



House of Commons
Defence Committee

Special Relationships? US, UK and NATO

Sixth Report of Session 2022–23

*Report, together with formal minutes relating
to the report*

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The Defence Committee

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Summary

The UK-US relationship in defence, security and intelligence is strong and enduring. Our Armed Forces have fought alongside in many campaigns post-1945 and continue to work together on development of both equipment and doctrine. Both countries benefit from the relationship: the UK benefits from US resources and economies of scale; the US from British niche capabilities, the UK's global reach and its willingness to defend its values. However, defence industrial co-operation is often limited as a result of US defence export controls. Any failure to consult Allies before taking action can also have negative consequences, as was demonstrated by the Afghanistan withdrawal. Nevertheless, the joint approach in response to Russian actions in February 2022 demonstrates the value of the UK-US relationship.

The UK commits most of its military capability to NATO. It takes a leadership role in the Alliance—placing many senior officials and officers in NATO roles—and has been at the forefront of support to eastern Allies and Ukraine. Despite this, whilst its maritime and air capabilities commitments are fulfilled, the failure to modernise land forces raises questions about the ability of the British Army to deploy an effective force in continental Europe, should it be required. However, the UK's focus on the High North and its leadership within the Joint Expeditionary Force are to be commended.

NATO has been preparing for an increase in the scale of Russian hostilities in Europe since 2014. Strategies and plans produced in the past few years have helped develop thinking and processes in NATO, and NATO was able to respond credibly to the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine. With his unprovoked aggression, President Putin has managed to unite Europe, re-engage the US in Europe and encourage Finland and Sweden to join NATO. However, NATO still suffers from capability shortfalls, particularly amongst its European Allies. As the US invests in the development of military equipment based on new technologies, it may cause further interoperability issues within the Alliance. NATO and the EU are investing in research and development but those investments and EU capability development programmes will need to be complementary to counter the interoperability issues.

The Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine has seen Western military equipment and weaponry sent east to the front line. The Ukrainians have fought bravely and effectively, driving back Russian advances. However, it is clear that Western warehouses and stockpiles are not being replenished at the same rate at which stocks are being shipped. Western industrial capacity does not appear to be able to match demand and it is clear that Government intervention is required. The current global situation shows that there is an ongoing need to deter aggressive actions which undermine the rules-based international order. The failure of Western Governments to deter Russia leads to questions about the effectiveness of the current deterrence posture.

1 Introduction

1. We announced this inquiry in Summer 2021, following the Spring publication of the Integrated Review and the Defence Command Paper. We wanted to explore how the foreign policy and capability decisions made by the Government would impact upon our defence relationships with our closest Allies.

2. We wish to thank all of those who gave evidence to this inquiry. We held 7 evidence sessions (incorporating two evidence sessions held before the official announcement of this inquiry¹) and received written evidence from a number of contributors. The evidence sessions were with:

- [2 February 2021](#): Lord Darroch KCMG, former UK Ambassador to Washington (2016–2019) and National Security Adviser (2012–15); Dr Charles Kupchan, Senior Fellow, Council of Foreign Relations and Former Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs (2014–2017) and Director for European Affairs, US National Security Council (1993–1994); Ambassador Douglas Lute, Former US Permanent Representative (2013–17) at NATO; and Sir Adam Thomson KCMG, Director of the European Leadership Network and former UK Permanent Representative to NATO (2014–2016)
- [2 March 2021](#): 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
- [1 March 2022](#): 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
- [15 March 2022](#): Lord Robertson, former UK Defence Secretary and Secretary General of NATO
- [19 April 2022](#): General (ret'd) Sir Richard Barrons, former Head of Joint Forces Command
- [24 May 2022](#): General (Rtd) Sir James Everard KCB CBE, former Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe (DSACEUR), NATO
- [2 November 2022](#): the right Hon. Ben Wallace MP, Secretary of State for Defence, Clare Cameron, Director, Euro-Atlantic, Ministry of Defence, and Major General David Eastman, ACDS CFD

3. We are also grateful to the FCDO, the British Embassies and the British Defence Staff who enabled us to discuss British defence strategy with a number of our Allies.²

1 Held under the title '[NATO, US and UK Defence Relations](#)' HC (2019 - 21) 1187

2 As part of this inquiry we visited Washington DC, Berlin, Warsaw, the NATO Headquarters in Brussels and Helsinki.

UK Defence is a tool of soft, as well as hard, power and we are grateful to all of the civil servants and members of the UK Armed Forces who have provided us with excellent support during this inquiry.

4. This inquiry, initially launched following the inauguration of the Biden Administration, has continued through the return of the Taliban to power in Afghanistan and the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Both events are challenges to the leadership of the West and both have implications for the US, UK and NATO. Although the Afghan campaign and the concerted efforts of Allies to assist the Ukrainian Government in its fight against tyranny are not the subjects of this Report, they have shaped our recommendations and conclusions.

2 The UK-US Relationship

The UK-US Defence relationship

5. Dr Jeffrey McCausland, a retired colonel from the U.S. Army and former dean of Academics at the U.S. Army War College, noted in 2006 that:

Cooperation between the American and British militaries is unparalleled not only with respect to U.S. relations with other states but perhaps even in the annals of alliances. No other state has the daily involvement in the planning and preparation of operations that the UK has with the United States.³

Below is an illustrative list of interventions where the UK and US have worked together. Some of these were UN or NATO-led, others were coalition operations.

Table 1: Illustrative list of significant US and UK military interventions post World War II

Date	Intervention
1948	Berlin Airlift
1950–1953	Korean War
1990–1991	Gulf War
1991–2003	Enforcement of the No Fly Zones over Iraq
1995–2002	Bosnia
1998	Operation Desert Fox
1999–2003	Kosovo
2001–2021	Afghanistan
2003–2009	Iraq
2011	Libyan Civil War
2014–present	Countering Daesh in Iraq and Syria

Source: Compiled by Committee Staff using publicly available material⁴

6. The UK and US work effectively at a deep level in defence, security and intelligence.⁵ Several witnesses agreed that that has remained the case throughout both the Trump and Biden Administrations.⁶ The Secretary of State described his view of this relationship covering both the Trump presidency and President Biden as “incredibly strong” at military leadership and political level.⁷

7. When we visited Washington in October 2021, the increase in defence spending (announced by the then Prime Minister in November 2020) was welcomed by our

3 Dr Jeffrey D McCausland, U.S.-UK Relations at the Start of the 21st Century, Strategic Studies Institute at the US Army War College, Jan 1, 2006, p. 194

4 ‘Brothers in Arms: The British-American Alignment’ by Professor Michael Clarke in ‘Wars in Peace: British Military Operations since 1991’, RUSI., 2014, p245; [Instances of Use of United States Armed Forces Abroad, 1798–2022](#) by the Congressional Research Service, March 2022; [UK armed forces Deaths: Operational deaths post World War II 3 September 1945 to 28 February 2022](#), Ministry of Defence, March 2022

5 [UNA011 - MOD](#)

6 Oral evidence taken on 2 February 2021 HC (19–21) 1187, [Q6](#); Oral evidence taken on 2 March 2021 HC (19–21) 1187, [Q40](#)

7 Q231

American interlocutors as were the majority of the capability decisions taken in the Defence Command Paper. However, as the ongoing refresh of both the Integrated Review and the Defence Command Paper indicates, it remains to be seen whether those capability decisions are still considered to be appropriate following the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

8. The recent US National Defense Strategy and Nuclear Posture Review demonstrate the closeness of the UK-US relationship. The adoption of a “campaigning” mindset in the National Defense Strategy acknowledges the importance of countering sub-threshold threats,⁸ something the Secretary of State welcomed in evidence to us⁹ having told the House of Lords International Relations and Defence Committee that it was an area of strength for the UK.¹⁰ He also cited the fact that the W93 warhead programme was now a programme of record as evidence of the strength of the UK-US relationship.¹¹ In fact, the UK-US relationship has many aspects, not least nuclear co-operation, intelligence sharing via Five Eyes and technology sharing via the US National Technological Industrial Base and AUKUS.

9. Despite the degree of interconnectedness, it was acknowledged that the relationship is reliant on continued engagement and exchange. Lord Robertson noted that as a result of the US political system, every new Administration has a learning curve when it comes to engaging with Allies. He advised that it was therefore necessary to build as many channels as possible. The Secretary of State recognised the value of this, noting that:

One of the things about the special relationship is that it is at all levels and on all routes ... The point is that if you want to know what the special relationship is, it's that: it's that depth of knowledge.¹²

10. It is a testament to the depth of the defence, security and intelligence relationship between the UK and the US that changes in direction and political leadership in both countries have not undermined the relationship. However, that depth requires regular engagement at multiple levels. It cannot be taken for granted.

How does the UK benefit from the relationship?

11. Professor Wyn Rees, Professor of International Security at the University of Nottingham, told us that as a result of its significant footprint in the US, UK Armed Forces are able to engage closely with the US military across domain commands, training establishments and doctrine centres. This allows the UK not only to integrate seamlessly with the US on contemporaneous operations but also to see how US thinking is evolving and plan how it can operate alongside the US military of the future.¹³ Dr Rob Johnson, Director of the Oxford Changing Character of War Centre,¹⁴ agreed, noting that US and

8 Melanie W. Sisson, [There is a lot to like in the 2022 National Defense Strategy, Brookings, 18 November 2022](#)

9 Q232

10 Oral Evidence taken by the House of Lords International Relations and Defence Committee on 1 November 2022, HL (2022–23) 124, [Q179](#)

11 Q248

12 Q242

13 Oral evidence taken on 2 March 2021 HC (19–21) 1187, [Q42](#); [Q75](#)

14 Dr Rob Johnson has since been appointed lead the newly established Secretary of State's Office for Net Assessment and Challenge (SONAC), responsible for the provision of independent advice to the Secretary of State and the Defence Board.

UK doctrines for a range of military operations were similar or the same meaning that integration was easier to achieve—he gave examples of US F-35s being able to operate from UK carriers and US-UK integration within NATO’s Allied Rapid Reaction Corps.¹⁵

12. In addition to intelligence sharing arrangements, the AUKUS agreement shows the trust engendered by the Five Eyes arrangement with all three countries willing to share complex and powerful technology as well as jointly developing critical future technology. Damien Parmenter, the MOD DG Strategy and International told the House of Lords International Relations and Defence Committee that collaboration with the US and other NATO Allies, particularly in science and technology, had given the UK “access to unique capabilities”.¹⁶

13. Such joint working across a number of equipment programmes allows the UK to access the benefits of the much larger US R&D budget.¹⁷ According to the Congressional Research Service, the United States spent \$55.4 billion on defence R&D in 2017, 23 times the amount spent by the United Kingdom.¹⁸

How does the US benefit from the relationship?

