

Vol. 767  
No. 77



Wednesday  
2 December 2015

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
(HANSARD)

# HOUSE OF LORDS

## OFFICIAL REPORT

*ORDER OF BUSINESS*

Questions	
Housing: Office Conversions .....	1095
United Nations World Humanitarian Summit .....	1097
Devolution: England .....	1100
Banking: Financial Crime .....	1103
Immigration Bill	
<i>First Reading</i> .....	1106
Syria: UK Military Action	
<i>Motion to Take Note</i> .....	1106

Lords wishing to be supplied with these Daily Reports should give notice to this effect to the Printed Paper Office.

No proofs of Daily Reports are provided. Corrections for the bound volume which Lords wish to suggest to the report of their speeches should be clearly indicated in a copy of the Daily Report, which, with the column numbers concerned shown on the front cover, should be sent to the Editor of Debates, House of Lords, within 14 days of the date of the Daily Report.

*This issue of the Official Report is also available on the Internet at [www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201516/ldhansrd/index/151202.html](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201516/ldhansrd/index/151202.html)*

PRICES AND SUBSCRIPTION RATES	
DAILY PARTS	
<i>Single copies:</i>	
Commons, £5; Lords £4	
<i>Annual subscriptions:</i>	
Commons, £865; Lords £600	
LORDS VOLUME INDEX obtainable on standing order only. Details available on request.	
BOUND VOLUMES OF DEBATES are issued periodically during the session.	
<i>Single copies:</i>	
Commons, £65 (£105 for a two-volume edition); Lords, £60 (£100 for a two-volume edition).	
Standing orders will be accepted.	
THE INDEX to each Bound Volume of House of Commons Debates is published separately at £9.00 and can be supplied to standing order.	
<i>All prices are inclusive of postage.</i>	

The first time a Member speaks to a new piece of parliamentary business, the following abbreviations are used to show their party affiliation:

Abbreviation	Party/Group
CB	Cross Bench
Con	Conservative
DUP	Democratic Unionist Party
GP	Green Party
Ind Lab	Independent Labour
Ind LD	Independent Liberal Democrat
Ind SD	Independent Social Democrat
Ind UU	Independent Ulster Unionist
Lab	Labour
LD	Liberal Democrat
LD Ind	Liberal Democrat Independent
Non-afl	Non-affiliated
PC	Plaid Cymru
UKIP	UK Independence Party
UUP	Ulster Unionist Party

No party affiliation is given for Members serving the House in a formal capacity, the Lords spiritual, Members on leave of absence or Members who are otherwise disqualified from sitting in the House.

© Parliamentary Copyright House of Lords 2015,  
*this publication may be reproduced under the terms of the Open Parliament licence,  
which is published at [www.parliament.uk/site-information/copyright/](http://www.parliament.uk/site-information/copyright/).*

## House of Lords

Wednesday, 2 December 2015.

3 pm

Prayers—read by the Lord Bishop of Derby.

### Housing: Office Conversions Question

3.07 pm

Asked by **Lord Goddard of Stockport**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their assessment of how the policy to allow offices to be converted into housing has worked so far, and whether they intend to extend the policy beyond next year, when it is due to lapse.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Communities and Local Government (Baroness Williams of Trafford) (Con):** My Lords, we announced on 12 October that we would make permanent the permitted development right for the change of use from office to residential use. From April 2014 to June 2015, 3,971 schemes have secured the permitted development right, which will deliver much-needed new homes.

**Lord Goddard of Stockport (LD):** I thank the Minister for that Answer. Is she aware that the British Council for Offices has estimated that 6 million square feet of office accommodation has been lost? In London, it is more disastrous than that: 834,000 square metres have been lost, 40% of which was due to evictions. They are thriving businesses trying to deliver for the economy, which have been thrown out by unscrupulous landlords trying to make profit from running around the planning rules. This is an unintended consequence of a policy that was right when it was brought in. We should look again because clearly that was not the idea. It was to create jobs and homes, not to create the complete opposite, which is what is happening.

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** I thank the noble Lord for that useful supplementary question. As he and I know, in Stockport and Trafford the policy has worked very well and has helped to deliver much-needed footfall and population to some of our town centres. The British Council for Offices estimates that the right has resulted in 7,600 much-needed homes, including in London and the south-east. The office market continues to develop, as noted by the British Council for Offices, with modern office developments being brought forward, but where there is evidence that it is necessary to protect the amenity and well-being of existing business areas, as the noble Lord said, local planning authorities can bring forward Article 4 directions to remove the right and require a planning application. Twenty local planning authorities have already done this.

**Lord Spicer (Con):** My Lords, is the unused office space that could be used for housing counted in the empty dwelling figures? If not, should it be as one indicator of what new build is required?

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** My Lords, as far as I am aware, it is not counted in the empty dwelling figures because at that point in time it is not dwellings.

**Baroness Whitaker (Lab):** My Lords, has the Minister made any assessment of the number of workplaces that have been destroyed when local authorities impose housing plans that do not take real account of the needs of the local economy?

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** The noble Lord, Lord Goddard, pointed out the figures in his supplementary question. That is why Article 4 directions are very useful in stopping some of that exodus of much-needed office space where it is not appropriate.

**Lord Holmes of Richmond (Con):** My Lords, I am slightly confused—perhaps my noble friend can assist. I am slightly surprised that this Question is being answered by a Minister from DCLG. Bearing in mind the exact wording of the Question, is this not something for the Home Office?

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** I thank my noble friend. I speak for the Government as a Minister. However, I appreciate my noble friend's great sense of humour.

**Lord West of Spithead (Lab):** My Lords, has there been any assessment of the impact of the huge number of garages—petrol stations—all across London that are closing and becoming housing, and of the difficulty in finding somewhere to get petrol within London?

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** The noble Lord raises a very interesting question, and he will not be surprised to learn that I do not have an exact answer to it. I thought he meant garages attached to homes, as there is evidence that they have been used as dwelling space. However, I will get him that figure if it exists.

**Baroness Bakewell of Hardington Mandeville (LD):** My Lords, can the Minister say whether the Government are prepared to review the waiver on Section 106 contributions for office conversions for much-needed sports, arts and public realm contributions, and whether she feels that the absence of a requirement to provide car parking spaces is wise given the huge reduction in bus services in some areas of the country?

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** I can give the noble Baroness an answer on that in due course, if she does not mind.

**Lord Hamilton of Epsom (Con):** My Lords, to put the remarks of the noble Lord, Lord Goddard, in perspective, it is important that we know what is happening to demand for office spaces. I understood that with more people working from home, the demand for office spaces was waning somewhat.

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** My noble friend makes a very good point. My answer to the noble Lord's first question is that it varies a lot across the country. In the north-west, where both I and the noble Lord live, there is a demand to build housing within town centres in an attempt to revitalise them. However, there is also a demand for housing nationwide; where that situation is distorted and reversed and office space is being lost, an Article 4 direction can be made.

**Lord Kennedy of Southwark (Lab):** My Lords, I declare an interest as an elected councillor in Lewisham, south London. For this great capital city to thrive, we need housing available to rent or buy for people on a wide variety of incomes who do all the jobs that need doing in the capital. Does the noble Baroness agree with the Housing Minister, Mr Brandon Lewis, when he said yesterday that Londoners had to make a judgment call about whether they could afford to live in the capital?

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** My Lords, we all have to make a judgment call on whether we can afford to live in the capital. It is certainly true that London has the highest house prices in the country. This Government's aim is to provide more houses—1 million new homes by 2020—so that the demand is met overall and people have somewhere to live.

## United Nations World Humanitarian Summit *Question*

3.12 pm

*Asked by Lord McConnell of Glenscorrodale*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what priorities they have agreed for the United Nations World Humanitarian Summit taking place in Istanbul in May 2016.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for International Development (Baroness Verma) (Con):** My Lords, the UK has four objectives for the World Humanitarian Summit. Most importantly, we want a renewed commitment to the protection of civilians in conflict but also smarter financing, a new approach to building resilience to natural hazards before they take place, and a stronger focus on protecting and empowering women and girls. The global community—humanitarian, development and political actors—must come together to address these challenges.

**Lord McConnell of Glenscorrodale (Lab):** While the priorities for this summit will undoubtedly focus on financing and the immediate scale of the humanitarian

crisis around the world today, will the UK Government do all they can to ensure that the summit also addresses the issue of child protection, particularly in the immediate aftermath of natural disasters, when human traffickers and others who would abuse and exploit children move all too quickly to trap and ensnare them, sometimes taking them across borders to carry out their evil deeds?

**Baroness Verma:** I am grateful to the noble Lord for his Question. He raises some very important issues around children given that 59 million children are growing up in the midst of humanitarian crises. I reassure him that we are committed to keeping children safe from harm, ensuring that they can access education and basic services wherever they are and that in health emergencies, such as we saw with Ebola in Sierra Leone, we are there on the ground to work not only with Governments but with local civil society organisations too.

**Lord Hylton (CB):** My Lords, have the Government considered the merits of concentrating British and European aid on the Middle East and the northern half of Africa, both in our interest and that of the huge rising young generation, which is so badly in need of work?

**Baroness Verma:** Yes, my Lords. Again, the noble Lord raises some important points. One of the key things we want to be able to do from the summit is to bring together not just Governments but civil society organisations and people from academia to see how we can respond to the growing need to make sure that young people particularly are able to get trained, educated and engaged in employment. They need meaningful life skills so that we do not end up with a generation unable to respond to the ever-growing demands of the 21st century.

**Lord Lansley (Con):** My Lords, my noble friend the Minister will be aware that the United Kingdom's commitment to 0.7% of gross domestic product as international development aid gives us the opportunity to give leadership at the World Humanitarian Summit. Can we use that and our commitment to predictable multiyear financing to lead in the development of training programmes for additional professionals capable of responding to humanitarian crises—not only trained but also available—since the use of additional financial resources depends on trained professionals in the field?

**Baroness Verma:** My noble friend again addresses a real, serious issue—one we recognised when we had to deal with the Ebola crisis in Sierra Leone. Our ambition for the summit is one of radical change to humanitarian action. We need much more efficiency, effectiveness and accountability in our responses and the responses of others, including a much-strengthened professional humanitarian workforce.

**Baroness Coussins (CB):** My Lords, given what the noble Baroness said about the importance of protecting civilians in conflict, will Her Majesty's Government

think again about supporting a United Nations resolution to protect interpreters working in conflict zones, to put them on the same footing as journalists, who are already protected by such measures?

**Baroness Verma:** My Lords, I think the noble Baroness's question has been raised before. I am not able to respond to her at this moment. Will she allow me to write to her?

**Baroness Kinnock of Holyhead (Lab):** My Lords, does the Minister agree that girls and boys must be part of the decision-making process, since children comprise 50% to 60% of the affected population in emergencies and suffer disproportionately from the effects? Can the Minister confirm that DfID will work with child-focused agencies such as Save the Children which have already focused on these issues and have compiled the views of more than 6,000 children in a range of countries?

