

Chief of the Defence Staff Lord Mayor of London Defence & Security Lecture

My Lord Mayor, Your Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a privilege to be here at Mansion House to deliver your Annual Defence and Security Lecture and thank you for those kind words, and for the many ways the Corporation of the City of London supports the Armed Forces, and your charitable and professional endeavours for the people of Ukraine.

This is my first public speech since before the summer, and the theme – continuity and change – feels worryingly a little more apt today than it did when I chose it back in September.

But let's start with the remarkable and historic events of last month.

In performing our last duty to Her Majesty The Queen – and our first duty to His Majesty The King – we saw the very best of the British Armed Forces.

The spectacle of those ten days, the pageantry, the horses, the gun salutes, the remarkable sight of 140 sailors pulling the state gun carriage, the strength and solemnity of those ten grenadiers who carried Her Majesty's coffin, all sent a message to the world about our country.

It's an example of what the academic, Professor Julian Lindley-French, has termed British elan – a strategic brand, executed with such style and assurance that it becomes a form of power in itself.

And yet these are very serious times, as The Lord Mayor said. We have a war in Europe. Political turbulence at home. A worrying economic outlook, domestically and internationally, compounded by growing food and energy insecurity.

So, it seems appropriate to offer some thoughts through a Defence lens on what this is all about, what is our role and what comes next.

And I hope I may be permitted to add a third 'C' into the title of this speech retrospectively and that is Confidence.

Because my premise is three-fold:

First, that Russia's invasion of Ukraine is the spur to rediscover our confidence and self-belief: in our democratic values, in the rule-of-law, and in the collective power of the international community.

Secondly, that we should recognise the authority and agency that the military instrument offers, and we should willingly embrace the ability of the Armed Forces to support our national interest in all its forms.

And third, that we should be confident that the vision for the Armed Forces

in last year's Integrated Review is the right one; and the forthcoming IR Refresh is an opportunity to contribute even more to our nation's security and prosperity.

So, what is it all about?

I've always been of the view that Putin made a strategic miscalculation by invading Ukraine, and the truism is more accurate than normal, that strategic errors lead to strategic consequences.

Eight months on, Putin's problems are mounting. He's undermined Russia's status as a great power, mortgaged his country's economic future, repelled its neighbours in the 'near abroad' and even China is losing patience. Meanwhile, his troops are ceding ground, running out of ammunition, and winter is coming.

And while handing call-out papers to political dissidents and protesters may be a ruthless way of dealing with opposition to his regime, it is a hopeless way to build an Army.

He has few options left – hence the nuclear rhetoric. And while this is worrying and deeply irresponsible, it is a sign of weakness, which is precisely why the international community needs to remain strong and united.

Ukraine, on the other hand, continues to perform magnificently. In my most recent visit to Kyiv, my message to General Zaluzhnyi was one of admiration, and that the United Kingdom will stand by Ukraine for as long as necessary.

But we also need to recognise that there is more at stake than the future of a single country, vital as that struggle may be.

Almost four hundred years ago, the Peace of Westphalia established the principle that no one state should violate the sovereign borders of another.

At a similar time, the Dutch Lawyer Hugo Grotius laid the foundations for international law, and the rules which governed the behaviour of nation states in the global commons.

In more recent times, the Atlantic Charter and the founding of the United Nations, shaped the modern world around the principles of self-determination, democracy and human rights.

And yet President Putin believes the rules do not apply to him. That his Army can cross international borders with impunity. That he can renege on commercial agreements and turn off the gas to Europe, and it doesn't matter. That he can close access to the Black Sea ports to merchant vessels and millions will die, and it doesn't matter.

But these things do matter. And that is what this is all about.

These things matter to the thousands of Ukrainians who are dying and suffering every single day.

And they matter here in the City of London too, because markets thrive on stability, and our prosperity rests on a world that is safe for the passage of trade.

And when the rules are broken, volatility and instability follow. When aggression is left unchecked the costs ricochet through global markets. This affects people everywhere, and especially the world's poorest.

This is more than a war over the borders on a map. This is about the future of international security and the peace and prosperity that we in this country have been so fortunate to enjoy for much of lives.

So then what is our role?

The role of the United Kingdom Armed Forces, even with a war in Europe, is more than just focusing on defending the nation.

It is about a maximalist approach to the military instrument. Using our power and influence in all its guises: both to further our security and prosperity. But especially – when we get it right – to add to the agency and authority of the British Government and the nation.

You are seeing that in our response to Ukraine.

I am immensely proud of the British Armed Forces and the role that we are playing, whether training alongside Ukraine since 2014, and that we are now training thousands more here in the UK: an effort that has expanded to include contributions from Canada, New Zealand, Sweden and others.

I am proud that we were the first European nation to provide lethal aid. And that our Defence Secretary, Ben Wallace, did so much to galvanise other nations to do the same through the establishment of the International Donor Coordination Centre in Germany.