14. The MOD notes that the US benefits from the UK’s willingness to act in defence of its shared values, its global reach (facilitated by its overseas bases) and the capabilities which the UK Armed Forces can deploy.¹⁹ This assessment was supported by several witnesses whilst others highlighted further positives: UK intelligence sharing, the capabilities of UK Special Operations Forces, UK cyber capabilities (both offensive and defensive) and the extent to which a UK contribution to a US-led operation can offer “a degree of legitimacy and support”.²⁰

15. The UK’s leadership in NATO is viewed as a vital component of the US-UK relationship. Both Ambassador Doug Lute, former US Permanent Representative to NATO and Heather Conley, then Senior Vice President for Europe, Eurasia and the Arctic, and Director, Europe, Russia and Eurasia Programme, Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS),²¹ told us that the US valued continued UK leadership in NATO in terms of the UK’s willingness to take part in NATO operations, its role in NATO’s modernisation drive and its engagement in NATO’s political dimension.²² Jim Townsend Senior Fellow, Centre for a New American Security, and President, Atlantic Treaty Association highlighted that “nations in Europe watch what the UK does on defence and defence spending ... one of

15 Oral evidence taken on 2 March 2021 HC (19–21) 1187, [Q43](#)

16 Oral Evidence taken by the House of Lords International Relations and Defence Committee on 1 November 2022, HL (2022–23) 124, [Q176](#)

17 [UNA01 - Jag Patel](#)

18 [Government Expenditures on Defense Research and Development by the United States and Other OECD Countries: Fact Sheet \(fas.org\)](#)

19 [UNA011 - MOD](#)

20 Oral evidence taken on 2 February 2021 HC (19–21) 1187, [Q14](#); Oral evidence taken on 2 March 2021 HC (19–21) 1187, [Q40](#); [Q41](#); [Q66](#)

21 Heather Conley is now President of the German Marshall Fund of the United State

22 Oral evidence taken on 2 February 2021 HC (19–21) 1187, [Q8](#); Oral evidence taken on 2 March 2021 HC (19–21) 1187, [Q40](#)

the most critical things is leadership by doing, which is what the UK provides.”²³ For Lord Robertson, former UK Defence Secretary and Secretary General of NATO, the British played a valuable role in anchoring the US into the transatlantic alliance.²⁴

16. The Secretary of State mentioned the importance of the size of the UK contribution to NATO along with the strategic partnership through AUKUS, concluding that his experience with the United States had “demonstrated only one thing, which is a constant trust and partnership with us at a level that I don’t see in other countries around the world”.²⁵ He also emphasised to us how important the UK’s support of Ukraine has been.²⁶

17. US interlocutors told us that UK actions in relation to Ukraine demonstrate that the UK is a reliable partner, willing to stand up for shared values. This was also evident to us when we spoke with NATO Allies at NATO HQ.

23 Q23
24 Q64
25 Q233
26 Q239

Box 1: Military and Security Organisations which both the UK and US are members of

- Arctic Council (UK as an observer);
- Central American Integration System (SICA) (both as observers);
- Council of the Baltic Sea Strategy (both as observers);
- Conference on Disarmament;
- Council of Europe (US as an observer);
- Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council;
- Financial Action Task Force;
- International Atomic Energy Agency;
- International Civil Aviation Organization;
- International Hydrographic Organization;
- International Maritime Organization;
- International Mobile Satellite Organization;
- Interpol;
- International Organization for Standardization,
- International Telecommunications Satellite Organization,
- International Telecommunication Union,
- NATO;
- Nuclear Suppliers Group;
- Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons;
- Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe;
- Southeast European Law Enforcement Center (both as partners);
- United Nations
- United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO);
- United Nations Mission in South Sudan;
- UN Security Council (permanent);
- Wassenaar Arrangement;
- Zangger Committee

Source: United Kingdom - The World Factbook (cia.gov); United States - The World Factbook (cia.gov)

18. The UK benefits from the UK-US relationship through its access to US military thinking, equipment and research as well as the opportunity to train and deploy alongside US counterparts. The UK-US relationship enhances the UK's security.

19. It is also important to recognise that the US also benefits from the relationship, through the UK's expertise in niche capabilities, as well as through the leadership role that the UK plays in NATO. Furthermore, the role the UK has played in co-ordinating assistance to Ukraine has demonstrated not just to the US but the whole of NATO its reliability as an Ally and partner.

Challenges

20. Witnesses told us that there were still challenges in the UK-US relationship however—primarily in the area of defence industrial co-operation. Sir Adam Thomson, Director of the European Leadership Network and former UK Permanent Representative to NATO, raised concerns about the openness of US defence industry, suggesting the UK could play a role in convincing both US and European decision makers to ensure that transatlantic defence markets were “open, competitive and collaborative”.²⁷ Lord Darroch, former UK Ambassador to Washington and National Security Adviser, described the difficulties he faced as HM Ambassador of trying to negotiate access to the US defence market for UK companies—noting that in the case of one product, the manufacturer had wanted to sell it to the US military, the US military “really wanted this piece of equipment” and yet despite seemingly productive negotiations between US and UK defence ministers, the US Department of Defense had still blocked the purchase.²⁸

21. Technology sharing will be vital to integration between the US and UK militaries when they deploy together. Heather Conley told us that the intention is to achieve the closest possible integrated operating picture across domains but that that relies on information sharing, base collaboration and co-operation on platforms to allow for a “seamless operating picture”, noting the UK's decision to retain higher-end capabilities alongside the US, unlike many other NATO Allies.²⁹ She suggested that the US needed to rethink its posture on defence exports in order to achieve such technology sharing.

22. Whilst we were in Washington we heard that co-operation between UK and US defence industry was often stymied by the export controls which the US places on defence equipment (known as ITAR—the International Trade and Arms Regulations). The UK is not the only US ally to have raised concerns about this—when he visited Washington in December 2022, the Australian Defence Minister also raised concerns about the impact of ITAR on defence industrial co-operation.³⁰

23. When we asked the Secretary of State about the difficulties he faced in relation to defence industrial co-operation, he spoke positively of the open general licences issued by the US to the UK, Canada and Australia, which allowed those four countries to import and export without the controls that had previously been in place. He told us that “In all my time and probably your time, that is a really significant change”.³¹

24. However, he also complained that that did not solve “ITAR taint”, noting that the MOD spends about half a billion a year complying with all the ITAR requirements which “is half a billion we cannot spend on our industry or on the US's industry”. He explained that there was agreement across the US defence industry, the White House and Congress

27 Oral evidence taken on 2 February 2021 HC (19–21) 1187, [Q28](#)

28 Oral evidence taken on 2 February 2021 HC (19–21) 1187, [Q31](#)

29 Oral evidence taken on 2 March 2021 HC (19–21) 1187, [Q44](#)

30 [‘AUKUS still faces red tape, Australian officials say’, Defense News, 8 December 2022](#)

31 [Q243](#)

that “if we want to work together, collaborate and burden share, ITAR is a barrier that is not helpful. It needs to be either removed or bypassed where appropriate.” He described progress on this as “slow but sure”.³²

25. Other challenges exist beyond defence industrial co-operation. The decisions taken in the 2021 Defence Command Paper were based around the modernisation of the UK Armed Forces. Those decisions are now being re-examined as a result of the changing strategic context and current economic challenges.³³ The Secretary of State explained to the House of Lords International Relations and Defence Committee that inflation and unfavourable foreign exchange rates had affected the MOD’s ability to implement the large capital project commitments in the Defence Command Paper (Type 26 and Type 31 frigates; Challenger 3 upgrade; and Ajax).³⁴ He told us that the inflationary and foreign exchange pressures on his budget for the next two years was £8 billion.³⁵

26. The NAO have also raised concerns about the impact of inflation and foreign exchange rates on the Equipment Plan—in their latest assessment they note that of the £242.3 billion Equipment Plan 2022–23, £33 billion is in US Dollars and £13 billion is in Euros. At the time the cost of the Equipment Plan was assessed (31 March 2022), the exchange rate of the Pound against the Dollar was \$1.31 to the Pound and the Euro was €1.18 to the pound.³⁶ On 20 January 2023, it was \$1.23 to the Pound and €1.14 to the Pound.³⁷ The NAO notes that the MOD includes within the Plan a ‘worst-case scenario’ by which the Plan could increase in cost, based on a low of \$1.26 against the Pound. As the NAO notes, the exchange rate has been consistently below that since June 2022.³⁸ We have sought further information from the MOD on how the Department is dealing with this since November 2022 but the only response has been that the Department “has built appropriate levels of contingency and risk to protect our budget”.³⁹

27. The UK clearly has some difficult decisions to make about investments in the modernisation of capabilities as a result of current levels of inflation and unfavourable foreign exchange rates. Whilst it is vital to maintain some sort of technology sharing with the US, UK efforts to develop innovative technological solutions with allies should also look wider afield.

28. The UK should explore the value of linking contracts to increase UK exports to the US and lobby the US Administration to reduce the regulatory burdens placed on UK defence companies.

32 Q243

33 Oral Evidence taken by the House of Lords International Relations and Defence Committee on 1 November 2022, HL (2022–23) 124, [Q173](#)

34 Oral Evidence taken by the House of Lords International Relations and Defence Committee on 1 November 2022, HL (2022–23) 124, [Q175](#)

35 Q275

36 Financial Times, [Historical Markets Data](#), 31 March 2022

37 Financial Times, [Historical Markets Data](#), 20 January 2023

38 National Audit Office, [The Equipment Plan 2022 to 2032](#), HC 907 29 November 2022, p28; p36

39 [Letter](#), dated 8 February 2023, from the Permanent Secretary to the Chair, in relation to the MOD Main Estimates and Memorandum for 2022–23

Implications for the US/UK relationship of the Afghanistan withdrawal

29. In February 2020, the Doha Agreement⁴⁰ was signed after 14 months of talks between US officials and the Taliban. The Agreement provided for the withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan, the removal of US sanctions on the Taliban and US support for the removal of UN sanctions against the Taliban and a prisoner swap between the Afghan Government and the Taliban. In return the Taliban committed to not providing safe haven for Al Qaeda or other extremist terror groups.⁴¹

30. At the point the Doha Agreement was signed, there were 13,000 US troops and 8,500 NATO (including 1,100 British troops) in Afghanistan. Under the Agreement, the withdrawal of US and NATO troops was agreed over a timetable of 14 months⁴² despite no NATO officials, nor national representatives of the NATO troops deployed, being involved in the Agreement. The Agreement was subsequently discussed—after it had been finalised—by NATO Foreign and Defence Ministers.⁴³ On 13 April 2021, the Biden Administration announced that it would proceed with the withdrawal of US troops, setting a deadline of 11 September 2021.⁴⁴ Despite the 457 British Armed Forces deaths in service and the £27.7 billion spent on Operations Herrick and Toral combined,⁴⁵ the Secretary of State told us that “The United States ... took a decision over the period to draw down. ... We were not given a veto or a say on the levels that the US announced in their contingency”.⁴⁶

31. The Secretary of State also made reference to a confidential annex to the Doha Agreement which placed conditions upon the Taliban (although these were later lifted).⁴⁷ Media reporting has suggested that the confidential annex was not shared with the UK Government and instead requests had to be made via the UK military to the US military for a briefing on what it covered.⁴⁸

32. The outcome of the Doha Agreement was the return of the Taliban to power in a country where the UK lost 457 service personnel and the MOD assessed that it had spent £27.7 billion on Operations Herrick and TORAL. We examine the decisions made in relation to the Doha Agreement more fully in our Report on Afghanistan. However, it is clear that the signing of the Doha Agreement served domestic US Administration priorities of the time. The absence of other NATO Allies and the Afghan Government at the Doha negotiations meant that decisions taken did not necessarily reflect the interests of all involved.