**Baroness Verma:** My Lords, the noble Baroness will be aware from her time as a Minister in the Foreign Office that we work very closely with a range of civil society organisations and other groups, and it is really important that we get the views of everybody, including children. As one of the countries that has often taken the lead on this, we must get other countries and institutions to work closely with us where we feel more can be done. As my noble friend said earlier, we have committed the 0.7% and shown our commitment to it and are dedicated to ensuring that no one—children, women, or girls—is left behind in the discussions.

**Lord Collins of Highbury (Lab):** My Lords—

**Lord Oates (LD):** My Lords, last month the UN Secretary-General warned that the scale and cost of humanitarian needs driven by armed conflicts threatened to overwhelm our capacity to respond. Does the Minister agree that the permanent members of the Security Council have an obligation to work jointly to resolve conflicts, rather than using them to serve their own geopolitical ends? Will she ensure that the UK Government lead by example in that respect?

**Baroness Verma:** My Lords, I assure the noble Lord that the UK has led and continues to lead by example. The summit next year will again bring a lot of different actors to the table to discuss these very important issues so that we have a joint, combined response that reaches out to more people.

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** My Lords—

**Lord Soley (Lab):** Will the Minister consider the United Nations duty to protect, and remind herself that at times non-intervention can cost far more lives than intervention?

**Baroness Verma:** My Lords, we have to do what the UK Government are doing, which is working very closely with our partners, making sure that we are

there on the ground when we are needed and providing support where we cannot be present. Generally, I think that we are doing exactly what has been asked of us and we should be proud of the commitment that the UK Government have made.

**Lord Collins of Highbury:** My Lords, third time lucky, I hope. The noble Baroness made the very good point that humanitarian programmes have the potential to make the difference between dependency and development. Will the department and the Government look at examples of this, such as providing refugees with cash rather than in-kind goods so that they can stimulate the local economy and benefit host nations as well as themselves?

**Baroness Verma:** My Lords, as the noble Lord will be aware, these discussions are ongoing. I cannot give precise details of exact discussions with different individuals but, as the noble Lord will also be aware, these things are often done in case-by-case reviews.

**Baroness Afshar (CB):** My Lords, has the Minister considered that before being able to help the children, we need to have peace? What are the Government doing to secure peace in the Middle East?

**Noble Lords:** Oh!

**Baroness Verma:** My Lords, that question is very wide-ranging but I think that the debate after Question Time will help to answer it for the noble Baroness.

## Devolution: England Question

3.21 pm

Asked by *Baroness Janke*

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have for engagement and consultation with the people of England on devolution of powers in England in the light of the devolution settlements in the other countries of the Union.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Communities and Local Government (Baroness Williams of Trafford) (Con):** My Lords, devolution of power from Whitehall is about handing power and decision-making responsibilities back to local areas. It is for local partners, not the Government, to decide on the best way to engage their communities and neighbourhoods. We have already seen this happen across the country. From city regions in our northern powerhouse to towns and rural villages in the south, devolution is igniting the spirit of localism in ways that we have not seen for decades.

**Baroness Janke (LD):** I am grateful to the Minister for her Answer, but is she aware that much of the discussion between leaders and the Government involves talking about bespoke deals? In the light of the work that has been done on devolution in the other countries

[BARONESS JANKE]  
of the union, is it not time that the Government engaged with the people of England to find out what they are looking for in terms of devolution and the future of the union as we move towards a much more federal system?

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** My Lords, leaders are nominated by their councils and are democratically elected. I do not think that the leader who did not discuss these issues with the members of the council would be leader for very long. These are the democratically elected heads who will then engage with government.

**Lord Beecham (Lab):** My Lords, given the votes on the creation of a mayor for London and on devolution to Scotland and Wales, and, at the Government's behest, a vote in eight councils, only one of which resulted in support for an elected mayor, why have the Government set their face against the electorate having a vote on whether to have elected city mayors in the context of their devolution programme? Is their position by any chance related to the observation by Nick Boles—then, as now, a Minister—that the only chance of the Conservatives regaining Manchester was for the city to have an elected mayor? If not, how do they justify this apparently irreversible imposition?

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** My Lords, the thought of Manchester having a Conservative mayor is a great one but, having lived there for some years, I am not sure that it is very likely to happen any time soon. Obviously the referendum some years ago on having a mayor was held under totally different principles from those that we have today, and local authorities can engage with their communities and their electors in any way that they see fit.

**Lord Morris of Aberavon (Lab):** My Lords—

**Lord Forsyth of Drumlean (Con):** My Lords—

**The Lord Privy Seal (Baroness Stowell of Beeston) (Con):** My Lords, it is the turn of the Conservative Benches. I think it is worth me alerting the Labour Benches to the fact that the noble Lord, Lord Blunkett, is trying to get in as well.

**Lord Forsyth of Drumlean:** My Lords, could my noble friend explain the implications for public services in England and expenditure of the Smith commission proposals for a no-detriment principle?

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** My noble friend will not be surprised if I cannot answer that question.

**Lord Morris of Aberavon:** My Lords—

**Noble Lords:** Blunkett!

**Lord Blunkett (Lab):** Will the Minister discuss with her colleagues the fact that there is no structure whatsoever for any form of accountability or input by the electorate

to the northern powerhouse because a framework does not exist to do so; and that, where there are combined authorities, unlike London, there is no assembly or direct democratic input? Without this, the legitimacy of the changes will not be sustained and people will become as mistrustful of what is happening at subregional level as they are of what is happening at national level.

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** My Lords, in terms of accountability with government, clear expectations will be laid out in the agreement between combined authority areas that have devolutionary agreements and the Government. This Government have absolutely no intention of revisiting the assembly model. It was made very clear in Greater Manchester that when it agreed to have a mayor, it did not want another layer of government but an eleventh leader.

**Lord Shipley (LD):** My Lords, could I remind the Minister of the very low turnout for the police and crime commissioner elections? That resulted in part from very poor public engagement with those elections. Does she fear, like I do, that there will be a similar problem of a lack of consultation and engagement with the electorate when it comes to elected mayors and that there may be a similarly very low turnout, which would not help the new structure?

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** My Lords, I refer noble Lords back to the process in London. When we first had an elected mayor in London there was scepticism, to say the least, about how effective the London mayor might be and how popular it might be as a concept. Fast-forward some years from that process, and we find that people are fighting to get that nomination and it has become one of the most sought-after positions in the country.

**Lord Morris of Aberavon:** My Lords—

**Lord Harris of Haringey (Lab):** My Lords—

**Baroness Stowell of Beeston:** My Lords, it is the turn of the Labour Benches, but I urge the noble Lords to decide between themselves whom they would like to give way.

**Lord Morris of Aberavon:** My Lords, is it right for a small country such as the United Kingdom to have four nations developing systems of government at different speeds? Do the Government rule out a constitutional convention, rather than allowing piecemeal development?

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** My Lords, a constitutional convention is not on the cards at the moment. However, the Government are clear that they will not impose any sort of identikit model on each area. It is up to each area to decide how it wishes to take forward devolution proposals, and to take those forward with government.

**Lord Cormack (Con):** My Lords, is my noble friend aware that, as one of those who voted against having a directly elected mayor in London in the referendum, every time I get into my car I wonder whether I was not right?

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** I think others might disagree with my noble friend.

**Lord Harris of Haringey:** The noble Lord, Lord Cormack, reminds the House, which the Minister did not, that there was a referendum in London and a two-thirds majority voted in favour of having an elected mayor. That was different from the election of police and crime commissioners, when there was no such referendum. Of course, the date was selected by a shabby deal done inside the coalition with the Liberal Democrats, which meant that we ended up with those elections in November. But why is it not permissible for the new combined authorities to have a referendum on their governance structures and how that process will happen? Surely that would buy in support—as it did in London, for everyone with the exception of the noble Lord, Lord Cormack—for the principle of having a directly elected mayor.

**Baroness Williams of Trafford:** My Lords, the Conservative Party made explicit in its manifesto its intention to have mayors for large cities which agreed to that. For that reason, the principle was outlined before the election. The people engaging with the Government are themselves elected members.

## Banking: Financial Crime *Question*

3.30 pm

*Asked by Lord Sharkey*

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they expect senior managers to be held to account following the imposition of a £72 million fine on Barclays Bank for failing to minimise the risk that funds might be used to facilitate financial crime.

**The Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office (Lord Bridges of Headley) (Con):** My Lords, the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 prescribes the regulatory framework under which action can be taken by the regulators against firms and individuals. Under this framework, decisions on whether to take enforcement action are for the regulators, and it is entirely right that they should be independent of government.

**Lord Sharkey (LD):** The fact is that so far we have not managed to hold any senior managers to account. That is because the regulatory regime does not work, and it is precisely why we were due to replace it next April with a tougher regime. However, the Government are about to scrap the new regime before it starts and to go back to a lighter-touch regime. Can the Minister explain how the lighter-touch regime can do what the current regime cannot?

**Lord Bridges of Headley:** Clearly, this was an appalling case of mismanagement on the part of the managers at Barclays at the time, and the record fine that Barclays has faced reflects that. I agree with the noble Lord that financial regulatory change is needed, as well as a change in culture of many financial firms. Key to this is ensuring that senior managers' responsibilities are crystal clear. I stress that the most important task is to find out who is responsible for such failings as we have seen at Barclays. Up till now, regulators have sometimes found it difficult to hold senior managers personally accountable for management failings in the area for which they are responsible because there is such lack of clarity about who is responsible for what. This is precisely what the new senior managers regime addresses. The Government think it perfectly reasonable for the regulator then to show that the senior manager failed to take reasonable steps to avoid the failings.

**Lord Mackenzie of Framwellgate (Non-Aff):** My Lords, on the wider point of strengthening corporate governance, and given that most employees know what is going on in a company, what plans do the Government have to safeguard whistleblowers in the financial sector?

**Lord Bridges of Headley:** The Bill does not change any existing obligations on individuals working in the financial services industry to report wrongdoing whether within their own firm, to regulators or to other authorities. To address the noble Lord's question directly, the FCA published in October a package of rules designed to encourage a culture in banks where individuals feel able to raise concerns and challenge poor practice and behaviour. Those rules will also constitute non-binding guidance for other financial services firms.

**Lord Flight (Con):** My Lords, does the Minister agree that the new senior managers regime imposes extremely detailed requirements for dealing with both accountability and responsibility—it is virtually micromanaged and reported on—and that the suggestion that the new arrangements have gone soft is completely wrong?

**Lord Bridges of Headley:** I entirely agree with the noble Lord. The new system will be robust and proportionate.

**Lord McFall of Alcluith (Lab):** The £2 billion deal on behalf of Qatari clients saw Barclays deliberately breach its own rules on money laundering and financial terrorism, bringing the total fines that it has paid from 2010 to £500 million. The FCA judgment was very clear: it was done to generate revenue and new business. The FSA has neither named people nor taken action against them. Given that the Parliamentary Commission on Banking Standards, comprising individuals from this House and the House of Commons, said in its primary recommendation that individual executives have to be personally accountable, when will the Government implement this sensible recommendation from an all-party committee?