But both the previous and current British Prime Minister have demanded even more. They want defence to work alongside trade and diplomacy to deliver closer relationships with India, Japan and Australia. To deliver our Indo-Pacific tilt and support broader government efforts, whether Levelling Up, Maintaining the Union, or our international strategic partnerships.

And it was illuminating to see that when the Prime Minister of the world's third largest economy, Japan, came together with the Prime Minister of the fifth largest economy in Downing Street last May, the rather boring headline announcement was about a Reciprocal Access Agreement – a technical measure to enable visiting forces. That is what I mean about the military doing far more than just defence and security.

Across this country, Defence secures more than 400,000 jobs, a large proportion of which are high-skilled, high-demand STEM subjects.

We are one of the largest providers of training and skills in the country. There are more than 130,000 uniformed cadets between the ages of 12 and 18, supported by 30,000 adult volunteers. Within the Armed Forces, there are more

than 20,000 apprenticeships underway at any one time.

We spend more than £20 billion with British industry every year. And in 2020 we generated almost £8 billion in defence exports, more than any other European country.

This is the full extent of the military instrument. And what this really provides is not just productivity or value-for-money. The real value is the agency and authority it offers.

And now the Government has committed to increasing Defence spending further, even with a tough economic outlook. This is really significant.

For most of my career, our story has been one of contraction and decline. Now we have the prospect of growth and acceleration.

And that leads me to what comes next.

We have the continuity of last year's Integrated Review, the central elements of which have been borne out by recent events:

The shift from an era of counter-terrorism operations to one of state-based competition.

The acknowledgement of Russia as the most acute threat to the United Kingdom.

The centrality of nuclear deterrence and collective security.

And recognising that our broader security needs to also embrace health and climate change. And that we need to embrace security for prosperity and prosperity for security.

What has changed since last year's review though is the speed and scale of Russia's aggression.

But we should nonetheless be supremely confident about our alliance with NATO: an alliance with more than 3 million people under arms, and with a combined GDP of \$15 trillion compared to just \$1.7 billion for Russia.

Even without the United States, the European members of NATO spend 3-4 times more on Defence than Russia.

So, the question is – with the potential increase to 3% of GDP on Defence, where can we make the most useful contribution?

Britain's forte has rarely been matching its adversaries in terms of mass.

Our approach has tended to reflect the British Way of Warfare, as described by the military theorist Sir Basil Liddell Hart almost a century ago:

The belief that Britain is an expeditionary rather than a continental power.

That our interests are best served by the indirect application of power – particularly economic power – by, with and through our partners.

And that we focus to ensure we provide disproportionate effect and to achieve operational advantage.

This audience will recognise these aspects in the City's own strengths. The capital flows, the deal-brokering, the expertise in mergers and acquisitions; the adherence to the stability that the rule-of-law provides for the capital – and that is what makes London one of the pre-eminent centres for global financial services.

But, looking forwards, we need to have some humility to look again at some of the risks we've taken in recent decades.

We need Armed Forces that are match fit, or more to-the-point, "war-fit", to meet the demands of state-on-state competition, better supported by more resilient supply chains and a greater capacity in our industrial base.

We need to be more agile. Bolder and braver in embracing technology and doing that much, much faster.

We may need to temper our tendency for bespoke procurements and constant commercial competition when we could simply go shopping instead. Why not choose what is available on the market today especially if it means we can get the capability sooner?

And while the threat posed by Russia is a generational challenge, we don't have the luxury of a simple choice over whether to double down on the security of the Euro-Atlantic or see through our tilt to the Indo-Pacific.

The shrinking of the Arctic Ice caps will halve the journey time between European and Asian markets. Climate change will fuel conflict and inequality. And health and energy security will become even more tied to international security.

This means having Armed Forces that are global in outlook. Anchored in NATO, and ready to fight alongside our allies in Europe, but tilting as necessary to Indo-Pacific or wherever in the world our British interests are at stake.

We do this by delivering projects like AUKUS. An audacious piece of statecraft, that strengthens a key ally, opens a world of possibilities for greater Australian-UK and American technological collaboration, and opens the prospect of growing our own submarine force.

FCAS is another example – the UK's sixth generation fighter. A project with the potential to do for combat air what AUKUS is doing for nuclear propulsion. A project that could shape our defence industrial relationships with Italy and Japan for the rest of the century.

The same potential exists for the Army's Future Soldier programme and our growing ambitions in autonomous, hypersonic and quantum technology. Each of them a transformational opportunity; with the power to facilitate our post-Brexit relationships, catalyse our science and industrial bases, generate growth, make us safer and help the nation to prosper.

And the more we achieve, the more our authority grows, and the stronger the example to our allies and partners. This is how we grow our national and collective authority.

So, in drawing to a close, this magnificent thing we call the military instrument is much more than the crucial role we play to defend the nation and the rules-based system the City uses to continue to be the economic powerhouse which drives our prosperity.

It is also a tool to help drive a broader national agenda. And when we get it really right, then we enhance the authority of the British government, and with it our nation's strength and security in this competitive world.

Thank you.