33. Lord Darroch told us lack of consultation had been a “defining feature of the Trump Administration”—something which was not just a UK complaint but also raised by other European Allies.⁴⁹ Whilst we were in Washington in October 2021 (and therefore prior

40 [The Doha Agreement](#)

41 [Afghan conflict: US and Taliban sign deal to end 18-year war](#), BBC News, 29 February 2020

42 [British and US troops home in 14 months under Taliban peace deal](#), The Telegraph, 29 February 2020

43 Oral evidence taken on Tuesday 26 October 2021, HC (2021–2022) 699, [Q2](#)

44 [Afghanistan: All foreign troops must leave by deadline - Taliban](#), BBC News, 5 July 2021

45 Defence Committee, Fifth Report of Session 2022–23, [Withdrawal from Afghanistan](#), HC 725, para 11

46 Oral evidence taken on Tuesday 26 October 2021, HC (2021–2022) 699, [Q2](#)

47 Oral evidence taken on Tuesday 26 October 2021, HC (2021–2022) 699, [Q2](#)

48 [US kept Britain in dark over deal that led Taliban back to power](#), The Sunday Times, 14 August 2022

49 Oral evidence taken on 2 February 2021 HC (19–21) 1187, [Q7](#)

to the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine) we heard from our American interlocuters about their concerns with the UK's lack of access to US internal decision-making discussions with the new Biden Administration.

34. The lack of consultation by consecutive US Administrations on the Doha Agreement led to public criticism of the US from NATO Allies following the fall of Kabul.⁵⁰ In Washington, we were told that US decision makers had been surprised at how much goodwill had been lost. Lord Robertson thought that this surprise had caused the Administration to reassess its approach towards Allies and partners, something which was then reaffirmed by the Russian build up and full-scale invasion of Ukraine:

Clearly, the withdrawal from Afghanistan was not NATO's finest hour. What it did was to underline a degree of internal lack of cohesion and a lack of consultation. ... The Ukraine experience has proved to be the exact opposite, because the West has now woken up and come together.... I think the shock effect of Ukraine has welded the Americans now to the future of Europe in a way that we could not have possibly imagined six months ago. The lessons of Afghanistan and the exit from Afghanistan, combined with Ukraine, mean that [NATO is] now much more of a coherent security organisation.⁵¹

35. The US approach on Ukraine has indeed provided a stark contrast to the approach on Afghanistan. At the press conference following the January 2022 NATO-Russia Council meeting, the Secretary General welcomed the level of US consultation, noting that the United States consulted with Allies both before and after the bilateral talks with Russia in Geneva and that US Deputy Secretary Wendy Sherman had spent significant amounts of time engaging with NATO Allies.⁵² The US have also consistently adhered to their commitment "to the principle nothing about Ukraine without Ukraine ... nothing about Europe without Europe"⁵³ made prior to the Russian full-scale invasion.

36. In addition, the US (and UK) declassification and dissemination of intelligence in advance of the Russian advance was unprecedented. It increased public awareness (and support) and played a role in combatting the false narratives which the Russians were propagating.⁵⁴ UK Defence Intelligence started publishing 'Intelligence Updates' in advance of the Russian full-scale invasion on 17 February,⁵⁵ and a tweet from 18 February 2022 which suggested the potential axis of invasion was widely circulated.⁵⁶ The MOD's twitter feed has been publishing a daily update on Ukraine since February 2022.⁵⁷ Commander Strategic Command (who is also the Chief of Defence Intelligence) has said that the way that information and intelligence could be declassified and shared with allies, partners and the public had had a significant effect. The publication of information which countered

50 [Nato allies urge rethink on alliance after Biden's 'unilateral' Afghanistan exit, Financial Times, 17 August 2021](#)

51 Q39; Q63

52 [Press conference](#) by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg following the meeting of the NATO-Russia Council, 12 January 2022

53 White House [Fact Sheet](#) on diplomatic engagement with European Allies and partners ahead of talks with Russia, 10 January 2022

54 [US and UK intelligence warnings vindicated by Russian invasion, The Guardian, 24 February 2022](#); [Intelligence disclosure in the Ukraine crisis and beyond, War on the Rocks, 1 March 2022](#); [U.S. intelligence didn't stop the invasion of Ukraine, but it had positive effects, NPR, 25 February 2022](#)

55 [Ministry of Defence on Twitter, 17 February 2022](#)

56 [Ukraine crisis brings British intelligence out of the shadows, The Guardian, 18 February 2022](#)

57 [Ministry of Defence on Twitter, 26 February 2022](#)

Russian narratives by disproving them—for instance, showing that troops had been re-positioned, rather than withdrawn from Ukrainian borders as claimed by Russia—meant that citizens in Western nations had been supportive in their Governments’ decision to assist the Ukrainians. This in turn had allowed those Governments to provide Ukraine with the capabilities they needed to defend themselves.⁵⁸

37. The US have engaged widely with allies and partners on Ukraine. Although this did not deter President Putin from his course of action, it helped to build a unified response. The US is to be commended for its approach in declassifying intelligence and combatting Russian narratives. UK Defence Intelligence have also kept the public informed about the situation on the ground in Ukraine. Their clear and sustained analysis is partly responsible for continuing public support for Ukraine.

38. We welcome the US public commitment to greater engagement with partners and allies. *However, the UK Government needs to encourage the US to engage at the planning stage for any operations that could have an impact on the UK or UK armed forces.*

58 Speech by General Sir Jim Hockenhull KBE ADC Gen, [How open-source intelligence has shaped the Russia-Ukraine war](#), 7 November 2022

3 The UK-NATO relationship

The UK's contribution to NATO

39. In the March 2021 Integrated Review, the Government reaffirmed its “commitment to leadership in NATO, supporting its adaptation to threats above and below the threshold of war under international law”.⁵⁹ The UK commits most of its military capability to NATO—in 2021, around 70%.⁶⁰ Both Professor Rees, Professor of International Security at University of Nottingham, and Lord Robertson former UK Defence Secretary and NATO Secretary General, talked about the importance of UK leadership within NATO.⁶¹ When we visited NATO HQ and spoke with NATO and Allied representatives, the message that we received was that the UK acts as a ‘thought leader’ and that its role in facilitating and mediating political discussion was widely acknowledged and respected. General Everard, former DSACEUR and current lead senior mentor for Allied Command Operations at NATO, noted that the UK is well represented by UK Armed Forces personnel at NATO:

If you count a four-star as four stars, we are somewhere over 50 stars’ worth of people in the alliance somewhere, and we have always been on the golden step in terms of our fill rate for NATO. When I was DSACEUR, it was always over 90%. It is about 93%⁶² today, which is probably better than any of the other big players.⁶³

40. However, there are gaps in the capabilities the UK has committed to NATO within its defence planning process, partly as a result of delays in the modernisation of land capabilities⁶⁴ and partly as a result of a change in the UK’s approach to how it fights in a conflict (which means that the UK no longer considers the capabilities which it has previously agreed to provide to NATO to be vital to its warfighting structure).⁶⁵

41. The Secretary of State has acknowledged that there is a divergence between what is expected of the UK and what it can provide given that the UK has not had a fully deployable armoured division since 1991:

For many decades, we have not really delivered what we said on the tin. ... If I look on paper at the current armoured division we have, it is lacking in all sorts of areas. It is lacking in deep fires, in medium range air defence, in its electronic warfare and signals intelligence capability, in its modern digital and sensor-to-shooter capability. On top of that, it is probably lacking in weapons stocks.⁶⁶

However, he questioned whether modern warfighting meant that expectations of what constituted an armoured division might need to evolve.

59 [Global Britain in a Competitive Age: the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy](#), 16 March 2021, p72

60 Oral evidence taken on 2 February 2021 HC (19–21) 1187, [Q34](#)

61 Oral evidence taken on 2 March 2021 HC (19–21) 1187, [Q51](#); Q54

62 This is a percentage of how many jobs in NATO allocated to the UK that the UK supplies personnel for. Therefore, of the 100% of jobs NATO asks the UK to ‘fill’, the UK has filled 93% of them.

63 Q121

64 Q297

65 Q121

66 Oral Evidence taken by the House of Lords International Relations and Defence Committee on 1 November 2022, HL (2022–23) 124, [Q183](#)

42. The UK also plays a role in setting expectations on defence spending. General Everard warned that if the UK failed to fulfil its pledges, it could provide cover for European Allies to do so as well:

NATO looks to its big allies to lead by example. The UK, France, Germany and Italy are the ones that need to stand up. If you lead, others will follow. If you do not lead, everybody will hide under the hedge.⁶⁷

As noted above, there are significant pressures on the Defence budget as a result of inflationary and foreign exchange pressures. Although the Defence Secretary told us he was planning to ask for an increase in defence spending to counteract those pressures, it remains to be seen whether that will be forthcoming.⁶⁸

43. There is also a danger that any backsliding from the UK during discussions on additional pledges that may be needed will undermine the commitment of other NATO Allies. When we asked the Secretary of State whether he would be able to meet current and increased NATO commitments, he told us that in order to do so it was vital to fund the modernisation commitments in the Defence Command Paper. In particular, that required continued commitment to the modernisation of the land component because it was 15 years behind its peer competitors. He noted that the commitment had been £23 billion in electronic warfare, deep fires, Boxer, Ajax and Challenger 3 but that inflation could have an impact on that.⁶⁹

44. When we questioned why a second Battle Group, ‘surged’ to Estonia after the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine, had been brought back to the UK despite the continued threat, the Secretary of State explained that personnel had been deployed to Bulgaria and Poland, and that the Battle Group remaining in Estonia had been provided with increased firepower and defensive capabilities.⁷⁰