**Lord Bridges of Headley:** My Lords, I cannot comment specifically on this case; the noble Lord, who is much more experienced than I am in these matters, will understand that. On the reverse burden of proof, the regulators could use that only once they had established that there was a regulatory breach and that the senior manager was responsible for the area of the firm where the breach occurred. It was only at that point that they could ask the individual to prove that they took reasonable steps to prevent the breach occurring. Under the proposed statutory duty, the new statements of responsibilities will make it much easier for the regulators to establish quickly who is responsible. The regulator will then simply need to establish that the senior manager did not take those steps.

**Lord Campbell-Savours (Lab):** My Lords, why is it that the American regulatory authorities frequently prosecute and we do not?

**Lord Bridges of Headley:** My Lords, I echo the point made by the noble Lord, Lord McFall: the financial companies face severe financial penalties. Furthermore, a new criminal sanction was created by the previous Government for those who manage firms in a reckless manner.

**Baroness Kramer (LD):** My Lords, the sophisticated and complex money laundering scheme for nearly £2 billion of Middle Eastern money is unlikely to have been a one-off. What assurances can the Minister give the House that this transaction and others like it were not using funds from terrorism or that the funds generated were used for terrorism?

**Lord Bridges of Headley:** My Lords, I am sorry but I cannot go into greater detail on that point. However, I draw the noble Baroness's attention to the fact that, under the FCA's rules, money laundering reporting officers will have to be senior managers. The FCA will also require firms to allocate overall responsibility for the firm's policies and procedures for countering the risk that the firm might be used to further financial crime to an approved senior manager, who could be the MLRO but does not have to be. This will ensure that there is accountability for financial crime matters at the top executive level.

**Lord Tunnicliffe (Lab):** My Lords, the problem with the regime so far is that there have not been successful prosecutions. Perhaps I may pick up on the point that my noble friend Lord Davies has been pressing in Committee on the Bank of England Bill. The Government have yet to provide a rationale for their change of heart on the code for senior managers, having moved from the reverse burden of proof to a duty of responsibility. The senior managers and certification regime is not due to come into force until next year so something must have changed their mind. We on this side of the House would like to know what that was. Will the Minister give an assurance that, before Report, noble Lords will be given access to the minutes of the

meetings that the Government have had with banks, their lawyers and whoever else they met when coming to this conclusion?

**Lord Bridges of Headley:** My Lords, it is no secret that a number of banks did not believe that the reverse burden of proof was a good idea. This is public knowledge. Why are we making this change? Because we are rolling out the more rigorous SMCR regime across all authorised financial services firms. We want to do so in a way that is proportionate but robust and which delivers a level playing field for competition across the industry. The new approach does just that.

## Immigration Bill

### *First Reading*

3.37 pm

*The Bill was brought from the Commons, read a first time and ordered to be printed.*

## Syria: UK Military Action

### *Motion to Take Note*

3.38 pm

*Moved by Baroness Stowell of Beeston*

That this House takes note of Her Majesty's Government's proposals for military action against ISIL in Syria.

**Lord Taylor of Holbeach (Con):** My Lords, with the leave of the House, it may be helpful if I make a brief business statement regarding our proceedings this afternoon. There are 64 Back-Bench Members who wish to speak in our debate today. If contributions are limited to four minutes each, we would expect the winding speeches to start at about 9 pm. This would allow the House to make its contribution to the debate before the House of Commons vote on the Government's proposals, which is expected to be at about 10 o'clock. I remind noble Lords that the clocks are set at zero when they rise to speak and that when the clock shows "4" the full four minutes will have elapsed—so if you see "4", your time is up. The Whips have been instructed to deal firmly with noble Lords who exceed the speaking time. In the circumstances, I therefore ask noble Lords to be restrained in intervening on speakers.

**Lord Campbell-Savours (Lab):** My Lords, if speeches overshoot, what will happen at 9.30 pm?

**Lord Taylor of Holbeach:** I think I can count on this House to show good sense in the way in which it deals with a very important subject. We all have a collective interest in allowing everyone who has indicated a wish to do so to have their say. The whole purpose of this statement is to encourage the House to exercise self-restraint in doing so.

3.39 pm

**The Lord Privy Seal (Baroness Stowell of Beeston)**

**(Con):** My Lords, the issue before the House today is how we keep the British people safe from the threat posed by ISIL. As a Government, we are not pretending that the answers are simple. The situation in Syria is incredibly complex. We are not overstating the contribution that our incredible service men and women can make, nor are we ignoring the risks of military action or pretending that such action is any more than one part of the answer. We are absolutely clear that we must pursue a comprehensive strategy that also includes political, diplomatic and humanitarian action. We know that the long-term solution in Syria, as in Iraq, must ultimately be a Government that can represent all of their people and who can work with us to defeat the evil organisation of ISIL for good.

Notwithstanding all of this, there is a simple question at the heart of the debate today. We face a fundamental threat to our security. ISIL have brutally murdered British hostages. They have inspired the worst terrorist attack against British people since 7/7, on the beaches of Tunisia, and they have plotted atrocity after atrocity on the streets here at home. Since November last year, our security services have foiled no fewer than seven different plots against our people, so the threat is very real. The question is this: do we work with our allies to degrade and destroy this threat and do we go after these terrorists in their heartlands from where they are plotting to kill British people, or do we sit back and wait for them to attack us? In answering this question, we should remember that, 15 months ago, facing a threat from ISIL in Iraq, the House of Commons voted by 524 to 43 to authorise air strikes in Iraq. Since then, our brilliant RAF pilots have helped local forces to halt ISIL's advance and recover 30% of the territory ISIL had captured.

On Monday, my right honourable friend the Prime Minister spoke to the President of Iraq in Paris, and he expressed his gratitude for the vital work our forces are doing. Yet when our planes reach the border with Syria—a border that ISIL itself does not recognise—we can no longer act to defend either his country, or indeed our country, even when we know that ISIL's headquarters are in Raqqa in Syria and that it is from there that many of the plots against our country are formed. We possess the capabilities to reduce this threat to our security, and my argument today is that we should not wait any longer before doing so. We should answer the call from our allies. The action we have proposed is legal, it is necessary and it is the right thing to do to keep our country safe. I hope that Parliament as a whole today will support us taking up our responsibilities rather than passing them off and putting our own national security in the hands of others.

Since the Statement last week, the Prime Minister has spoken further to our allies, including President Obama, Chancellor Merkel, President Hollande and the King of Jordan, and I know that my right honourable friend has listened carefully to the views expressed by Members in both Houses in recent days. That was reflected in the case he set out in Parliament and the Motion laid before the other place by him

today. In opening this debate, I want to focus on some of the key questions raised about the case that we have made.

First, could acting increase the risk to our security by making an attack on Britain more likely? This is one of the most important questions we have to answer. Paris was not just different because it is close to us or because it was so horrific in scale; it showed the extent of terror planning by Daesh in Syria and the approach of sending people back from Syria to Europe. I should point out to noble Lords that I am using the term “Daesh”; it is a conscious decision by me and by the Prime Minister because ISIL is neither a true representation of Islam nor a state. From now on, in as many cases as possible, we will be referring to it as Daesh.

This was, if you like, the head of the snake in Raqqa in action, so let me be frank. If there is an attack on the UK in the coming weeks or months, there will be those who try to say that it has happened because of our air strikes. We do not believe that that would be the case. Daesh has been trying to attack us for the last year. The terrorist threat level to the UK was raised to “Severe” last August in the light of the threat from Daesh, meaning that attack is highly likely. Some 800 people, including families and children, have been radicalised to such an extent that they have travelled to this so-called caliphate. Noble Lords should be under no illusion: these terrorists are plotting to kill us and to radicalise our children right now. They attack us because of who we are, not what we do. That is why all the advice that we have received—the military, diplomatic and security advice—is very clear. When it comes to the risks of taking military action, the risks of inaction are far greater.

Yet some people ask whether Britain conducting strikes in Syria would really make a difference. We believe that it would. In repeating the Prime Minister's Statement last week, I talked about our dynamic targeting—our Brimstone missiles, the RAPTOR pod on our Tornados, and the intelligence-gathering work of our Reaper drones. I will not repeat all that today, but there is another way of putting this that is equally powerful. Typically, the UK represents between a quarter and a third of the international coalition's precision bombing capability over Iraq and Syria. We also have about a quarter of the unmanned strike capability flying in the region, so we have a significant proportion of higher-precision strike capability. That is one reason why members of the international coalition believe that British planes would make a real difference in Syria, just as they are already doing in Iraq.

In many ways, what I have just said helps to answer the next question some have raised: why do we not simply increase our level of air strikes in Iraq to free up other coalition capacity for air strikes in Syria? We have these capabilities that other members of the coalition want to benefit from. It makes no sense to stop using these capabilities at a border between Iraq and Syria that Daesh simply does not recognise or respect. In fact, there was a recent incident in which Syrian opposition forces needed urgent support in their fight against Daesh. British Tornados were eight minutes away, just over the border in Iraq, and no one

[BARONESS STOWELL OF BEESTON]

else was close. But Britain could not help, so the Syrian opposition forces had to wait 40 minutes in a perilous situation while other coalition forces were scrambled. This kind of delay endangers the lives of those fighting Daesh on the ground and, frankly, does nothing for our reputation with our vital allies.

But there is a much more fundamental answer to why we should carry out air strikes in Syria ourselves, and it is this. Raqqa in Syria is the headquarters of this threat to our security. It is in Syria where they pump and sell the oil that does so much to help finance their evil acts, and where many of the plots against our country are formed. So we must act in Syria to deal with these threats ourselves.

I turn to the question of whether there will be ground forces to make the operation a success. Those who say that there are not as many ground troops as we would like and that they are not all in the right places are correct. We are not dealing with an ideal situation. But there are some important points to make in this respect. First, we should be clear what air strikes alone can achieve. We do not need ground troops to target the supply of oil that Daesh uses to fund its terrorism, or to hit Daesh's headquarters, infrastructure, supply routes, training facilities and weapons supplies. It is clear that air strikes can have an effect on its ability to plot attacks against us. Indeed, the strike on Hussain and Khan, in Syria, played an important role in degrading Daesh's network. So, irrespective of ground forces, our Royal Air Force can do serious damage to Daesh's ability right now to bring terror to our streets. We should back the RAF to do that.

Secondly, the full answer to the question of ground forces cannot be achieved until there is a new Syrian Government who represent all of the Syrian people. It is this new Government who will be the natural partners for our forces in defeating Daesh for good. But there are some ground forces that we can work with in the mean time. Last week we set out that we believe there are around 70,000 Syrian opposition fighters who do not belong to extremist groups and with whom we can co-ordinate attacks on Daesh.

Noble Lords will appreciate that there are some limits on what I can say about these groups, but I can say this: the 70,000 is an estimate from our independent Joint Intelligence Committee, based on detailed analysis that draws upon a wide range of open sources and intelligence. Of these 70,000, the majority are from the Free Syrian Army. Alongside the 70,000, there are some 20,000 Kurdish fighters, with whom we can also work. We are not arguing that all of these 70,000 are somehow ideal partners, but some left the Syrian army because of Assad's brutality and they clearly can play a role in the future of Syria. Let me be clear: our figures exclude those in terrorist groups, so the 70,000 figure does not include a further 25,000 extremist fighters in groups which reject political participation and co-ordination with non-Muslims. Although they fight Daesh, they cannot, and will not, be our partners. Therefore, there are ground forces who will take the fight to Daesh, and in many cases we can work with them and assist them.

