too—let's not forget them. You have to remember that today, the EU represents 21 NATO member countries, but spends only 20% of the overall NATO budget, so the EU is still in the position of being a very powerful economic bloc that is basically defended by non-member states. That is an interesting reflection when you think of EU strategic autonomy, so I was not surprised that NATO was clearly in the lead with that big crisis.

Now, as we head towards sanctions, you see the EU percolating up—as you would expect—with the various summits, the meetings over the past couple of days and around the clock in Brussels every day, and Ursula von der Leyen or Charles Michel announcing a new raft of sanctions. The EU is still very strong and very powerful in the economic area, notwithstanding its military aspirations, but when you talk about innovation and burden sharing, you or someone on the Committee mentioned—no, it was Jim; forgive me—the NATO innovation fund, Project DIANA, which is \$1 billion. That is good, but the EU's budget for the European defence fund is €8 billion, and the EU budget for space is €5.5 billion. The EU Horizon programme for research and development, which of course includes civil-military technologies, is €25 billion. The EU budget for military mobility in Europe is €1 billion, so as Jim rightly pointed out, in these various EU programmes there are pots of money that can be usefully made available for NATO priorities too.

I make two brief comments on that. First, it is good that the Dutch in the lead of the EU military mobility programme are also working according to NATO's objectives, and the EU is spending its money on upgrading infrastructure that NATO has identified as crucial for military



reinforcement. The other thing with PESCO and the European defence fund is that it is very important, as they define European strategic autonomy in the wake of Ukraine, that they now programme things that contribute to NATO's collective defence of Europe. When this strategic autonomy debate started—I, being based in Brussels, have been to a thousand seminars on this subject, more than I could ever remember—it was largely focused on not doing NATO things: you know, being present in Africa, Mali, the Sahel, the Mediterranean, and those types of operations under the so-called common security and defence policy. Now, there is an urgent need to make sure that all of this R&D and all of these programmes are made non-duplicative with NATO and contribute to NATO's priorities.

For example, just before Russia began to threaten Ukraine, the big talk over here in Brussels was the so-called EU first entry force. The lesson that the EU had learned from Afghanistan was that they needed their own 5,000-sized mobile brigade that could go into Kabul airport, run Kabul airport, and stay there in Afghanistan even after the US had left. It is telling that since Ukraine, nobody is talking about that any more. As Jim rightly pointed out, the EU now clearly understands that strategic autonomy has to be the European contribution to NATO's defence, rather than the EU doing its own thing elsewhere—

Q23 Dave Doogan: Sorry, Jamie, I am just going to stop you and ask you both to very quickly highlight in a sentence or two what is the role of a post-EU Brexit Britain that is a prominent NATO member in that dynamic—the United Kingdom, rather. I beg your pardon.

Dr Shea: Can I continue for a couple of brief sentences? If I may, sir, I will finish talking about NATO and the EU. With areas like resilience—cyber, supply chains and what we were talking about a moment ago with Jim—the EU has very important assets that NATO relies on. Focus on those areas where there is a clear overlap.

On the role of the UK post-Brexit, we have to recognise that, although we have left the EU, we still share existential threats and interests with our European allies—and Ukraine shows this—whether it be Russia, the Middle East, the Sahel, jihadism or illegal migration across the Mediterranean. Therefore, my hope, as a convinced European, is that we will eventually work out some security arrangement or *modus vivendi* with the European Union. If the United States can participate in PESCO programmes, why can't we?

James J. Townsend Jr: I echo what Jamie said. The US-UK relationship is critical. We depend on each other in so many things, but it is not good enough. We need the UK to work out with Brussels some of the problems that Brussels has with relationships, so that the UK can be part of the continent's solution on defence. The UK leads by example. Nations in Europe watch what the UK does on defence and defence spending. That is something I have seen for years. One of the most critical things is leadership by doing, which is what the UK provides. You should keep that in mind.