45. Dr Rob Johnson and General Everard questioned the utility of the current expectations of UK’s ability to deploy to continental Europe. For them—and for Heather Conley, then Senior Vice President for Europe, Eurasia and the Arctic, and Director, Europe, Russia and Eurasia Programme, CSIS—the UK’s focus ought to be on the High North.⁷¹ As part of NATO’s recent political and military developments,⁷² the Secretary of State explained forthcoming changes to the NATO Defence Planning Process, in order to align with SACEUR’s strategic plans. This would lead to NATO regional plans allowing the commitments made by nations under the NATO Defence Planning Process to be allocated to specific areas. These plans are due to be finalised in April 2023 and, alongside requirements on readiness, will form the basis of the response to acts of aggression on NATO territory.⁷³ We explore the new plans in more detail below.⁷⁴

67 Q204

68 Q275

69 Q297

70 Q295

71 Oral evidence taken on 2 March 2021 HC (19–21) 1187, [Q52](#); Q205; Oral evidence taken on 2 March 2021 HC (19–21) 1187, [Q46](#)

72 These are discussed in detail in ‘The future direction of NATO’ below.

73 Q287

74 Paragraphs 55–56

The High North and the JEF

46. The 2021 Defence Command Paper emphasised that the High North (and “maintaining security in defence of the North Atlantic”) is an area of strategic importance to the UK.⁷⁵ The MOD’s 2022 paper ‘The UK’s Defence Contribution in the High North’ explained that the region is important to the UK’s environment, prosperity, energy supply and security.⁷⁶ It further noted that Russia has increasingly militarised its Arctic territory, expanding military activity in the region and investing in military infrastructure there. It has established a new Northern Joint Strategic Command, reopened Cold War-era bases above the Arctic Circle and invested in Arctic-capable equipment. Furthermore Russian submarine activity in the North Atlantic has reached Cold War levels. The MOD explained that:

While this activity is not, in and of itself, a breach of international law, it presents challenges which impact upon the interests of the UK, our Allies and partners, and the inhabitants of the Arctic, and to which we must be vigilant and prepared to respond.⁷⁷

47. The MOD also warned that China is increasing investment and activity in the region. It is pursuing a Polar Silk Road as an extension of the Belt and Road Initiative, supported by a proposed range of Arctic infrastructure and capabilities, including:

investing in ports in Arctic nations, undersea cables, and a nuclear-powered icebreaker, as well as a commitment to increasing “practical co-operation” with the Arctic states.⁷⁸

48. To ensure the “stability and security” in the High North, the UK Government gives its objectives as:

- protecting its and allies national interests (including critical national infrastructure) in the region;
- ensuring the UK’s freedom “to navigate and operate” in the region including through reinforcing the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea; and
- contesting “malign and destabilising” behaviour in the region.

As well as improving the UK’s own understanding, profile and defence capabilities in the High North, the MOD committed to working with regional Allies and partners including NATO and the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF).⁷⁹

49. The document notes that the UK whilst ensuring that the JEF maintains an ability to operate in the High North through “engaging regularly, developing common plans, improving interoperability, and conducting activity”, the UK will also “advocate for NATO to take a more proactive approach to the High North”.⁸⁰ General Everard noted that the JEF was an area where the UK showed leadership:

75 Ministry of Defence, [Defence in a Competitive Age](#), 22 March 2021, p20

76 Ministry of Defence, [The UK’s defence contribution in the High North](#), 29 March 2022, p4

77 Ministry of Defence, [The UK’s defence contribution in the High North](#), 29 March 2022, p5

78 Ministry of Defence, [The UK’s defence contribution in the High North](#), 29 March 2022, p5

79 Ministry of Defence, [The UK’s defence contribution in the High North](#), 29 March 2022, p8

80 Ministry of Defence, [The UK’s defence contribution in the High North](#), 29 March 2022, p10

You look at where the UK has greatest influence, knowledge and experience, and you look at the membership of the Joint Expeditionary Force. It is the Baltics, Sweden, Finland and Norway.⁸¹

Although Finland and Sweden applied for NATO accession in 2022, they are the only members of the JEF who are not currently part of NATO. The JEF has therefore best enabled Finland and Sweden to exercise, plan and interoperate with a group of other countries (who are using NATO processes and standards) on a regular basis.⁸²

50. The JEF responded quickly to the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine.⁸³ Meetings, previously between defence chiefs or defence ministers, took place between state leaders over February and March 2022.⁸⁴ On 14 March, leaders and representatives of JEF nations agreed to “co-ordinate, supply and fund” more arms and other equipment requested by Ukraine. And they declared that the JEF, through exercises and “forward defence”, would seek to deter further Russian aggression—including provocations outside Ukraine that might stymie NATO or fall under the Article 5 threshold.⁸⁵ A Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) Commentary described the JEF nations as “at the forefront of providing military, economic, and humanitarian aid to Ukraine”. President Zelensky conveyed his gratitude when addressing the JEF leaders, saying, “Our people will always remember who came to the rescue at the most difficult time for our state”.⁸⁶ The Secretary of State has praised the JEF, noting assistance from JEF members to the UK Armed Forces in training members of the Ukrainian Armed Forces in Cumbria and Yorkshire.⁸⁷

51. The UK makes an impressive contribution to NATO. We welcome the decision within the Integrated Review of 2021 to ensure that the UK maintained its prominent role in NATO. However, we are concerned that if the Government fails to protect the defence budget from inflationary and foreign exchange pressures combined with the withdrawal of a battle group from Estonia, it will send the wrong message to Allies and adversaries alike. Unity is vital in understanding what the threat is and how best to counter it.

52. The Joint Expeditionary Force has proven itself to be effective, acting as a force multiplier for both its constituent countries and NATO. *We have heard that the UK should focus its efforts within NATO on the High North. Given that UK Defence is calling for greater NATO focus on the High North, it appears obvious that under the SACEUR’s new regional plans the UK should be looking to reinforce the borders of its JEF counterparts. We therefore recommend that the Government ensure that it has the necessary personnel and capabilities available to lead NATO operations in the High North.*

The future direction of NATO

53. It is astonishing to think that NATO regarded Russia as a ‘strategic partner’ as recently as its 2010 Strategic Concept. Following Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014,

81 Q198

82 Q311

83 [Boris Johnson tells The Economist about his anti-Russia coalition, The Economist, 19 March 2022](#)

84 [The Joint Expeditionary Force: Global Britain in Northern Europe?, CSIS, 25 March 2022](#)

85 [Boris Johnson tells The Economist about his anti-Russia coalition, The Economist, 19 March 2022](#)

86 [The Joint Expeditionary Force: Global Britain in Northern Europe?, CSIS, 25 March 2022](#)

87 Q311

NATO's approach has evolved. At its 2014 summit NATO developed a 'Readiness Action Plan' (with additional commitments added at later summits). The Readiness Action Plan initially resulted in (amongst other measures) air policing in the Baltic Sea, Romania and Iceland and an increase to the NATO Response Force.⁸⁸ In 2016, the enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) Battlegroups which are based in the three Baltic States and Poland were added to the Readiness Action Plan⁸⁹ and in 2018, at the Brussels summit, NATO launched a NATO Readiness Initiative (NRI) to ensure that more high-quality, combat-capable national forces at high readiness can be made available to NATO.⁹⁰

54. In 2019, the NATO military committee⁹¹ agreed a new (classified) military strategy. That was followed in 2020 by the NATO concept for the Deterrence and defence of the Euro-Atlantic Area (often referred to as the DDA) which was endorsed by all NATO Defence Ministers. The DDA set out a framework of deterrent activities in peacetime (known as SACEUR's Strategic Directive—SSD) and the response in times crisis and conflict (known as SACEUR's AOR-wide Strategic Plan—SASP). According to SACEUR the plans have been created to allow for rapid changes of approach as situations develop, providing military coherence at tactical, operational and strategic levels, across all domains and allow for actions to be undertaken during “peacetime competition”, the initial stages of a crisis and full-scale conflict.⁹²

55. The NATO regional plans (mentioned above) which will have assigned national roles and capabilities sit under the SASP.⁹³ Alongside those regional plans are domain-specific plans which are:

executed by theatre component commanders on behalf of SACEUR, separate from joint force commanders, who are running regional plans ... You are going to have modern C2. You are going to have two simultaneously supporting commanders in the same battlespace.⁹⁴

General Everard explained the importance of the work which had been done since 2014: “There is a plan ... that defends and secures the Euro-Atlantic area sensibly.”⁹⁵

56. In February 2022, the NATO Response Force was activated following the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine.⁹⁶ Jim Townsend, Senior Fellow, Centre for a New American Security, and President, Atlantic Treaty Association saw this as an important show of unity amongst NATO members, achieving something he had not thought possible.⁹⁷ General Everard explained that the structures NATO had implemented post-2014 had allowed this to happen relatively seamlessly:

88 NATO Fact Sheet, [NATO's Readiness Action Plan](#), February 2015

89 NATO's military response to Russia: November 2016 update, [Briefing Paper CBP7276, House of Commons Library, 3 November 2016](#)

90 [Jan Broeks, The necessary adaptation of NATO's military instrument of power, NATO Defense College Policy Brief, June 2019](#)

91 Made up of the Military Representative from each NATO member country plus a Chair elected by the Committee.

92 Speech by SACEUR, [Keynote Address - Atlantic Council Commanders Series](#), 9 June 2021

93 Q287

94 Q145

95 Q145

96 Statement by SACEUR, [The activation of the NATO Response Force, 25 February 2022](#)

97 Q5

Because Ukraine was not in NATO, NATO did not need to make it a crisis, which means it did not need to activate the NATO crisis response mechanism, which meant that no difficult decisions came up to the NAC [North Atlantic Council]. They could just empower SACEUR, under the authority he had in his strategic directive, to get on with it.⁹⁸

As a result, SACEUR “had about 42,000 troops under his direct command”, under a framework that was not reactive but rather “worked out post-2014 and endorsed in 2019”.⁹⁹

57. The Secretary of State told the House of Lords International Relations and Defence Committee that:

NATO has woken up. ... The question for NATO will be how to defend Europe from Russia and what part we all have to play in it. ... Fundamentally, we will all have to invest. I think 17 countries of NATO have increased their defence budget since the invasion. That is quite telling. The Poles are going to go over to 3%. The French, I saw last week, are pledging to increase their defence budget by 26%. That challenge about the cultural change is real, and Britain should not think that it should be exempt from that. But we will have to see how the plans fight a 21st-century, rather than a 20th-century, war. That is going to be interesting.¹⁰⁰

58. Lord Robertson set out the wider impact of the Russian full-scale invasion on NATO:

Putin’s objective to stop any further NATO enlargement has now produced the opposite effect, with Finland and Sweden, and even Switzerland, realising the benefits of collective defence. He wanted to split off the United States from Europe, and he has welded them together. He wanted to divide Europe, which he thinks is a dissolute group of nations, and he has united them as never before. He wanted to stop the mobilisation of troops in the areas and the new countries, and the exact opposite has taken place.¹⁰¹