Thirdly, if we do not act now, we should be clear that there will be even fewer ground forces over time as Daesh will get even stronger. Therefore, we simply cannot afford to wait. We have to act now. By doing so, we can reduce the ability of Daesh to attack us and pave the way for the political transition in Syria that can lead to a new Government and the long-term destruction of this evil terrorist threat.

I turn to our overall strategy. Again, I set this out in the House last week in repeating the Prime Minister's Statement, but let me say a little more about each of the non-military elements—counterterrorism, counter-extremism, the political and diplomatic processes and the vital humanitarian work. First, our counterterrorism strategy gives Britain a comprehensive plan to prevent and foil plots at home and address the poisonous extremist ideology that is the root cause of the threat we face. As part of this, the Prime Minister announced in the other place this morning that we will establish a comprehensive review to root out any remaining funding of extremism within the UK. This will examine specifically the nature, scale and origin of the funding of Islamist extremist activity in the UK, including any overseas sources. It will report to the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary next spring.

I know that some suggest that military action could in some way undermine our counterextremism strategy by radicalising British Muslims, so let me take this head on. British Muslims are appalled by Daesh. Far from the risk of radicalising British Muslims by acting, failing to act would actually betray British Muslims and the wider religion of Islam in its very hour of need.

The second part of our strategy is our support for the diplomatic and political process. Let me say a word about how this process can lead to the ceasefires between the regime and the opposition that are so essential for the next stages of this political transition. It begins with identifying the right people to put around the table. Next week, we expect the Syrian regime to nominate a team of people to negotiate under the auspices of the United Nations. Over the last 18 months, political and armed opposition positions have converged. We know the main groups and their ideas. In the coming days, Saudi Arabia will host a meeting for opposition representatives in Riyadh and the United Nations will take forward discussions on steps towards a ceasefire, including at the next meeting of the International Syria Support Group, which we expect to take place before Christmas. The aim is clear: a transition Government in six months and a new constitution and free elections within 18 months. The key elements of a deal are emerging, with the key players—America, Saudi Arabia and Iran—all in the room together. Hitting Daesh does not hurt this process; it helps it, which is the eventual goal.

Turning to humanitarian relief and longer-term stabilisation, the Statement I repeated last week set out our support for refugees in the region and the broad international alliance that we would work with in the rebuilding phase. However, we should be clear: people will not return to Syria if part of it is under the control of an organisation that enslaves Yazidis, throws gay people off buildings, beheads aid workers and forces children to marry before they are

10 years old. So we cannot separate the humanitarian and reconstruction action from dealing with Daesh itself.

Let me turn in more detail to the plan for post-conflict reconstruction to support a new Syrian Government when they emerge. The Prime Minister has said that we would be prepared to commit at least £1 billion to Syria's reconstruction. The initial priorities would be protection, security, stabilisation and confidence-building measures, including meeting basic humanitarian needs such as education, health and shelter, and of course helping refugees to return home. As we said last week, we are not in the business of trying to dismantle the Syrian state or its institutions.

Let me conclude: this is not 2003. We must not use past mistakes as an excuse for indifference or inaction. Let us be clear: inaction does not amount to a strategy for our security or that of the Syrian people. Inaction is a choice. I believe it is the wrong choice. We face a clear threat. We have listened to our allies. We have taken legal advice. We have a unanimous United Nations resolution. We have discussed our proposed actions extensively at meetings of the National Security Council and the Cabinet. The Prime Minister has responded personally to the detailed report of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee and, during his Statement last week, which lasted over two and a half hours, has taken more than 100 questions from MPs.

There are debates happening right now in both Houses of Parliament. Later tonight there will be a vote in the other place. I hope the result will be to give support to Britain playing its part in defeating these evil extremists and taking the action that is needed now to keep our country safe and protect our way of life. I beg to move.

3.57 pm

**Baroness Smith of Basildon (Lab):** My Lords, I thank the Leader for her comprehensive comments. When she repeated the Prime Minister's Statement last week, she made a commitment that, should there be a vote in the House of Commons on extending military air strikes to Syria, there would be an opportunity for debate in your Lordships' House. I thank her because it is clear from the number, range and expertise of speakers that this has been welcomed across your Lordships' House. As I said last week, I hope that the Government will seek to make use of that expertise beyond this debate.

I am sure the whole House will welcome the fact that the noble Lord, Lord Hague, has chosen to make his maiden speech today. I have to say that choosing this particular issue is perhaps the parliamentary equivalent of making an entrance, but I look forward to hearing what he has to say and we are grateful that he has chosen this debate for his maiden.

First, I will share some thoughts about our colleagues of all parties in the other place who are grappling with this issue and will be voting tonight. I occasionally envy those who at the outset of any debate or consideration of serious, important issues have absolute confidence and certainty about their decision, because for most of us it is just not like that. Unless we are expert in a particular field, we want to hear the arguments, analyse information, take advice, give thoughtful

consideration and examine our consciences before reaching a judgment. Many MPs with the same information will come to different conclusions. Across the Commons there are those who continue to have doubts, but that does not make them weak on ISIL/Daesh or security. Those who are convinced should not be attacked for supporting action they believe to be part of a process to attack ISIL and better protect UK citizens. For many, it will be a marginal decision in weighing up the considerations. We must support MPs who we trust to make such decisions and condemn those who abuse, intimidate and threaten them.

All party leaders are entitled to seek to persuade their MPs of their views through information and argument but reported comments that those who vote differently are a "bunch of terrorist sympathisers" or have "no hiding place" are offensive, wrong and of no help in allowing proper decision-making.

We are not debating today whether to engage with allied forces or to attack ISIL/Daesh militarily. We are, rightly, already doing so. The proposal from the Prime Minister is about extending that military force with air strikes into Syria. In some ways, it would be a relatively marginal increase. Today, the Prime Minister has to provide the information and arguments to convince not just MPs but the country as a whole that the extension of air strikes against military targets will be effective and that it is part of a wider strategy—a strategy that comprehensively addresses not just military aspects but, post air strikes, the humanitarian and diplomatic issues and the reconstruction of post-conflict Syria.

I am grateful for the briefing on intelligence and military issues that I had on Privy Council terms. But no briefing is needed to understand the vile evil of ISIL. They are murderous fanatics, despised and condemned across the world not just for the incomprehensible attacks on Paris but, as we should never forget, the murders of British holidaymakers in Tunisia; the beheading of British citizens; the bombing of a Russian airline; the mass murder of women too old to be sold as sex slaves; and the murder of gay men by throwing them off buildings. The list goes on. We also know that the threat here at home is real and severe. So for all those reasons, there can be no doubt that action against such evil is necessary and justified.

As I said last week, we are not an isolationist party. We recognise wider international obligations and responsibilities. Last week, I cited military and humanitarian examples—I will not repeat them—of intervention by UK forces under a Labour Government that had helped to secure peace and stability. That is why we are part of the allied forces in Iraq and Syria already. We are part of a campaign that shows solidarity with those who also recognise the threat of ISIL and we are playing our part militarily, diplomatically and on humanitarian issues.

UN Security Council Resolution 2249, unanimously passed on 20 November, calls on member states to use, "all necessary measures ... to prevent and suppress terrorist acts ... specifically by",

ISIL/Daesh; and to deny them "safe haven" in Syria and Iraq. Chapter VII, Article 51 of the UN Charter is clear about the inherent right of individual or

[BARONESS SMITH OF BASILDON]

collective self-defence until the Security Council has taken necessary measures to maintain international peace and security.

We clearly should be part of that coalition, seeking to weaken ISIL and to be a credible and authoritative voice in the Vienna talks to bring some peace and stability to Syria and the region. But on the specific Motion before the House of Commons that we are discussing here, there remain issues to be addressed in judging the effectiveness of the new action proposed. The Government are going to provide further reassurance on whether additional air strikes are the best way to achieve our common objectives, on the difference and impact that the extension of our military involvement in Syria will have, and on how it will contribute to the wider strategic aims, including the Vienna peace process.

We also want to know more about the wider comprehensive strategy, including the humanitarian implications and support that the noble Baroness referred to. I was glad that she referred to this because it is extremely important that there is greater engagement with moderate Islamic communities, working with them here in the UK to combat and prevent home-grown violent radicalisation. All of us will also want guarantees that every conceivable action will be taken to avoid innocent civilians being casualties or being killed.

I have a few questions which it would be helpful if the noble Earl, Lord Howe, could respond to when he winds up tonight. The first is on the military assessment of the difference that our extended involvement will bring, given the current level of engagement we already have in Syria and Iraq and the amount of bombing that has already taken place in Iraq and Syria. As we have heard—and I was grateful to the noble Baroness for her considered response on this today—only so much, however valuable, can be achieved by air strikes alone. There has been extensive debate over the last week about the potential of moderate ground forces, post air strikes, and what action they will be able to take. I am pleased that the noble Baroness referred today to the fact that a number of MPs and experts have questioned the reliability of the 70,000 estimate provided by the Prime Minister, and the ability of those ground forces to mobilise in a way that is deemed necessary, given that there are not the military command structures, weaponry or communications between air strikes to co-ordinate those land and air assaults.

I was pleased that the Government understood those concerns and that the noble Baroness provided more information today. When the noble Earl responds, can he say something more about the numbers? My information is slightly different, so I would like some clarification, including on when ground forces would be needed and how operations would be co-ordinated. Also, what consideration has been given to diplomatic initiatives to build up a larger coalition of regional ground troops?

There are significant and considerable encouraging developments at the Vienna peace talks, which we welcome and support. I appreciate the update from the noble Baroness today but, as encouraging as that is, we still seem to be a long way from developing more than a process, as important and crucial as having a

process is. The statement from the International Syria Support Group last month set early timescales for objectives to be met. Further meetings soon will evaluate progress, which will be a key diplomatic priority—for without progress in those talks, the strategic case fails. Can the noble Earl reassure your Lordships' House of the Government's confidence in the process and the advances that are being made?

I know that the Government understand that in terms of both the short-term and longer-term future of Syria, there are serious concerns about Assad. The noble Baroness was very clear last week about there being no role for Assad in a post-conflict Syria, but it remains uncertain how that will be achieved. The future of Syria, and the ability of Syrian refugees to return to their homeland to be part of the reconstruction, is dependent not just on removing ISIL but on removing Assad. Are the Government confident that the military action and objectives are adequately strategically linked to and co-ordinated with the diplomatic efforts that are taking place?

Obviously, to seriously combat ISIL/Daesh, as the noble Baroness said, we need to end or significantly limit its finances and funding. I find it absolutely extraordinary that, according to government estimates, it is funding its activities with around \$1.5 million each and every day from oil revenues, as well as from other sources. Is this part of the Vienna talks, and what immediate political and diplomatic efforts are being employed now?