Q24 Mr Francois: Gentlemen, I apologise for arriving late. I have come from a ceremony in Southend, which has been formally made a city. Prince Charles was there. Because of the tube strike, there was a lot of trouble getting back into London. No disrespect was intended.

At the June 2022 summit, there was due to be a discussion on the strategic concept and potential additional funding. How do you see that discussion now it has obviously been altered by the events in Ukraine?

Dr Shea: First, I am delighted to see you again, Mark. Yes, there will be a strategic concept. NATO has committed and the ambassadors have been going off on various seminars and brainstorming to prepare the way, but I think they will write it very late in the day. In other words, they will wait to see how all these uncertainties play out and then put pen to paper nearer the time, obviously so that the document is not immediately overtaken by events, which is always the risk here.

Much of what NATO has been doing in areas such as climate change, cyber, emerging security threats, new technologies and defence capacity building is all pretty fixed. Clearly, this is going to be a strategic concept heavily influenced by Russia—how NATO describes the dimension of the Russia challenge in Europe and globally. Just like NATO described the China challenge in the last summit, it now needs to describe the long-term Russia challenge. Is it going to be presented in ways similar to the Soviet Union, and how? Is it a military challenge? Is it economic? What are the stakes in a global confrontation between Russia as a rogue state and the West?

Secondly, are we going to go for a completely new defence posture based on much greater numbers of NATO forces permanently stationed in the east? That would be expensive—beyond the 2%—and it might be difficult for some Allies to accept. All the deployments we are seeing at the moment are temporary, apart from the commitment to establish four multinational brigades. They could quickly be brought back home again, but the eastern Europeans will be calling for a much more permanent form of deployment. Will we go back to a deployment that is essentially based on early warning and reinforcement? A lot can already be written, but the big stuff will be done at the last minute.

Q25 Mr Francois: Jamie, sorry if I missed some of this because I was late, though for a good reason, but there is already a debate under way here in the UK about whether our much-vaunted Integrated Review has now been overtaken by events; we will have to see how that debate plays out. You talked about whether the strategic concept will involve changes for deployment and posture, but could I press you on readiness? Although we in the UK are not without sin on having our Armed Forces at the right level of readiness, certainly given what has happened, but without finger pointing, there are other NATO countries—some of them quite large—whose readiness is far worse than ours. Given some recent changes in policy in the last few days, do you think there will be an important change in the emphasis on readiness and operational availability in the new strategic concept?



Dr Shea: I think there will be more of an emphasis on having troops over in Europe on a permanent basis and, to some degree, as you know, this Government anticipated that—wisely, at it has turned out—by returning UK forces to Sennelager in Germany some time ago. In view of the situation we are facing today, that is a good anticipatory decision. I am not saying that we are going to resurrect the British Army of the Rhine—you remember that—but I think there will be the need beyond the British lead currently in Estonia. The UK has already reinforced that, and the Estonians will want those extra British troops to stay permanently and turn the battalion into a multinational brigade.

The Integrated Review put the emphasis on two things. Maritime components are important, because we have the Russians in the Atlantic and in the Black sea, and Britain's role as a maritime power is not just important for the Indo-Pacific, but will be even more important in guarding the Atlantic lines of communication, as it has always been in the history of the last couple of centuries; but in the old NATO, Britain provided a major land component as well. The question for the UK, beyond the obvious capabilities with the 16 Brigade, cyber, information warfare, electronic warfare, where the UK has proven very useful, is whether now to extend, in terms of the cuts to the Army, by going back to providing that major continental armoured commitment that it had in previous times, or whether the UK can look to the Germans—who knows?—and some of the others to provide that. But I am sort of sceptical. It is great to see what the Germans are doing, but I am sceptical that NATO will have a good, robust defence without some kind of augmented UK land armoured component, and an air component, of course—that is absolutely vital, particularly with the F-35s coming on stream.