Finland and Sweden

59. Finland and Sweden applied for membership of NATO in May 2022 and signed the accession protocols at the start of July.¹⁰² The next stage in the process of accession is ratification. At present, 28 of the 30 NATO countries have ratified Swedish and Finnish membership. Those outstanding are Hungary and Türkiye.¹⁰³ Once those members have ratified their membership, Finland and Sweden will be invited to accede and, having done so, will be full members of NATO. However, the May 2023 elections in Türkiye are expected to delay ratification there.¹⁰⁴

98 Q193

99 Q193

100 Oral Evidence taken by the House of Lords International Relations and Defence Committee on 1 November 2022, HL (2022–23) 124, [Q182](#)

101 Q28

102 NATO press notice, [NATO Allies sign Accession Protocols for Finland and Sweden, 5 July 2022](#)

103 [When will Sweden and Finland join NATO? Tracking the ratification process across the Alliance, Atlantic Council \[accessed 20 January 2023\]](#)

104 [Explainer: Why is Turkey blocking Sweden and Finland NATO membership, Reuters, 25 January 2023](#)

60. The addition of Finland and Sweden will not result in substantial changes within their militaries as both countries had already adopted NATO standards and had increased defence co-operation with NATO since the annexation of Crimea in 2014. However, it will expand NATO's geographic area, not just in terms of an expanded land border but also in the High North. A US think tank, the Centre for a New American Security (CNAS) have noted the strategic importance to Russia of the Kola Peninsula, directly east of northern Finland, and have suggested that "the presence of another NATO country on its borders is likely to heighten Russia's sense of threat to its Northern Fleet assets" which include ballistic missile submarines which form the basis of Russia's nuclear deterrence and attack submarines and surface fleet with cruise missile capabilities which would be tasked with destroying US naval vessels intent on resupplying Europe in the event of a conflict.¹⁰⁵

61. There have been concerns that Russia would react aggressively to the accession of Finland and Sweden to NATO. As a result, the UK signed security agreements with both countries in May 2022 and there has been an increase in UK military engagement in the region.¹⁰⁶

62. We visited Finland in October to discuss their accession to NATO. We heard that the decision to join NATO had been led by the population and that, despite the focus of the Finnish Army previously being on territorial defence, Finland was expecting to be a security provider, rather than consumer. We were told that Finland could raise a larger Army than Germany and that it has a significant will to fight—a recent survey had found that 80% of the population were willing to take up arms if the country was invaded, even if the outcome were uncertain. Joining NATO would require a cultural shift within Finland from a focus on defending their country alone to defending with Allies. We heard that Finland will also need to learn how to engage in 'strategic signalling' as the Finnish mindset is one of "Do, don't say". Finland has been clear that it has no pre-conditions as to what it will or won't do as part of NATO as it wants any discussion on forces and capabilities to be based on an understanding what NATO requires.

63. The Secretary of State welcomed the prospect of Finland and Sweden becoming part of NATO, noting that their ratification will mean that the whole of that area—bordered by Russia from the High North, down to the Baltic Sea—would be within NATO territory, therefore allowing for NATO exercises and operations to take place without the barriers which currently exist. He pointed to the Russian Northern Fleet as a security threat to the UK and its Critical National Infrastructure which could be more effectively countered following the accession of Finland and Sweden.¹⁰⁷ When he gave evidence to the House of Lords International Relations and Defence Committee, he acknowledged that the ratification of Finland and Sweden had the potential to change the UK's focus in NATO given the work it does in the High North and that "that might become our main access, rather than the German plains, as was traditional".¹⁰⁸

105 [How Finnish and Swedish NATO Accession Could Shape the Future Russian Threat, CNAS Transatlantic Forum on Russia, January 2023](#)

106 Q302

107 Q312

108 Q174

64. The Secretary of State acknowledged that the UK and Türkiye have a close defence co-operation relationship. When we asked him whether he had raised the issue with his Turkish counterpart, he responded that he was “optimistic” about the likelihood of Türkiye ratifying the accession of Sweden and Finland.¹⁰⁹

65. We welcome the likely accession of Finland and Sweden to NATO. We recommend that the Government continue to engage with interlocutors in both Hungary and Türkiye to lobby for ratification in the near future.

Capabilities available to NATO ...

66. The shortfall in equipment and personnel made available to NATO by its members have long been a source of concern. The Secretary of State has recognised that NATO will need to ensure that any Allied Force is, at least, interoperable if not fully integrated, given how badly the Russian Armed Forces have fared in Ukraine.¹¹⁰ General Barrons, former Head of Joint Force Command, told us that many of the problems faced by the Russian Armed Forces have been as a result of an inability of their armour, infantry, artillery, engineers and logistics to co-operate and communicate.¹¹¹ Sir Adam Thomson, Director of the European Leadership Network and former UK Permanent Representative to NATO, noted that during his tenure at NATO, there had been 21 identified military capability shortfalls, all of which were European shortfalls.¹¹² General Everard suggested that technological advances might see an exacerbation of the current situation whereby European NATO powers are reliant upon US enablers:

Some 90% of air refuellers are provided by the Americans within the alliance, as are 65% of fast air and 65% of suppression of enemy air defences. The American dominance is so huge that other allies are struggling to catch up. This will come into play again when we move into multidomain operations as the US establishes a system that the rest of us might struggle to keep up with.¹¹³

Heather Conley agreed this was an issue and suggested that the UK ought to play a role ensuring that NATO forces were more balanced by working with both the US on high-end capabilities whilst also ensuring that there is a way for the low-end capabilities of some Allies to be interoperable with US and UK forces.¹¹⁴

67. Jim Townsend thought that NATO was starting to address some of these issues through various initiatives, including the Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic (DIANA) which has one of its European headquarters in the UK.¹¹⁵ However, he thought leadership was required (from both the US and the UK) in order to give Allies a political push to invest in high-end capabilities which would allow for integration on the battlefield.¹¹⁶ Spektrum RDS also thought that the UK could play a role by conducting and

109 Q302

110 Oral Evidence taken by the House of Lords International Relations and Defence Committee on 1 November 2022, HL (2022–23) 124, [Q178](#)

111 Q74

112 Q31

113 Q144

114 Q78

115 [UK to host world-leading NATO Defence Innovation Headquarters](#), Ministry of Defence, 5 April 2022

116 Q18

implementing “a multifaceted approach” including “establishing a plan to integrate minor NATO nations and provide a higher return to industry to smaller nations to improve general relations and cooperation partnerships”.¹¹⁷

68. Conversely, both Dr Jamie Shea, President, Centre for War Studies, University of Southern Denmark, and Associate Fellow, Chatham House, and General Everard were more sceptical of NATO’s role in ensuring that NATO members had the innovative technology which would allow them to defeat adversaries who have consistently been investing in improving military capabilities. General Everard noted that NATO had tried to address interoperability issues through the process of Standardisation Agreements which specify the technical requirements for various pieces of equipment but that “the first NATO standard was on communications, and people cannot speak to each other, so it has not worked that well”.¹¹⁸ Dr Shea felt that NATO did not have a culture of innovation¹¹⁹ and whilst he welcomed DIANA, he noted that it had a budget of \$1 billion compared to the EU’s budget for the European defence fund which “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.”¹²⁰ He felt that if NATO could leverage its European Allies to utilise that funding for NATO priorities, that would be more effective. We examine the role of the EU below.

69. The MOD told us that the UK was actively engaged with both NATO and the US to ensure that interoperability is integral to all current and future capabilities, through the NATO Federated Mission Networking (FMN) initiative.¹²¹ The MOD also cited the UK’s engagement with NATO’s Emerging and Disruptive Technology (EDT)¹²² Roadmap and Strategy and its role in driving progress by drawing on national work and expertise. This included providing a paper on using EDTs to the Conference of National Armaments Directors and providing experts (academic and government) to help develop NATO’s strategy on EDTs. In addition, there are other UK experts working on science and technology at NATO, such as Dr Bryan Wells, NATO’s chief scientist, and Professor Deeph Chana, chair of the NATO EDT Advisory Board.¹²³

70. The MOD noted that the UK has “played a leading role in shaping the NATO AI strategy, contributed expertise to the NATO Quantum workshops and conducted a conference for UK industry and academia to explore how they can support NATO in maintaining the Alliance’s technological edge”. The MOD expressed hope that “mutually beneficial opportunities” could be found to “share expertise, shape strategies and modernise the NATO Defence Planning Process” as the UK pushes for reforms in line with the introduction of SACEUR’s regional plans.¹²⁴ During our visit to NATO HQ, it was clear how important UK engagement is in the science and technology structure there. We welcome the work being done in ensuring that EDTs are being adopted responsibly,

117 [UNA004](#) Spektrum RDS

118 Q153

119 Q19

120 Q22

121 [UNA011](#) MOD

122 Listed as being: Artificial Intelligence, Data and Computing, Autonomy, Quantum Technologies, Biotechnology and Human Enhancement, Hypersonic Technologies and Space

123 [UNA011](#) MOD

124 [UNA011](#) MOD; Oral Evidence taken by the House of Lords International Relations and Defence Committee on 1 November 2022, HL (2022–23) 124, [Q183](#)

at the speed of relevance. The threat posed by Russia, and indeed China, highlights the importance of maintaining NATO's ability to draw on and utilise Allied Armed Forces who can co-operate, communicate and fight effectively on a 21st century battlefield.

... and the role of the EU

71. Jim Townsend and Dr Jamie Shea felt that events in Ukraine had led to an acceptance within Europe that any military defence of the continent should be co-ordinated through NATO rather than the EU.¹²⁵ The January 2023 'Joint Declaration on EU-NATO Cooperation by the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission, and the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization' noted that

NATO remains the foundation of collective defence for its Allies and essential for Euro Atlantic security. We recognise the value of a stronger and more capable European defence that contributes positively to global and transatlantic security and is complementary to, and interoperable with NATO.¹²⁶

72. Agreeing with Dr Shea's view on the potential benefits of utilising EU funding, Jim Townsend told us that the EU had a vital part to play in strengthening the defence capabilities of European Allies. He cited PESCO and its processes as one of the programmes which NATO members could use to improve their military capabilities. However, he noted that this had to be done "in collaboration and co-operation with NATO" in order to avoid contradictory priorities for capability development.¹²⁷

73. The UK has also engaged with the EU bilaterally, applying to join the PESCO Military Mobility project. The MOD told us that the project was designed to coordinate and align NATO and EU military mobility requirements, national activity and EU regulations. The UK joined in order to resolve "any impediments to moving military personnel and assets across Europe at pace". The MOD explained that by joining the project, it would allow the UK to shape relevant EU rules and requirements, including for cross-border military transport procedures and transport infrastructure, as well as helping to drive co-operation and coherence between the EU and NATO.¹²⁸

74. While we support the Government's intention to join PESCO, we have noted elsewhere that the UK's expulsion from the EU's Galileo programme was a deeply regrettable decision by the European Commission that was harmful to UK security interests.¹²⁹ It remains to be seen whether the EU's priorities have been clarified by Russian actions in Ukraine.