Although we do not vote tonight, we bring consideration and thoughtfulness to this issue. We are extremely fortunate in having a number of noble Lords with considerable experience in diplomacy, in the military, in security, in aid and humanitarian work, in government and in Parliament. Their experiences may not lead them all to the same judgment at the same time, but I urge the Government to make use of that expertise.

I thank the Government for their commitment, in the statement that they issued to the House of Commons today, to provide quarterly progress reports. However, I just want the noble Earl to confirm later that this House will also receive those reports and that, should there be significant developments, additional statements will be provided and brought to your Lordships' House.

Finally, whatever the outcome of tonight's vote in the other place, we entirely concur with the final paragraph of the government Motion and offer our wholehearted support to Her Majesty's Armed Forces.

4.07 pm

**Lord Wallace of Tankerness (LD):** My Lords, I, too, thank the Leader of the House for ensuring that your Lordships' House has the opportunity today, concurrently with the House of Commons, to debate this very grave and profound issue. It is right that this Chamber has the opportunity to express its views to the Government. Although it will be the responsibility of Members of another place to vote on the specific question that is before them, it is nevertheless important that your Lordships' House can consider the wider questions and proffer such constructive advice to Her Majesty's Government as we can. Looking at the speakers list, I see a vast reservoir of experience and expertise here

on which to draw. We look forward, not least, to the maiden speech of the noble Lord, Lord Hague of Richmond.

From these Benches, we unequivocally condemn the atrocities that continue to be perpetrated by ISIL/Daesh. No matter where in the world these horrific acts of terror have taken place, its actions are reprehensible. ISIL's evil is apparent to the world: we have seen it behead journalists and aid workers for a worldwide audience; we have heard of the rape and enslavement of Yazidi women; we have seen the summary execution of gay men and women; and we have seen ISIL's brutal occupation of vast tracts of Iraq and Syria. Day in, day out, we witness the sheer fear of thousands of ordinary people as they risk their lives fleeing from its terror.

We on these Benches have recognised that in defeating an enemy such as ISIL, the use of military force will be necessary. We have supported air strikes in Iraq, but the decision to use, or extend the use of, lethal force is never easy. It is important to take a balanced judgment, based on evidence, after careful consideration. That is precisely what the Liberal Democrats have done in the past, and precisely what we have done today. I was proud to be a member of a party that stood alone in 2003 in opposing the war in Iraq. I was equally proud to support my noble friend Lord Ashdown when he alone called for military intervention to stop the massacres in Bosnia. That is why, as I explained to the House last week, we wrote to the Prime Minister setting out five considerations by which we would judge the words and actions of the Government when they were making their case for military action. We have also deliberated on the case for military action from our position as a liberal, international and humanitarian party.

The first consideration is whether military intervention is legal. In 2003, there was no UN resolution to legitimise action. That was therefore the crux of my party's argument against the war then. Therefore, the role of the UN Security Council in Resolution 2249, which it adopted unanimously on 20 November, is extremely important. The resolution has already been quoted. It calls on member states to,

"take all necessary measures ... to eradicate the safe haven they"—

ISIL—

"have established over significant parts of Iraq and Syria".

We know that so far this year, seven terrorist attacks by ISIL against the United Kingdom have been prevented. Daesh, or ISIL, is a direct threat to the United Kingdom, to our allies and to international peace and security. Our closest neighbour and ally in Europe has just suffered the most brutal of attacks on its capital city, and the request from France that we give military support engages the right of collective self-defence under Article 51.

A second consideration is whether a wider diplomatic framework is in place, including efforts towards a no-bomb zone to protect civilians. We have consistently called for a diplomatic effort to put together a wider coalition, including those who have an interest in the defeat of jihadism, notably Russia and Iran. Any military action by the United Kingdom must be part of a wider international effort involving all those who have an interest in defeating ISIL.

Therefore, we welcome the diplomatic process in the Vienna talks, aimed at ensuring that the world remains engaged with Syria through this period of conflict and beyond, supporting the Syrian people to rebuild in a post-ISIL, post-Assad Syria. We recognise that these talks are still at a fairly embryonic stage and that the international coalition remains fragile, so we urge the Government to continue to be an engaged member of this process and to be at the forefront in ensuring that the Vienna talks succeed in bringing together the broadest possible support for action to end the war in Syria and to effect a political transition.

The third consideration we have set out relates to the Government's response to our call for the United Kingdom to lead a concerted international effort to put pressure on the Gulf states to stop the funding of jihadi groups within the region and worldwide. We believe that the United Kingdom should press the Gulf states to do much more to assist in the effort to defeat ISIL, to establish peace in Syria and to help with refugees. Such states, we feel, are currently doing very little. However, ISIL is not just a western problem. It is a travesty to suggest that this is a battle between the West and the self-proclaimed caliphate. One way to prevent Daesh framing the situation in that way would be greater involvement by other countries within the region. I therefore repeat some of the questions I asked the noble Baroness last week during the Statement: what pressure is being put on our coalition partners in the Gulf to rejoin air strikes? What are the Government doing to ensure that they play their part? Are the Government confident that some of our coalition partners are doing enough in their own countries to stop the funding of ISIL and other extremist groups? It is surely critical that the Gulf states are vocal in their condemnation of ISIL.

Fourthly—the noble Baroness gave us some indication of this—the Government must map out what kind of Syria they wish to see post ISIL and what post-conflict strategy they will propose to give the best chance of avoiding a power vacuum in the immediate post-ISIL Syria. This is, of course, linked to the diplomatic discussion and framework to which I have already referred. The future of Syria after any action must be at the forefront of the minds of all those asking for support for air strikes, both here in the United Kingdom and among our international partners.

The fifth strand of our consideration regards the Government's plans domestically. The fight against Daesh is not just in the Middle East; it is within Europe and it is here in the United Kingdom. We had urged the Government to conduct an investigation into foreign funding and support of extremist and terrorist groups within the United Kingdom. We very much welcome the Prime Minister's positive response to that call when he addressed the other place this morning. We also want to know, and be reassured, that the Government intend to take steps to engage fully with Britain's peace-loving Muslim community, to ensure understanding of the action and strategy that the Government are proposing.

My party leader, Tim Farron, has spoken very movingly indeed of his visits this year to Calais and Lesbos. I know he was profoundly affected by what he witnessed there: thousands of people who have made

[LORD WALLACE OF TANKERNESS]

the dangerous crossing across the Mediterranean, through Turkey and the Aegean, to flee from Syria, Iraq and, in particular, from ISIL. I therefore echo his call for the Government to step up their acceptance of Syrian refugees and, in particular, to opt in to the proposal from Save the Children for the UK to give a home to 3,000 unaccompanied refugee children from within Europe. In his reply, will the Minister say whether the Government recognise, as has been highlighted by Save the Children, that several thousand refugee children have disappeared after arriving in Italy? Will the Government accept that there is a responsibility on all European nations, including us, to protect such children from further exploitation?

Concern was expressed by the noble Baroness, Lady Smith—and, indeed, was addressed by the Leader of the House—about the army of 70,000 ground troops, which we are told can commence effective ground action in Syria. The noble Baroness herself said that it was far from an ideal situation. Over time, we will want to be reassured, and seek a commitment, that Ministers will regularly update the House on the inevitably complicated twists and turns of the various alliances on the ground. Will the Minister give clarity about how they will cut off the flow of finance, fighters and weapons to ISIL?

Let us not kid ourselves: there are no quick-fix solutions for dealing with ISIL. Nor is there is an easy, simple route to peace and stability in Syria; it would be wrong to pretend otherwise. Nor should we pretend that doing nothing further is a risk-free option. My party has come to a difficult and very finely balanced judgment. I agree with the assessment of my party leader that air strikes alone will not resolve the hugely complex political situation in Syria. Tonight we are lending our support in the House of Commons for military action only because it is part of a wider strategy. We are clear that that must be done only in a political and diplomatic context.

I recognise, and respect, the considered and sincerely held views of many others who have reached a different conclusion. At this point, no one can be sure whether the action that the Government are taking and asking the other place to support will succeed, but I personally believe that unless something is done to remove ISIL from Syria, there is no hope whatever of progressing towards the goal of a safe and stable Syria.

This is clearly not the end of the debates and discussions in this House or the other place on this country's role in Syria. It is the duty of Parliament—I hope your Lordships will see it as our particular duty—to scrutinise closely the actions of the Government in the weeks and months ahead, paying particular attention to the quarterly reports promised by the Government. We will not be uncritical if we believe the Government are making mistakes as the situation progresses. We on these Benches will continue to do what we can after today to hold the Government to account for the steps they should be taking to chart a diplomatic way forward, as well as contributing to future reconstruction in Syria, so that those people currently living in despair in Syria and the refugee camps can have a secure and stable future in their own country.

4.18 pm

**Lord Dannatt (CB):** My Lords, I am sure I am not alone among noble Lords in almost losing track of the number of times in recent days that someone has asked the question, “Are we right to bomb Syria?” Although that is a very fair question, asked by many concerned people, it is, however, fundamentally the wrong question to ask. Although more long-winded, the real question is whether the United Kingdom is willing to become a fully committed member of the international coalition in pursuit of the strategic objective of defeating ISIL/Daesh, the so-called Islamic State. To that question, there must be the unequivocal answer yes, on the basis that the biggest threat to our security today indeed comes from ISIL/Daesh.

It is my sincere hope that Members of the other place will vote in significant numbers in favour of the Motion that they are currently debating. To do otherwise would send an appalling message that the UK has pulled up the drawbridge, is no longer an ally that can be trusted and has lost its appetite to be a significant positive influence in Europe and the wider world. However, this is of course more than just about sending the right message, as important as that is. It is about being part of an effective coalition that is not only clear about its strategic objective but has a credible and coherent plan that takes us from where we are now to the defeat of so-called Islamic State and on to a more secure and stable Syria and that wider region. It also has to be accepted that the defeat of the so-called Islamic State will not come about through diplomatic pressure or economic sanctions; they are not susceptible to those measures. Defeat will come about through military reverse for them on the battlefields in Syria and Iraq. This will involve co-ordinated air and ground operations. However, those operations will make sense only within a coherent diplomatic and political framework.

The immediate challenge in front of us is to create the diplomatic framework within which military operations can sensibly be conducted. United Nations Security Council Resolution 2249 was an important step in the right direction, and so are the continuing talks in Vienna, but we need a constructive dialogue with the Russians, Iranians, Turks and other key interested parties in the region to work out common objectives and then create a co-ordinated plan. Then there is the Syrian regime itself. Western Governments are determined that President Assad has no role in the future. His transition out of power is therefore an urgent imperative, but many Syrians do not wish to see the throwing over of the complete Syrian regime. They saw the vacuum that was created in Libya after Gaddafi and they do not want that to happen to Syria—and I suggest that we do not wish to see that either. As the Prime Minister seemed to suggest in his opening speech in the other place earlier today, we need to work with the Syrian armed forces against ISIL/Daesh rather than see those armed forces fighting against their own citizens.