If I may, the other thing is that, as I said, every time I have turned on my TV over the last year, living here in Brussels, I have seen the Army delivering fuel to petrol stations, fighting fires, rescuing people from floods, building Nightingale hospitals and so on. I totally applaud that, but if the British Army is now going to be employed on its original task, which is fighting wars, I think it is high time that the UK started to look at some kind of gendarmerie or civil protection force that can handle those kinds domestic rescue and resilience tasks.

Q26 **Mr Francois:** Thanks, Jamie—it is good to see you again. Jim, do you have anything to add from your perspective, particularly on readiness and employment?

James J. Townsend Jr: I think for sure that it will certainly rate a paragraph or more in the strategic concept, but what is important is the document that follows the strategic concept called "Ministerial Guidance". That is where your Minister of Defence and mine will agree with colleagues the details on readiness, the details on how NATO will have to have a restructured force posture on the continent. That guidance document comes from the strategic concept so, for sure, we need to have hooks in that strategic concept that tell the Defence Ministers, "You need to focus on readiness."



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Let me say two things on the strategic concept. One is that it is going to be quite a historic document—one of the major reasons being that we will probably have to come up with, in the first five paragraphs of that document, a whole new concept of how we deal with Putin now, and how we deal with European continental defence now. It will have to be something a little different from what we have seen in previous strategic concepts. It will have to say, “We’re in a new era, this is what the new era looks like, and this is what NATO’s role is.” That is something for us to think about, because it cannot be boilerplate standard stuff; it will have to have a strategic aspect to it that we need to get right.

The second and last thing is that the strategic concept is going to give us an opportunity to see whether we can lock in what Allies like Germany are saying about defence spending. It is not so much what the document will say; it will be the data around the table and in capitals about where nations are. I have negotiated these before. As Germany begins to talk about its guidance from Berlin on defence spending, if we get a feeling that they are backsliding and saying, “Well, we’re not so sure,” we will have to come down hard on them as an alliance and say, “No! We’re not going to let you do that.” We will have to use that strategic concept negotiation to lock them in to becoming a leader in our defence rebuild for NATO.

Q27 Mr Francois: Jim, apropos your point about the first few paragraphs setting the tone, I can give you one hard example of that. During the cold war, when the Berlin wall was still up, we referred to the Soviet Union as “the threat” and we used to talk about “the enemy”, or at least “the potential enemy”—we did not deal in euphemisms. Now, we talk about “peer competitors”, or at least we did until a week ago. So do you think that the strategic concept will actually involve—forgive the awful phrase—a paradigm shift? In June, are we going to produce a document that calls Russia an “enemy” or “potential aggressor”, rather than just a “competitor”?

James J. Townsend Jr: A lot of that will be strengthened by what happens in the coming days in Ukraine. If we see the horror show that we might see in Ukraine, first, the gloves will come off. Secondly, the new Allies—I call them “new”, meaning the central and eastern European Allies, Poland and the others—will not let NATO get away with soft pedalling what we are dealing with, and neither will the United States or the UK, I hope. I think we will be together on this. The time for soft pedalling and talking about Russia as a competitor and yet also a partner—all the language we have used in past strategic concepts—is over. Those days are over. A lot will be shaped by what happens in the coming weeks in Ukraine. If we end up with a Ukraine suppressed, oppressed, by Russian forces snuffing out pockets of resistance in Ukraine, the gloves will be off.

Mr Francois: That is very helpful, Jim. Thank you, Chair.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed. This has been a very helpful session looking at the details. You mentioned earlier our visit to Brussels. We will be heading there shortly. We also had a fantastic visit to Norfolk in the



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United States, and that was very helpful indeed, in particular just after the aftermath of the retreat from Afghanistan. But we are in a fast-changing world and your contributions today have helped us better understand the importance of, first, the bilateral relationship that we in the UK have with the United States and, secondly, the importance of NATO reinvigorating itself, repurposing itself, given the new and developing threats. Jim Townsend and Jamie Shea, I thank you very much on behalf of the Committee. That brings us to the conclusion of our session today.