75. For Jim Townsend, the increase in European capabilities was particularly important given the context of the American pivot to the Pacific and the possibility that US military capabilities may be deployed in that part of the world.¹³⁰ Dr Jamie Shea agreed, noting that it was therefore vital that Germany lived up to the promises it had made on improving

125 Q20; Q22

126 [Joint Declaration on EU-NATO Cooperation by the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission, and the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 10 January 2023](#)

127 Q20

128 [UNA012](#) MOD

129 Report by the Defence Committee, Third Report of Session 2022–23, [Defence Space: through adversity to the stars?](#), HC 182, Para 83

130 Q6

its military capabilities. We visited Germany in examining this subject as part of this inquiry. We heard that a third of the €100bn promised by Chancellor Scholtz as part of his ‘Zeitenwende’ was to be spent on equipment upgrades to infantry, vehicles, planes, helicopters and naval assets. However, at the time of our visit in March 2022, the specifics had not yet been determined, and nor had the timeframe, which could have been between 4–10 years. Germany announced its intention to purchase thirty five nuclear capable F-35s¹³¹ in March 2022 but despite being told in May that talks were progressing between the German Government and defence industry, the first contracts drawing on the €100bn fund—including the one for the purchase of F-35—were only signed in December 2022, with delivery a number of years hence.¹³²

China

76. Dr Charles Kupchan, Senior Fellow, Council of Foreign Relations, former Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs and Director for European Affairs at the US National Security Council and Sir Adam Thomson thought that the US Administration’s focus on China could well prove to be a dividing line between the US and the European Allies.¹³³ However, Dr Jamie Shea argued that NATO was indeed starting to talk about the challenge posed by China as evidenced by the Secretary General meeting Wang Yi, the Chinese Foreign Minister—albeit primarily to discuss Russian actions in Ukraine—and engaging with partner countries¹³⁴ in the region. Dr Shea suggested that the biggest question was whether NATO would come to consider China as posing the same sort of threat as Russia or whether it would be viewed as its own separate entity, noting that “balancing the immediate crisis with the longer-term comprehensive security approach is going to be the challenge”.¹³⁵

77. NATO’s 2022 Strategic Concept sets out the threat posed by China and the actions which NATO will take:

The People’s Republic of China’s (PRC) stated ambitions and coercive policies challenge our interests, security and values. The PRC employs a broad range of political, economic and military tools to increase its global footprint and project power, while remaining opaque about its strategy, intentions and military build-up.¹³⁶

78. Citing the Chinese hybrid, cyber and disinformation operations which “target Allies and harm Alliance security” and attempts by the Chinese Government “to subvert the rules-based international order, including in the space, cyber and maritime domains” as threats, the Strategic Concept also criticises China’s use of “its economic leverage to create strategic dependencies and enhance its influence” and its efforts to “control key technological and industrial sectors, critical infrastructure, and strategic materials and supply chains”. NATO raises concerns that “The deepening strategic partnership between the People’s Republic of China and the Russian Federation and their mutually reinforcing

131 [Germany to buy 35 Lockheed F-35 fighter jets from U.S. amid Ukraine crisis, Reuters, 14 March 2022](#)

132 [Our tanks are kaputt, German general warns, Politico, 19 December 2022; Germany clinches \\$8 billion purchase of 35 F-35 aircraft from the US, Defense News, 14 December 2022](#)

133 Oral evidence taken on 2 February 2021 HC (19–21) 1187, Q19

134 Several Indo-Pacific countries are partners of NATO (Australia, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea) and NATO has also started a dialogue with India.

135 Q13

136 NATO, [Strategic Concept 2022, July 2022](#)

attempts to undercut the rules-based international order run counter to our values and interests”. As a result of the threat posed, NATO commits to “address the systemic challenges posed by the PRC to Euro-Atlantic security and ensure NATO’s enduring ability to guarantee the defence and security of Allies” and boost shared awareness; enhance resilience and preparedness; and protect against coercive tactics and efforts to divide the Alliance. The Strategic Concept states that NATO will “stand up for our shared values and the rules-based international order, including freedom of navigation”. However, NATO also emphasises that it remains:

open to constructive engagement with the PRC, including to build reciprocal transparency, with a view to safeguarding the Alliance’s security interests.¹³⁷

79. The January 2023 ‘Joint Declaration on EU-NATO Cooperation by the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission, and the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization’ also included language on China, acknowledging that the current: “era of growing strategic competition” and “China’s growing assertiveness” present challenges that need to be addressed.¹³⁸ The document went on to say:

NATO and the EU play complementary, coherent and mutually reinforcing roles in supporting international peace and security. ... We will further strengthen our cooperation in existing areas, and expand and deepen our cooperation to address in particular the growing geostrategic competition, resilience issues, protection of critical infrastructures, emerging and disruptive technologies, space, the security implications of climate change, as well as foreign information manipulation and interference.¹³⁹

80. The MOD told us that it worked closely with NATO and NATO Allies to “ensure our engagement with the Indo-Pacific is complementary—bilaterally, multilaterally and in small group formats”. It welcomed NATO’s increased cooperation with Asia-Pacific partners, which it said would result in deeper political engagement. The MOD committed to exploring possibilities for further practical cooperation where there are shared concerns, on areas ranging from cyber defence to maritime security.¹⁴⁰

81. NATO has been revitalised by the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine—there is a unity of purpose and agreement on what the threat posed is. However, it is still in the relatively early stages of its shift to refocusing on the defence of continental Europe, and political and technological developments are required to ensure NATO maintains its technological edge.

82. We welcome NATO-EU engagement, both on China and defence capabilities, where it is complementary, rather than duplicative. We are also supportive of the UK’s application to join PESCO.

137 NATO, [Strategic Concept 2022, July 2022](#)

138 [Joint Declaration on EU-NATO Cooperation by the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission, and the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 10 January 2023](#)

139 [Joint Declaration on EU-NATO Cooperation by the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission, and the Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 10 January 2023](#)

140 [UNA011](#), MOD

4 Wider issues

83. There are areas of concern, exposed by the events in Ukraine, which go wider than the UK-US relationship and the NATO Alliance. Whilst these have not been the focus of our inquiry, we feel that it is necessary to flag them here.

Industrial capacity

84. General Richard Barrons, former Head of Joint Forces Command, told us that the trajectory of the UK Armed Forces since 1990 has been a process of reductions “in size, in investment and in the numbers of key platforms” and “the hollowing out of stockpiles, engineering, reserves and infrastructure”. He accepted that such decisions were “entirely explicable in circumstances where you face no existential threat”. However that meant that when a significant threat—like Russia—appeared, there was no spare capacity:

I hesitate to give you a yardstick but, as a rule of thumb, I would be surprised if we had munitions that would sustain high-intensity conflict for more than about a week. We already know, because many nations confronted this even in the limited air campaign over Libya, that our ability to consume these munitions is considerably greater than the ability of industry to replace them without a long lead time. If you look at the Ukrainian rate of consumption of NLAWs and Starstreaks, it is consuming missiles at a rate that would entirely deplete our stockpiles if we were able to do that, which we are not, and a rate that industry cannot keep up with.¹⁴¹

85. The war in Ukraine has demonstrated starkly the lack of defence industrial capacity available to NATO members. We heard from General Everard, former DSACEUR at NATO and current lead senior mentor for Allied Command Operations, that many Allied nations had been “supplying capability to Ukraine, including munitions, when we know from their own returns that they were at probably minimum levels of investment in those areas anyway”. He reiterated that munitions were being consumed “at an alarming rate” and that “defence industrial capacity, which has atrophied across most of the western world, is a real challenge”.¹⁴² At the February meeting of NATO Defence Ministers, the Secretary-General told reporters that it was vital that the NATO Allies consider “how to ramp up production and strengthen our defence industry to be able to provide the necessary ammunition to Ukraine and also to replenish our own stocks.”¹⁴³

86. The Minister for Defence Procurement told us that funding had been granted to the MOD in the Autumn Statement to both replenish and then increase UK ammunition stockpiles. However, this was projected to take over a decade.¹⁴⁴ The Secretary of State told the House of Lords International Relations and Defence Committee that such work could take considerable time if there were not an active production line:

It turns out that, for even the most basic munitions, the just-in-time or made-to-order supply chain, including for the NLAWs, finishes when you

141 Q93

142 Q146

143 [Doorstep statement by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg ahead of the meetings of NATO Defence Ministers, NATO, 14 February 2023](#)

144 Oral evidence taken on 11 January 2023, HC (2022–23) 987, [Q115](#)

stop buying them. Sure enough, when you try to reheat the NLAW supply chain, you discover there is a shortage of the optics or the explosives, and you have to start that all over again. That may take 18 months or whatever.¹⁴⁵

This is not just a problem for the British: when we were at NATO HQ, we were told that the waiting list for Javelin anti-tank missiles were roughly five years and a recent CSIS report found that “the number of Stingers transferred to Ukraine is roughly equal to the total number built for all non-U.S. customers in the last 20 years”.¹⁴⁶

87. Industrial production and supply chain capacity are currently two of the biggest constraints on accelerating defence programmes.¹⁴⁷ Complexity of the product, whilst often cited, is not the sole reason for the difficulties in the supply chain. For most defence industry production lines, the ecosystem of small and medium-sized companies is vital, yet many SMEs find it difficult to engage with both the MOD and Defence Primes.¹⁴⁸ Furthermore, as the Secretary of State acknowledges, the MOD’s approach of “feast or famine” when it comes to defence equipment orders can be challenging for companies who invariably need to switch to a new product once orders sustaining a production line end.¹⁴⁹

88. The Secretary of State explained to us that he saw two ways of creating resilience within the supply chain—ensuring that there was a long-term commitment to a programme (particularly in areas of complex manufacturing) or finding alternative suppliers.¹⁵⁰ However, he also warned that the whole of Government needed to be thinking about the UK skills base and skills shortages:

People have retired. Also, the requirement in the medium and high skill base around everything from tech to engineering is a real challenge. If we are going to suppress inflation and begin to secure our supply chains, we have to invest. That is FE colleges, apprenticeships.¹⁵¹

89. As well as the need for so-called STEM skills (advanced manufacturing, AI, electronics, software engineering, radar systems engineering and digital skills),¹⁵² there is a skills shortage in manufacturing.¹⁵³ Our previous work on shipbuilding has highlighted shortages in “marine welding, plating and fabrication, pipe fitting and mechanical fitting”.¹⁵⁴ This is not unique to the UK, we recently heard that one of the challenges facing

145 Oral Evidence taken by the House of Lords International Relations and Defence Committee on 1 November 2022, HL (2022–23) 124, [Q176](#)

146 [Empty Bins in a warehouse: The Challenge to the U.S. Defense Industrial Base, CSIS, January 2023](#)