The bottom line is that if we do not want to see western international boots on the ground, yet we accept that the defeat of ISIL/Daesh will come about only through successful action on the ground, albeit

supported from the air, we have to find enough local ground forces that are well enough led, equipped and trained to be successful. The apparent 70,000 Free Syrian opposition forces are not reliable nor good enough to achieve the success needed. A reinvigorated Iraqi army, the Peshmerga, the Jordanians, possibly even the Turks and the Iranians, are all needed to play a significant part in the ground operations, as is the Syrian army itself. Without this level of local participation on the ground, we may have to face again the unpalatable option of deploying western combat units on the ground at some point in future.

4.22 pm

**The Archbishop of Canterbury:** My Lords, I add to the welcomes given to the noble Lord, Lord Hague of Richmond, and note his perfect timing in bringing his immeasurable wisdom and experience to our debates. I look forward very much to his contribution.

To my mind, the “just war” criteria have been met. However, while they are necessary, they are not by themselves sufficient in action of this kind, where we can end up doing the right thing in such a wrong way that it becomes the wrong thing. To my mind, there are three components that currently need more emphasis and are to some extent missing. In this role, through visiting all 38 provinces of the Anglican communion, through the constant contacts that we have with Muslim and Christian leaders in the region, as recently as three weeks ago in a conference at Lambeth Palace, I am constantly reminded that this is a global issue to which we are applying local solutions.

First, ISIL is but one head of the hydra; religiously motivated extremism is not restricted to one part of the world. Secondly, our bombing action plays into the expectation of ISIL and other jihadist groups in the region, springing from their apocalyptic theology. The totality of our actions must subvert that false narrative, because by itself one action will not work. If we act globally only against ISIL, and only in the way proposed so far, we will strengthen their resolve, increase their recruitment and encourage their sympathisers. Without a far more comprehensive approach, we confirm their dreadful belief that what they are doing is the will of God.

Thirdly, it is as essential to defeat the narratives of ISIL and other extremists. The Prime Minister’s strategy and the Minister’s speech rightly recognise that military action is only one part of the answer. There must be a global theological and ideological component, not just one in this country, to what we are doing. It must be one that is relentlessly pursued and promoted and it must include challenging Saudi Arabia and Qatar, whose promotion of a particular brand of Islamic theology has provided a source from which ISIL has drawn false legitimisation. It must also show clear support for global mainstream Muslim and other religious leaders.

Lastly, there is room and requirement for greater generosity in our nation’s hospitality to refugees, but hospitality must be accompanied by a clear strategy that reduces the need for others to seek sanctuary, which was mentioned in the Minister’s remarks and is welcome, and enables those who have fled to return. Communities that have lived there for 2,000 years

should not simply be emptied from that region. The additional military force that we are bringing to this quasi-policing operation, which is already active over Syria, symbolically—and to some extent significantly—adds to what is happening there. Far more than that, it enables us to act where our resources and expertise are world-leading in the creation of post-conflict peace and nation building. Only a holistic, theological and global policy will achieve our aims.

4.26 pm

**Lord Hague of Richmond (Con) (Maiden Speech):**

My Lords, it may be regarded as a perilous exercise to embark on a maiden speech and comment on a grave international situation in a matter of a few minutes but, as someone who led the Conservative Party at the time of the height of the power and success of Tony Blair, I am no stranger to perilous exercises—or indeed to time-limited exercises. It is a great honour to follow the speech of the most reverend Primate. Indeed, it is a great honour to be here at all and to find many old friends residing here on all sides of the House—and many old foes residing here on all sides of the House as well. I intend to use my membership of this place to comment on issues such as this but also to work on issues I am passionate about, such as the prevention of sexual violence in conflict and combating the illegal wildlife trade, matters on which I know I will find common cause in many parts of this House.

Like many former MPs, I am hugely influenced by my former constituents, and I am proud to bear the title of “Richmond” in this place. My former constituents are distinguished by many things. One is their common sense—after all, it is Richmond, Yorkshire, we are talking about. One is their ability to choose Members of Parliament—I am followed by a very able MP in Rishi Sunak. One is the huge military presence at Catterick Garrison and RAF Leeming, and that brings me directly to this debate because it means I spent a quarter of a century listening to and learning from people in the Army and the RAF. That has given me great confidence when we ask them to go into any action, but has also taught me never to take lightly any decision to extend their action, as is being debated today.

I want to make three points in two minutes about that. First, we should always be open to imaginative diplomacy, however difficult it may be. I can tell noble Lords that it is desperately difficult. In June 2012, I helped to negotiate the nearest we came to a resolution of the Syrian crisis. All the members of the Security Council and all the leading Arab nations agreed that there would be a transitional Government in Syria formed by mutual consent from the opposition and the Assad regime. Those of us with influence over the then Syrian opposition delivered it to the peace conference to implement that. Russia, with its influence over Assad, did not deliver the Assad regime to implement that. Had it done so, we would not be having this debate and Russia would not be embroiled in Syria today. However, every renewed effort must be made. We have heard about the efforts being made now and, if they do not work, we should be open to new solutions. In the end, if communities and leaders cannot live peacefully together in Syria and Iraq,

[LORD HAGUE OF RICHMOND]

we will have to try to have them living peacefully but separately in the partition of those countries, although I say that regretfully.

Secondly, while military force alone cannot defeat Daesh, it cannot be defeated without military force. That is a very obvious point. When it enslaves women, murders hostages and persecutes minorities, it is not seeking a negotiation. Since our security as the United Kingdom rests on our alliances, and our greatest alliances are with the United States and France, if our security is indivisible from theirs it would be extraordinary and we would need a very compelling reason not to act with them in this crisis.

Thirdly, if we are to take this action, it must be effective. That means that it has to be, sadly, against economic infrastructure that Daesh controls. It should not rule out, as the noble Lord, Lord Dannatt, said, the use of perhaps small specialist ground forces from western nations in the future if that helps to tip the balance on the ground. However, on that basis, I believe that it is in the national interest of the United Kingdom to act with our closest allies in this crisis.

4.31 pm

**Lord Jay of Ewelme (CB):** My Lords, during my diplomatic career, my normal posture vis-à-vis Foreign Secretaries was for me to say a few words and then bow my head lightly while I was given a detailed and well-judged critique of what I had said. I cannot imagine a more appropriate moment to reverse that than to have the privilege of congratulating the noble Lord, Lord Hague, on an expectedly brilliant maiden speech. The noble Lord is a very distinguished former Foreign Secretary, a very distinguished biographer—I cannot praise *William Wilberforce* too highly—and a brilliant orator. I cannot imagine a better conjugation of talents for your Lordships' House than political experience, historical wisdom and oratorical genius. If the maiden speech that we have heard is a prelude of what is to come, we can only look forward with impatience, as the French would say, to further treats in store.

Having said that, I must rapidly regain my independence by recalling that I spoke against military action in Syria two years ago because it was not clear what the targets would be or what the objectives were. I spoke for military action against Daesh last year but argued that we should do so with our eyes wide open and recognised that when—and I believed that it was “when” and not “if”—the Government put forward proposals for action against Syria, we should have to accept that our allies would in some ways be unfortunate or unpleasant and include Iran, but more particularly that we would have to accept that action against ISIL—Daesh—must take precedence against action against Assad. We cannot have two conflicting objectives at the same time.

There is no doubt that Daesh continues to be a direct threat to the United Kingdom, as we saw in Tunisia and as others have seen only too clearly recently, notably in Paris, from which I returned this morning. There is in addition a clear and unanimous United Nations Security Council resolution authorising all necessary measures against Daesh and denying them a

safe haven in Iraq and Syria. Furthermore, joining the United States, France and others by extending action against Daesh into Syria will add capability to that action and will strengthen our hand in pressing for effective diplomatic action to find a political settlement in Syria; for example, through the International Syria Support Group. Stepping up that search in parallel with military action is essential.

Equally, we have to be realistic about this. Getting those negotiations going, let alone completing them, is going to be fraught, complex and time-consuming and will not easily take place in parallel with the necessary military action. We cannot, as the noble Baroness said in introducing this debate, do nothing while we wait for a long and drawn-out diplomatic process to continue; we have to try to do both at the same time. We have to take decisions on the basis of the judgments and evidence we have before us now.

I have nothing but respect for those who take a different view on the case for action against Syria and I see no advantage whatever in denigrating them, but I have no doubt, either, that extending military action against Daesh from Iraq into Syria is now the right thing to do.

4.35 pm

**Lord King of Bridgwater (Con):** My Lords, I recall that many years ago, as a young man of 16, the noble Lord, Lord Hague, stood up at a Conservative Party conference and said that some of us there would not be around in 30 years' time. Well, I am one of those who is still around 30 years later, having listened to him from the platform. I remember also campaigning in Richmond 29 years ago, when I thought we had a promising young MP on the way who might do quite well. He made an absolutely outstanding maiden speech, which all noble Lords in this Chamber will remember. We look forward very much to hearing him again.

So much has already been said with which I entirely agree, and I am not going to emphasise the points about the obscenity of Daesh or the urgency and importance of the threat. I just want to say one thing. The duty of many noble Lords in this House is to bring any experience to bear on this debate. It is the value of this House, perhaps, over the other place. I spent a lot of years fighting terrorism. One thing I know about terrorism is that it needs money. One of the major challenges in Northern Ireland was trying to switch off the money coming from America—trying to stop the funding of the arms and equipment that was coming out of Libya, paid for by certain well-meaning benefactors who did not realise where their money was going. That is the background against which I approach this.

That is why I welcome the emphasis on dealing with economic forces in the speech from my noble friend the Leader of the House. I am not sure whether the figure she gave for daily income was in pounds or dollars, but whatever it was, it was a huge figure. There is also the amount of weaponry sloshing around in the world, particularly the large quantities from Slovakia, for some reason. Daesh is undoubtedly well equipped and does not seem to have any shortage of ammunition or weaponry, and no shortage at the moment, sadly, of markets in which to dispose of its oil. These are the

areas we need to tackle—particularly oil, but also donations from unsuitable quarters that may be coming to it, and compulsory taxation of the populations in some of the towns it presently occupies.

The noble Baroness leading the debate for the Opposition said that, perhaps in some ways, just a marginal increase was being proposed. What we are talking about is doing in Syria what we are already doing in Iraq. Our allies have asked for our help in that respect. To hear some people talk, you would think we were proposing carpet-bombing the whole of Raqqa and the whole of Syria. Importantly, the beauty of Brimstone, which some noble Lords have talked about, is not just that it is extremely precise and accurate and can hit moving targets, but it actually has a rather small explosive charge. It is not a great bunker-busting bomb that sends shrapnel flying in every direction, killing men, women and children.

What have we learnt so far—what have we learnt from Iraq? The Minister has just been to Baghdad, and I know she will not mind me quoting the tribute that was paid to the RAF for its minimising civilian casualties. It has shown that it can do it there. This is what we need to do. This is not a major change, but it would be a very major change if we refused to support our allies.

I will say just one thing to the noble and learned Lord, Lord Wallace. He said, “Get the Gulf Cooperation Council—the countries in the region—to play their part”. If we did not say yes today, it would be that much harder to persuade those countries to play their part. This is a step and, having taken it, we can then turn to them and say, “Right. We’re now all in this together”. That is the way we can really make progress against a very evil organisation that threatens us all.

4.40 pm

**Baroness Ramsay of Cartvale (Lab):** My Lords, like everyone else in the House, I very much appreciated the maiden speech of the noble Lord, Lord Hague, and of course we all look forward to hearing him many times more on this and other topics.

When, in September 2014, this House debated air strikes against Daesh in Iraq, I said that these were very much more limited in scope and were being proposed much later than I would have wanted but that they were better than nothing. Well, here we are again. As many of us predicted, we are trying to extend the air strikes against Daesh to its whole footprint in the Middle East—in Syria as well as Iraq.

In the many lengthy debates in this House in 2003, I constantly maintained that three considerations—legal, moral and political—had to be involved in issues of military intervention. It was true then and it is true now.

On legality, we have UN Security Council Resolution 2249. Perhaps I may give a quick word of advice to the Government: do not be sidetracked by the legal validity of your mandate being questioned, because you will find that it probably will be. I speak as a lifelong UN supporter, but I tell noble Lords that no one now objects to the British interventions in Sierra Leone or Kosovo, where we did not have a UN resolution. In 2003, we had 16 Chapter VII resolutions to take military action against Saddam and everybody demanded a 17th.

Morally, is anyone in doubt about the evil of this death cult, which beheads and crucifies the innocent, throws gays off roofs, enslaves and rapes young women and kills all the old ones?

Politically, all agree that all diplomatic, humanitarian and political activities need to be pursued—they already are in Vienna and elsewhere, as the noble Baroness the Lord Privy Seal enumerated when she made her presentation of the Motion—as well as cutting off the sources of finance. I do not think we need the details of what is being done about that because undoubtedly our intelligence and other agencies are doing that worldwide as we speak.

However, without military intervention as well, none of these will succeed, so we need not fool ourselves. If the UK wants to be in on the political solution process, it has to play a full part in the military component of the struggle against Daesh, along with our allies, who have asked for our help. No one argues that air strikes alone are a complete answer, but that is not to say, as some are doing at the moment in the public domain, that their achievements will be negligible. Try telling that to the Kurds who were desperately defending Kobane or to those who recently recaptured Sinjar. In both these operations, air support was absolutely crucial.

There is much talk of lessons to be learned from our past. As a veteran of government service in 1990-91, when a year of my life was taken up by Iraq and the first Gulf War, as well as a parliamentarian and a member of the ISC in 2003, which saw the overthrow of Saddam, the biggest lesson that I draw from the past is: if you do not in good time confront evil in its heartland, evil will come to you in your heartland. I support the Government’s proposals.

4.44 pm

**Lord Ashdown of Norton-sub-Hamdon (LD):** My Lords, it is a very great pleasure to welcome and congratulate the noble Lord, Lord Hague, on his speech. He was a doughty friend and supporter of all that we tried to do in Bosnia, and I thank him for that. He and his colleague the noble Baroness, Lady Helic, made a very significant contribution there.

I hope that today marks a watershed not just for the people of Syria but in our battle to remove the scourge and terror of ISIL and in the foreign policy of Her Majesty’s Government. In the last 10 years, since shock and awe, we have been obsessed by high explosives as our singular instrument of foreign policy. We have forgotten again and again and again the old dictum of Clausewitz that war is an extension of diplomacy by other means. So in Afghanistan we relied on high explosives: we did not build the relationships with the neighbours that we should have built, we did not build that diplomatic context, and we lost. In Iraq, we did the same. And we lost. In Libya, when it came to constructing the peace, we did the same. And we lost. And for the last three years we have been doing exactly the same. And we were losing. Maybe we will now give ourselves a chance to turn that around and make success.

The more alert Members of your Lordships’ House will recall that I have made the point over the last three years, in this place and in newspaper articles, that bombing alone would not succeed and that we ignored

[LORD ASHDOWN OF NORTON-SUB-HAMDON] the diplomatic context—there was none. I remember saying, time and again, that to make the removal of Assad a cardinal principle of our policy when we did not have the means to make it happen was utter folly. If you will the ends, you must will the means, and we had none, since he was supported by Russia and Iran. I made the point, time and again, that this was not about the West but about the growing Sunni-Shia conflict, and we had to try and get in and unite those two groups; that we needed to create a proper coalition; that we needed to involve the Russians—I remember the rather derisory comments when I first made that proposition.

Now, we have that. At last, in Vienna, we have a proposition for a widening coalition between Sunni and Shia with the involvement of the Russians. To back that, we have a UN Security Council resolution, which, by the way, does not just legitimise action but lays a duty upon us to take action. That is what the words say. So all the ingredients that I sought to make some sense of military action are now either in place or in progress. How could I not back that?

However, I want to make two points very clear. The first is that British bombing alone will not defeat ISIL. It might add something—a rather small amount, I think—to the weight of bombs that are falling, but it is the coalition being constructed in Vienna today that will first of all defeat ISIL and then move on to create, I hope, some kind of stable peace in Syria. By the way, those who want to get rid of Assad need to recognise that it is only in the context of that coalition that Assad will now be removed. So of course one would want to support that. With a coalition that comes up with a military strategy first—as in Dayton, when we had to bomb the war to an end to beat the Serbs—and then a strategy to create some kind of stability in Syria, how could it be the case that Britain would not play a part in that? So, yes, I support the Government.

Secondly, and finally, if you launch war, you launch unpredictability. The best that we are deciding on today is that, on the balance of probabilities, this is the best opportunity that we will have. There are no certainties. If we are successful in removing ISIL and creating some context of stability in Syria, it will be messy, conflict-ridden and inelegant. The peace that we may be able to create will not look very nice. In fact, probably the only thing to be said for that peace is that it will be better than the war that it ended.

I remember so well when the citizens of Sarajevo had to suffer four years of conflict. The Dayton peace agreement left a mess, but there was not one of them who did not say that that mess was better than the war that preceded it. I bet that there is not one person—

**Baroness Evans of Bowes Park (Con):** My Lords, we have been very clear that we really need to stick to time. I would be grateful for the next speaker.

**Lord Ashdown of Norton-sub-Hamdon:** I will draw my remarks to a close. There is not one citizen—

**Baroness Evans of Bowes Park:** I am sorry, my Lords, but could we move on to the noble Baroness, Lady Hollins?

4.49 pm

**Baroness Hollins (CB):** My Lords, little has been said about the psychological roots and psychological impact of war and terrorism, and I am grateful to senior colleagues at the Royal College of Psychiatrists and the British Psychological Society for their advice. How and why do young people choose to fight with a terrorist organisation? They started life needing the same things that we need: to be safe, to be loved, to have a future. What went wrong? Misguided idealism is an inadequate answer. Each started as an ordinary child whose life pathway took them to a place where they started doing extraordinarily evil things.

All children in growing up take time and need parental support to achieve the intellectual and emotional maturity that will allow them to modulate their behaviour and manage powerful feelings such as anger, impotence and despair. Children traumatised by violence or abuse are more likely to go on to inflict trauma on those weaker than themselves. The bully looks for the Achilles heel of his enemy before striking. Trauma is trans-generational, but its expression may vary from generation to generation and our primary task must be to try to break the cycle of trauma. Education and care are critical. Our schools pay insufficient attention to the emotional needs of their students; child and adolescent mental health services have been cut to the bone; and youth services have an inadequate reach. This is not good enough. We must invest in the mental health of future generations, not just in mental health services but in creating mentally healthy communities.

You might ask what I know of war. My father died of his war wounds 50 years after he was seriously injured on the day after D-day while leading a battalion inland from the Normandy beaches. He suffered post-traumatic stress disorder for the rest of his life, but it was not diagnosed or treated. The ripples of war last for a long time. Many veterans of more recent wars still live with the psychological consequences of their military experience with shockingly little support for their mental wounds. It seems that we have still not provided the infrastructure needed to help our own veterans resume a normal life. Some civilian survivors of the London Blitz had nightmares for 50 years because they did not know they could get help. Even now, only one in seven people in this country seeking psychological therapy will get it. The Prime Minister says that the infrastructure needed to help Syria recover after the war is over will be provided, but has he factored in the psychiatric and psychological treatment and rehabilitation services that will be essential for peace to be secured?

As a psychiatrist myself, I know, and as most psychologists know, here in the west we are seeing a knee-jerk and “groupthink” reaction. Our horror at events in Paris and Tunisia has turned into a rush to violent retribution. It is inevitable that many people will lose friends and family members and be seriously traumatised as a result of British bombs, some of them going on to suffer post-traumatic stress disorder, complicated bereavement, depression and anxiety. They will stay awake at night, unable to forget the awful things that they have seen. What about children bereaved of parents or siblings, who will not have parents to teach them about forgiveness and about normal human

relationships of love and trust? Some of the people whose families and friends we have bombed will join the original aggressors and the cycle will go on.

Syrian refugees settled in the UK are likely to have ambivalent feelings, including concern for relatives left behind. They will be directly aware of what is happening back home through social media. How much investment is being made in the communities from which British-born IS volunteers are recruited? By enriching their families' lives and investing in the stable future of those societies, we would be investing in the whole world's security.

Restoring peace, security and the rule of law, and freedom from arbitrary murder, persecution, rape and terror, would be one of the best mental health interventions there is, but does the Minister agree that attending to psychological trauma experienced by survivors will also be essential to break the cycle of violence?

4.54 pm

**Baroness Helic (Con):** My Lords, I congratulate my noble friend on his powerful and timely maiden speech. I had the privilege to work with him for over a decade and it is my honour to be on the same Benches now.

When the Arab spring arrived in Syria, I was heartened by the support that many rightfully offered to its people. I was disappointed when that support ebbed away and, most of all, when the hands of our own Government were tied after the use of chemical weapons by Assad forces. Those who voted against military action then, when ISIL barely existed, said it could only make things worse. Today, thousands more people are dead, there are 5 million refugees and Lebanon, Turkey, Tunisia and Paris have been attacked. It is hard to imagine how it could have been any worse.

I supported the Government then and I support the Government now. Daesh poses a threat to the United Kingdom and we cannot rely on the others to defend our security. It is deliberately working to undermine the cohesion as well as the security of our societies by trying to create a clash of religions. If we simply wait, the poison will spread and we will have to pay an even higher price to confront it in the future.

It seems obvious that military action to disrupt Daesh is only a part of the solution, along with choking off its finances and external support, securing the border between Turkey and Syria and, above all, working on a political settlement. This means being clear about what kind of Syria we wish to see emerge and overcoming the question of President Assad that has paralysed diplomacy. We should not confuse the process of diplomacy, which will require dealings with Damascus, however unpalatable, with the outcome we are seeking—a stable, sovereign Syria, at peace with itself and its neighbours.

Like others in this House, I recall the ending of the war in Bosnia, after mass atrocities, mass displacement and the Srebrenica genocide. The person behind many of these crimes, President Milosevic of Serbia, was one of the main signatories of the peace agreement with the full blessing of the international community. It was a flawed and unjust peace, giving de facto recognition to ethnic cleansing. However, it stopped the killings, refugees went back and Milosevic ended his days in The Hague, exactly where he belonged.