147 Oral evidence taken on 11 January 2023, HC (2022–23) 987, [Q56](#)

148 [Challenges and barriers that limit the productivity and competitiveness of UK defence supply chains, RAND Europe, July 2021](#)

149 Oral Evidence taken by the House of Lords International Relations and Defence Committee on 1 November 2022, HL (2022–23) 124, [Q176](#)

150 Q250

151 Q298

152 [Challenges and barriers that limit the productivity and competitiveness of UK defence supply chains, RAND Europe, July 2021](#)

153 [Trend Deck 2021: Skills, Government Office for Science, 28 June 2021](#)

154 Report by the Defence Committee, Third Report of Session 2021–22, [“We’re going to need a bigger Navy”](#), HC 168, Para 149

US Shipyards was the attrition of welders.¹⁵⁵ However, when we asked the MOD whether it mandated that a percentage of workers employed on an acquisition programme contract were apprentices, it told us that:

Although there is no formal requirement for Apprenticeships in all MOD contracts, we do consider social welfare and prosperity factors. ... There is no set ratio, but any commitments to skills development and apprenticeships made in tenders are included as obligations in the final contract.¹⁵⁶

90. Lockheed Martin told us that:

In some areas, the UK's industrial base has atrophied over many years—notably in aspects of radar, complex and disruptive weapons, and space. The UK has the opportunity to leverage the capability development undertaken by allies, coupled with knowledge and technology transfer, onshore training, and collaborative R&D, to give it access to advanced technologies, whilst maintaining operational independence and re-growing onshore industrial capability. Moreover, MoD requirements are unlikely by themselves to sustain long-term industrial capability.¹⁵⁷

The Secretary of State acknowledged the role of international partners in increasing industrial capacity. He gave two examples:

- ammunition stocks where only significant orders could persuade defence industry to invest in their supply chains and production lines because “big orders will make them invest and lead to an increase in production rates, and that is important. If I turn up and just ask for 35, my leverage is not very big. If I turn up and ask for 3,500 NLAWs, that changes things.”¹⁵⁸
- Typhoon—the more complex the platform is, the fewer any country can buy. He noted that as a result of the original four countries creating an export market, it still had an active production line.¹⁵⁹

91. The Defence Security and Industrial Strategy paper published in March 2021 committed the Government to ensuring that its approach to defence and security acquisition and procurement is both effective and fit for purpose. It also acknowledged the need to work with allies and partners, adopting an agreed approach on international cooperation, exports and foreign investment.¹⁶⁰ Almost two years on from its publication, current events demonstrate that there is little evidence of sufficient advancement in either area.

92. It is clear that the UK and its NATO Allies have allowed ammunition stockpiles to dwindle to dangerously low levels. Whilst Russia is also facing the diminution of its stockpiles, other adversaries are able to maintain and potentially increase their own. This inability to replenish UK stockpiles therefore puts at risk not just our ability to resupply Ukraine but also to counter any threat to our own security.

155 Oral evidence taken on 17 January 2023, HC (2022–23) 183, [Q123](#)

156 [UNA012](#) MOD

157 [UNA006](#), Lockheed Martin UK

158 Q299

159 Q252

160 Ministry of Defence, [Defence and Security Industrial Strategy](#), March 2021, p 18

93. Defence industrial capacity needs to be both resilient and scalable. In order to secure supply chains the Secretary of State acknowledged that the Government needs to address skills shortages as well as committing to significant orders alongside allies to ensure that production lines are maintained in the long term and to replace stockpiles of munitions in the short term. Capacity (including redundant capacity) is also key if industry is to be able to ramp up production.

94. *It is clear that the manner in which Western Governments procure armaments is not fit for purpose. The MOD produced a strategy aimed at improving the way that it engages with industry and allies almost two years ago and yet we have been told it will take at least a decade to replenish (and then increase to a sustainable level) UK ammunition stockpiles. We have previously recommended that the Department report annually on its implementation of the Defence, Security and Industrial Strategy—a recommendation which was ignored. We therefore recommend that the Department produce an action plan of how it intends to grow defence industrial capacity and reduce the time taken to replenish UK stockpiles. We further recommend that the Department brief this and other relevant Committees on the steps required to fulfil those goals.*

95. *We welcome the Government’s acknowledgement that resilience requires investment in increasing the medium and high skills base. We recommend that the MOD enter into a joint programme of work with other relevant Government Departments to identify and remove barriers which stop UK educational institutions from preparing their students to become the workers required for the UK defence industrial base. Furthermore, we recommend that the MOD pilot a procurement approach whereby a set percentage of apprentices are required to be attached to an acquisition programme.*

The role of Deterrence

96. The Secretary of State, three days before Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, told the House that:

The Government have taken the position, as has NATO, that this is about deterrence and diplomacy, and deterrence does involve upholding the shoring up of NATO members with resilience and containment measures to make sure that Russia is contained should it make the foolish mistake of an invasion of Ukraine.¹⁶¹

Despite the many statements warning of consequences, Russia was not deterred from the full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

97. General Barrons noted that after the Cold War, the balance of nuclear and conventional forces acted as a deterrent by denial. The reduction in conventional forces left NATO with effectively only deterrence by punishment—the nuclear deterrent.¹⁶² General Everard told us that there was no longer any understanding of deterrence. Instead, the “complete fear in the alliance of provoking Putin” meant that escalation and counter-escalation cards were not played and so the Alliance continually gave ground:

We see with Putin that he just takes more and more and more. This is where, I am afraid to say, political leaders have to take brave decisions. You

161 HC Deb, 21 Feb 22, col. 31

162 Q96

are right: if you escalate and Putin challenges you, you are potentially into conflict and everything else. Modern deterrence, or even old deterrence, is not as distinctly understood as it was.¹⁶³

98. NATO's 2022 Strategic Concept noted the need to "significantly strengthen our deterrence and defence as the backbone of our Article 5 commitment to defend each other".¹⁶⁴ The Secretary General announced that:

we are making the most fundamental shift in NATO's deterrence and defence since the cold war, significantly enhancing our presence on the eastern flank, putting hundreds of thousands of troops on higher readiness and continuing to invest in cutting-edge capabilities. NATO's security guarantees leave no room for miscalculation in Moscow about our ability to defend every inch of alliance territory.¹⁶⁵

99. However, there have been criticisms of the measures announced at the Madrid summit. Sean Monaghan, a commentator at War on the Rocks noted that "although the [strategic] concept sets out a high level of ambition, NATO still has plenty of work to do to meet it". He suggested that it did not represent a transformative shift to a credible forward defence but acknowledged that the Madrid summit was "a point of departure for NATO, not the final destination. Even if some Allies remain underwhelmed, the strategic concept sets a new level of ambition and gives NATO political headroom to strengthen its posture over time".¹⁶⁶ Paul Cornish, Chief Strategist at Cityforum, was sceptical of the effectiveness of NATO's deterrence rhetoric noting that (following the annexation of Crimea) the Alliance had introduced a number of deterrence measures at its 2014 and 2016 summits and made significant pronouncements about strengthening deterrence then. He concluded that NATO needed a deterrence posture which was not a response to a crisis but rather an agreed position; that having credible capabilities and skills to back up the rhetoric was vital and that NATO member states needed to acknowledge that:

NATO is an inter-governmental organisation. NATO is not a country. It does not have its own army, navy and air force, and nor does it have its own parliament where political-military decisions (including budgets) can be deliberated. All these things come from the countries that constitute NATO's membership and it is therefore with the Alliance's members that any blame should lie for any flaws and failures in deterrence.¹⁶⁷

100. Lord Robertson agreed that to make NATO deterrence effective, what is required is a clear and unified agreement of a response to unacceptable actions with sufficient capability to back it up. He told us that "we have got to make sure that we have the instruments for making sure any adversary believes that if they cross the line, they pay a disproportionate price".¹⁶⁸ General Everard explained that "if you are to deter, you need to be able to demonstrate an unambiguous ability to defend, and to defend requires you to dominate key geographic areas and the domains of warfare simultaneously."¹⁶⁹ He

163 Q180

164 NATO, [Strategic Concept 2022, July 2022](#)

165 'The price will be high, but NATO must stay the course in Ukraine', Financial Times, 7 September 2022

166 [The Sword, the Shield, and the Hedgehog: Strengthening Deterrence in NATO's New Strategic Concept, War on the Rocks, 23 August 2022](#)

167 [Paul Cornish, NATO: Alliance for Deterrence, Cityforum, November 2022](#)

168 Q49

169 Q175

suggested that the plans which were developed by SACEUR and endorsed by the NATO political leadership in 2019 are threat-driven in that they looked at how an adversary (in this case Russia) uses its military forces and its other “paths to power” so that SACEUR can utilise NATO military forces—either as a response or a deterrent—to prevent it from achieving its objective.

101. As noted earlier in this Report, the UK has been in the lead at NATO in calling out the possibility of a Russian invasion of Ukraine, in supporting the Ukrainians in their fight and in working within NATO to achieve unity. However, the Secretary of State told us that UK land capabilities were 15 years behind the UK’s peers.¹⁷⁰ He told the House of Lords International Relations and Defence Committee that the current armoured division was “lacking in all sorts of areas” including deep fires, medium-range air defence, electronic warfare and signals intelligence capability.¹⁷¹ He explained that modernising the UK’s capabilities to create a credible force was vital for the security of the country.¹⁷² We therefore await the decisions of the IR refresh and the updated Defence Command Paper to see whether the current capability gaps are filled—and therefore can provide the deterrent which is so clearly required at the current time.

102. The events of the past year demonstrate the need for effective deterrence against aggressive actions which undermine the rules-based international order. The UK must work within NATO to ensure that there is an agreed approach and unity of action. But capable, sustainable armed forces are also a vital part of a credible deterrence. Adversaries must believe that the UK (alongside Allies and partners) will retaliate against aggressive actions which undermine the international rule of law, making aggressors pay a disproportionate price.

170 Q297

171 Oral Evidence taken by the House of Lords International Relations and Defence Committee on 1 November 2022, HL (2022–23) 124, [Q183](#)

172 Q179

Conclusions and recommendations

The UK-US Relationship

1. It is a testament to the depth of the defence, security and intelligence relationship between the UK and the US that changes in direction and political leadership in both countries have not undermined the relationship. However, that depth requires regular engagement at multiple levels. It cannot be taken for granted. (Paragraph 10)
2. The UK benefits from the UK-US relationship through its access to US military thinking, equipment and research as well as the opportunity to train and deploy alongside US counterparts. The UK-US relationship enhances the UK's security. (Paragraph 18)
3. It is also important to recognise that the US also benefits from the relationship, through the UK's expertise in niche capabilities, as well as through the leadership role that the UK plays in NATO. Furthermore, the role the UK has played in co-ordinating assistance to Ukraine has demonstrated not just to the US but the whole of NATO its reliability as an Ally and partner. (Paragraph 19)
4. The UK clearly has some difficult decisions to make about investments in the modernisation of capabilities as a result of current levels of inflation and unfavourable foreign exchange rates. *Whilst it is vital to maintain some sort of technology sharing with the US, UK efforts to develop innovative technological solutions with allies should also look wider afield.* (Paragraph 27)
5. *The UK should explore the value of linking contracts to increase UK exports to the US and lobby the US Administration to reduce the regulatory burdens placed on UK defence companies.* (Paragraph 28)
6. The outcome of the Doha Agreement was the return of the Taliban to power in a country where the UK lost 457 service personnel and the MOD assessed that it had spent £27.7 billion on Operations Herrick and TORAL. We examine the decisions made in relation to the Doha Agreement more fully in our Report on Afghanistan. However, it is clear that the signing of the Doha Agreement served domestic US Administration priorities of the time. The absence of other NATO Allies and the Afghan Government at the Doha negotiations meant that decisions taken did not necessarily reflect the interests of all involved. (Paragraph 32)
7. The US have engaged widely with allies and partners on Ukraine. Although this did not deter President Putin from his course of action, it helped to build a unified response. The US is to be commended for its approach in declassifying intelligence and combatting Russian narratives. UK Defence Intelligence have also kept the public informed about the situation on the ground in Ukraine. Their clear and sustained analysis is partly responsible for continuing public support for Ukraine. (Paragraph 37)

8. We welcome the US public commitment to greater engagement with partners and allies. *However, the UK Government needs to encourage the US to engage at the planning stage for any operations that could have an impact on the UK or UK armed forces.* (Paragraph 38)

The UK-NATO relationship

9. The UK makes an impressive contribution to NATO. We welcome the decision within the Integrated Review of 2021 to ensure that the UK maintained its prominent role in NATO. However, we are concerned that if the Government fails to protect the defence budget from inflationary and foreign exchange pressures combined with the withdrawal of a battle group from Estonia, it will send the wrong message to Allies and adversaries alike. Unity is vital in understanding what the threat is and how best to counter it. (Paragraph 51)
10. The Joint Expeditionary Force has proven itself to be effective, acting as a force multiplier for both its constituent countries and NATO. *We have heard that the UK should focus its efforts within NATO on the High North. Given that UK Defence is calling for greater NATO focus on the High North, it appears obvious that under the SACEUR's new regional plans the UK should be looking to reinforce the borders of its JEF counterparts. We therefore recommend that the Government ensure that it has the necessary personnel and capabilities available to lead NATO operations in the High North.* (Paragraph 52)
11. We welcome the likely accession of Finland and Sweden to NATO. *We recommend that the Government continue to engage with interlocutors in both Hungary and Türkiye to lobby for ratification in the near future.* (Paragraph 65)
12. NATO has been revitalised by the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine—there is a unity of purpose and agreement on what the threat posed is. However, it is still in the relatively early stages of its shift to refocusing on the defence of continental Europe, and political and technological developments are required to ensure NATO maintains its technological edge. (Paragraph 81)
13. We welcome NATO-EU engagement, both on China and defence capabilities, where it is complementary, rather than duplicative. We are also supportive of the UK's application to join PESCO. (Paragraph 82)

Wider issues

14. It is clear that the UK and its NATO Allies have allowed ammunition stockpiles to dwindle to dangerously low levels. Whilst Russia is also facing the diminution of its stockpiles, other adversaries are able to maintain and potentially increase their own. This inability to replenish UK stockpiles therefore puts at risk not just our ability to resupply Ukraine but also to counter any threat to our own security. (Paragraph 92)
15. Defence industrial capacity needs to be both resilient and scalable. In order to secure supply chains the Secretary of State acknowledged that the Government needs to address skills shortages as well as committing to significant orders alongside allies

to ensure that production lines are maintained in the long term and to replace stockpiles of munitions in the short term. Capacity (including redundant capacity) is also key if industry is to be able to ramp up production. (Paragraph 93)

16. *It is clear that the manner in which Western Governments procure armaments is not fit for purpose. The MOD produced a strategy aimed at improving the way that it engages with industry and allies almost two years ago and yet we have been told it will take at least a decade to replenish (and then increase to a sustainable level) UK ammunition stockpiles. We have previously recommended that the Department report annually on its implementation of the Defence, Security and Industrial Strategy—a recommendation which was ignored. We therefore recommend that the Department produce an action plan of how it intends to grow defence industrial capacity and reduce the time taken to replenish UK stockpiles. We further recommend that the Department brief this and other relevant Committees on the steps required to fulfil those goals. (Paragraph 94)*
17. *We welcome the Government’s acknowledgement that resilience requires investment in increasing the medium and high skills base. We recommend that the MOD enter into a joint programme of work with other relevant Government Departments to identify and remove barriers which stop UK educational institutions from preparing their students to become the workers required for the UK defence industrial base. Furthermore, we recommend that the MOD pilot a procurement approach whereby a set percentage of apprentices are required to be attached to an acquisition programme. (Paragraph 95)*
18. The events of the past year demonstrate the need for effective deterrence against aggressive actions which undermine the rules-based international order. The UK must work within NATO to ensure that there is an agreed approach and unity of action. But capable, sustainable armed forces are also a vital part of a credible deterrence. Adversaries must believe that the UK (alongside Allies and partners) will retaliate against aggressive actions which undermine the international rule of law, making aggressors pay a disproportionate price. (Paragraph 102)

Formal minutes

Tuesday 28 February 2023

Members present

Tobias Ellwood, in the Chair

Robert Courts

Dave Doogan

Mark Francois

Emma Lewell-Buck

Gavin Robinson

John Spellar

US, UK and NATO

Draft Report (Special Relationships? The US, UK and NATO), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 102 read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Sixth Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available (Standing Order No. 134).

Adjournment

Adjourned till Monday 6 March 2023 at 1.45pm.

Witnesses

The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

Tuesday 01 March 2022

Dr Jamie Shea, President, Centre for War Studies, University of Southern Denmark, Associate Fellow, Chatham House; **James J. Townsend Jr.**, Senior Fellow, Center for a New American Security (CNAS), President, Atlantic Treaty Association (ATA)

[Q1–27](#)

Tuesday 15 March 2022

Lord Robertson, former Secretary General of NATO

[Q28–66](#)

Tuesday 19 April 2022

Gen Sir Richard Barrons, former head of Joint Force Command

[Q67–120](#)

Tuesday 24 May 2022

Sir James Everard KCB CBE, former NATO Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe (DSACEUR)

[Q121–208](#)

Wednesday 02 November 2022

Rt Hon Ben Wallace MP, Secretary of State, Ministry of Defence; **Clare Cameron**, Director of Euro Atlantic, Ministry of Defence; **Major General David Eastman**, Senior Director - International Programmes, Ministry of Defence

[Q209–326](#)

Published written evidence

The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

UNA numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete.

- 1 Airwars ([UNA0007](#))
- 2 Cambridge Middle East and North Africa Forum ([UNA0002](#))
- 3 David, Mr James Charles (International Affairs Adviser / Master's Scholar, Independent / University of Groningen) ([UNA0010](#))
- 4 Gavin, Mr Robert (Consultant, Spektrum Research, Development & Support); Harrison, Mr Craig (Senior Consultant and Partner, Spektrum Research, Development & Support); Marston, Dr Hannah R. (Research Fellow, The Open University); and Turner, Mr Robbie S. (Senior Consultant and Partner, Spektrum Research, Development & Support) ([UNA0004](#))
- 5 Lockheed Martin UK ([UNA0006](#))
- 6 London, James ([UNA0003](#))
- 7 Ministry of Defence ([UNA0012](#))
- 8 Ministry of Defence ([UNA0011](#))
- 9 Patel, Jag ([UNA0001](#))
- 10 Rethinking Security ([UNA0009](#))
- 11 Thomas, Brett ([UNA0005](#))

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

All publications from the Committee are available on the [publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

Session 2022–23

Number	Title	Reference
1st	The Treatment of Contracted Staff for The MoD's Ancillary Services	HC 187
2nd	The Integrated Review, Defence in a Competitive Age and the Defence and Security Industrial Strategy	HC 180
3rd	Defence Space: through adversity to the stars?	HC 182
4th	Developments in UK Strategic Export Controls	HC 282
5th	Withdrawal from Afghanistan	HC 725
1st Special	Operation Isotrope: the use of the military to counter migrant crossings: Government response to the Committee's fourth report of Session 2021–22	HC 267
2nd Special	The Treatment of Contracted Staff for the MOD's Ancillary Services: Government Response to the Committee's First Report	HC 702
3rd Special	The Integrated Review, Defence in a Competitive Age and the Defence and Security Industrial Strategy: Government Response to the Committee's Second Report	HC 865
4th Special	Defence Space: through adversity to the stars? Government Response to the Committee's Third Report	HC 1031

Session 2021–22

Number	Title	Reference
1st	Russia and Ukraine border tensions	HC 167
2nd	Women in the Armed Forces	HC 154
3rd	"We're going to need a bigger Navy"	HC 168
4th	Operation Isotrope: the use of the military to counter migrant crossings	HC 1069
1st Special	Obsolescent and outgunned: the British Army's armoured vehicle capability: Government Response to the Committee's Fifth Report of Session 2019–21	HC 221
2nd Special	Manpower or mindset: Defence's contribution to the UK's pandemic response: Government Response to the Committee's Sixth Report of Session 2019–21	HC 552
3rd Special	Russia and Ukraine border tensions: Government Response to the Committee's First Report	HC 725

Number	Title	Reference
4th Special	Protecting those who protect us: Women in the Armed Forces from Recruitment to Civilian Life: Government Response to the Committee's Second Report	HC 904
5th Special	"We're going to need a bigger Navy": Government Response to the Committee's Third Report	HC 1160

Session 2019–21

Number	Title	Reference
1st	In Search of Strategy—The 2020 Integrated Review	HC 165
2nd	The Security of 5G	HC 201
3rd	Pre-appointment hearing for the Service Complaints Ombudsman	HC 989
4th	Foreign Involvement in the Defence Supply Chain	HC 699
5th	Obsolescent and outgunned: the British Army's armoured vehicle capability	HC 659
6th	Manpower or mindset: Defence's contribution to the UK's pandemic response	HC 357
1st Special	Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report 2018: Government Response to the Committee's Eighteenth Report of Session 2017–19	HC 162
2nd Special	Drawing a Line: Protecting Veterans by a Statute of Limitations: Government Response to the Defence Committee's Seventeenth Report of Session 2017–19	HC 325
3rd Special	In Search of Strategy—The 2020 Integrated Review: Government Response to the Committee's First Report	HC 910
4th Special	The Security of 5G: Government Response to the Committee's Second Report	HC 1091
5th Special	Foreign Involvement in the Defence Supply Chain: Government Response to the Committee's Fourth Report	HC 1380