Assad has presided over the slaughter of his own people and the destruction of Syria. We cannot continue letting his sheer existence decide if, when and how the war ends. While there is no future for Assad in Syria, we today must find a way forward. We have faced such difficult moral, political and strategic situations before and found a solution through diplomacy and hard power. We must do the same for Syria for the sake of its people, peace and our own security. That, in my view, must start with military action against Daesh in Syria.

4.57 pm

**Lord Berkeley (Lab):** My Lords, I have been persuaded to speak by many friends and families who are questioning the need to bomb on its own. I was interested to see a poll in one of the papers this morning saying that the majority of the population was opposed to bombing. I see this as a debate about whether bombing will help the inevitable peace process that will come.

We are, to some extent, moving into a war situation of our own making. This is a religious war between different parts of the Muslim faith. However, we have had that before. We have had religious wars for the past thousand years, including one in Northern Ireland, as the noble Lord, Lord King, mentioned, and the Crusades. They were all highly destructive, as many noble Lords have said. So I question why we want to be in this one. Could we not be more useful being sympathetic bystanders supporting the diplomatic work that is going on? It is not as if one side—if there is one side; there are several sides at the moment—is better than others. We change our favourites rather too often for credibility. ISIL is a horrible organisation, but I am told that there were in fact 102 executions in Saudi Arabia in the first six months of this year while ISIL is recorded as conducting 66. I do not know whether that is right but it puts a balance on these things.

What good does bombing do? It keeps the people who make bombs happy, obviously, and other people may feel good, but what else does it do? It invites retaliation, which we have had and we may get more. The biggest question I have is this: who are we targeting? It is fine to say that we can pinpoint people with drones—we have seen that—but there are an awful lot of other bombs around and an awful lot of other people who are being killed or blown out of their houses. I do not accept the figure of 70,000 people being trained on the ground to support this. Again, I have seen a report which stated that training cost the US Government more than £1 billion but that only seven people actually turned up to fight the war.

I suppose my next question is: what is the effect of bombing? It destroys homes and businesses—something that we have seen everywhere—in a way that is miles out of proportion to the horrible things we have seen in Paris and other places recently. We have seen it in London in times past. People leave for a better life. They are now coming to Europe and to the UK—and why not, if we bomb them out of their homes? If it happened here, where would we go? We would want to go somewhere else. We would be refugees, like everyone else. So I see this as a rather nasty vicious circle. We make the bombs, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states

[LORD BERKELEY]

buy them with their oil money, thus keeping alive the industry that makes them, and they pass on the weapons to their friends and neighbours for this war.

I think that there is a much better way of doing this, which is to encourage them to make peace through a massive co-ordinated and effective humanitarian peace mission. The noble Lord, Lord Hague, in his excellent speech talked about imaginative diplomacy. I think that that is what we should be doing now, and I am not persuaded that bombing will add anything to this.

5.01 pm

**Baroness Jolly (LD):** My Lords, recent research by Charles Lister, a visiting fellow at the Brookings Doha Center, found after interviewing Syrians of all faiths and sects that they valued their pluralist society of old and wanted to return to the days when Christians and Druze were friends and all lived on the same street. The debate today allows us to debate whether the action proposed by the Government will contribute to this aspiration.

After much deliberation, Lib Dem MPs are supporting the Government based on five criteria or principles: that the action should be legal; that there should be a diplomatic framework; that we should lead pressure on the Gulf states and Turkey to re-engage; and that there should be a post-Daesh plan that includes an exit strategy. At home, we should look into foreign funding for British extremist groups, do better on refugees and adopting the Save the Children plan for child refugees, publish the report on the Muslim Brotherhood and, finally, work on all of this with our European neighbours to co-ordinate our action plan against Daesh.

Any military action by the UK must be part of a wider international effort involving all who have an interest in defeating Daesh, which is not an army but a collective mafia. This would be as a prelude to ending the conflict in Syria and Iraq. The effort must include Russia, Iran and Turkey. The Government should use all efforts to ensure that the Vienna talks succeed in bringing together the broadest possible support for action to end the war in Syria and effect political transition, as well as physical and economic reconstruction.

One thing that has not been mentioned so far but must be addressed is the appallingly high unemployment rate among young men and women across MENA: to be disenfranchised, educated and unemployed is just what appeals to Daesh recruiters. The UK should lead a concerted international effort to put pressure on the Gulf states to stop their nationals funding jihadi groups within the region and worldwide.

Daesh collects taxes, and even VAT, and a cash economy does not suit its way of working: it uses banks. Oil and gas plundered from Syria and Iraq is finding its way on to the world market and putting \$3 million a day straight into Daesh coffers. Although I know that we all differ on that figure, whatever it is, it is an awful lot. At the moment it looks very much as if Turkey is complicit, allowing transit across its borders and then into the international market. We need to deny Daesh use of world banking systems and oil markets.

Daesh is not short of arms and armour. It took American kit from Iraq and Russian kit from Syria, but, as I read in a new report yesterday, and contrary to what the noble Lord, Lord King, said, it needs ammunition. There will always be an arms trader who wants to make an easy dollar, renminbi, rouble, euro or pound. Is the Minister confident that no Daesh oil is finding its way into our markets? I would be grateful if he would also explain to the House the moves being taken to curb the sale of oil and ammunition, and the stops on banking, in particular in Syria.

At home, we call on the Government to step up their acceptance of Syrian refugees and to opt in to Save the Children's proposal to rehome 3,000 unaccompanied refugee children from within Europe. For politicians, your Lordships will understand that this works out at about five children per constituency.

My challenge to the Government is to ensure that debates over military intervention do not drown out the cries of those desperate for our help, and that we keep our eyes very much on the plight of the Syrians and plan for their future—a future of community, peace and growth. I support the Government in this and, along with my colleagues in the House of Commons, I very much hope that our support is not in vain.

5.06 pm

**Lord Harries of Pentregarth (CB):** My Lords, I have always found the Christian just war tradition an essential tool for thinking about military action. There is nothing esoteric about it. It is simply a way of ordering one's thoughts in relation to a well-established set of criteria.

In relation to the proposed bombing in Syria, the first three criteria are easily met. Is there just cause? Yes: Daesh is an evil that must be stopped. Is there competent authority? Yes: the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2249 calls on states to take "all necessary" means to overcome this threat to international peace. Is there just intention? Yes: to establish an ordered peace in territory now held by ruthless killers.

It is when we come to the last three of the six criteria that the issue becomes much more problematical. Have all other steps short of war been taken? No: there are clearly other actions that we should be tackling as a matter of urgency. One is working with Turkey to close the Turkey/Syria border to foreign fighters, who have in recent years made their way much too easily across it. The other is stopping the flow of arms to Daesh. Much stronger pressure must surely be put on those countries that are currently facilitating this.

The next two criteria are very closely intertwined and are crucial in the present debate in particular, as noble Lords have made clear. Namely, more good than evil must flow from the military action, and there must be a reasonable chance of success. We need to think very seriously about what we mean by "success" in this context. It has two aspects, both crucial. One is the worldwide battle for hearts and minds. We must never forget that the aim of these terrorists is to alienate young Muslim minds from the values of the countries in which they live and to win them over to their extreme form of religion.

There is a lesson to be learnt here from the liberation struggles in the 1960s against colonial powers. The guerrilla forces at that time knew that they could not win great battles, but their aim was to stay in existence long enough and be enough of a threat until the political battle had been won. That success depended on keeping the population for whom they were fighting on their side. Daesh must, and will, be defeated, but that would be worse than useless if military action resulted in thousands more disaffected Muslims joining its ranks worldwide. This could happen if bombing resulted in major civilian casualties. The problem now is that Daesh forces are clever enough to no longer present obvious military targets. They can and do very easily melt into the civilian population—a population that would be the main sufferers in any bombing campaign.

The second aspect of success means winning and holding Daesh territory and establishing stable government upon it. For this, as so many noble Lords have emphasised, ground forces are needed. But Syrian experts tell us that the Free Syrian Army, even if it numbered 70,000, is mainly in the south, with its fighters unwilling to fight outside their own provinces. As we know, they are very divided amongst themselves. Until there are ground forces in place ready to take territory—this probably means some prior political understanding with the Russians over the future of the Syrian Government, as the noble Lord, Lord Hague, so rightly stressed—I do not think that the criterion of a reasonable chance of success has been met. As the Prime Minister wrote, in response to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee,

“Without transition, it will ... be difficult to generate a Sunni force able to fight ISIL and hold ground in Eastern Syria”.

The Government are committed to a political and diplomatic process, which, of course, the whole House wholeheartedly supports. However, it is only the beginning of a process. It is premature to say that it is far enough advanced to have a reasonable chance of success on the ground, without which air strikes alone would be premature and could alienate the very people whom we want to hold to our side.

5.10 pm

**Lord Dobbs (Con):** My Lords, we are, I suspect, about to embark once again on the business of war. At this moment, above all else, we must remember that the objective of war is not to secure victory but to secure the peace.

It is understandable that so many are cautious. The failures of Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya cast a long shadow. I have considerable reservations. We are told that IS represents “a fundamental threat” to our national security, yet we will not commit troops to the ground under any circumstances. That is militarily bizarre. What are troops for if not to deal with a fundamental threat to our national security?

Am I alone in having no clear understanding of what the specific political objectives of the Free Syrian Army are? Perhaps my noble friend Lord Howe will be able to tell us when he winds up. Yet alongside those reservations, and many others, I ask myself this: what would we be saying if the attack had been on London rather than on Paris and the French refused to help us?

The headlines and the outpourings of insults and accusations would be appalling. Enduring friendships sometimes require us to swallow our doubts.

This will not be a war against Islam but against evil, butchers, beheaders and crucifiers. I have no doubt that we will win the military conflict, but what I fear most is that, in the aftermath of victory, we will throw away the peace, as we have done too many times before. If winning a war is a messy business, securing the peace can be far more difficult.

Peace in the land called Syria will not be the peace we hope for. We are going to get our hands dirty. It will involve deals with Russia and Iran. It will involve us finding a way of dealing with Assad, too, despite our reservations. Some will undoubtedly describe such deals as grubby. The end result will have little to do with democracy, human rights and fair play and everything to do with stability and practical things—grubby compromises. It might even involve an effective division of Syria or widespread and forced relocation of populations. Nothing can be ruled out. Sunni, Shi'ite and Kurd will demand autonomy and their own security, and how will we square our new friends the Kurds with our old allies the Turks?

In the end, we will do things that we would rather not do, and we will fail to do some of those things that we very much want to see done. If, and only if, we are ready to meet the challenges of that peace should we embark on this challenge of war. Let us not dare set out on a journey that we fail to finish.

5.14 pm

**Baroness Taylor of Bolton (Lab):** My Lords, my entry in the register of interests shows that I am a director of a large French high-tech company. That is not relevant to this debate but I thought it would be best to mention it. I start by mentioning something that was touched on earlier; namely, the amount of abuse that has been levelled at people on both sides of this argument. This is a serious matter and it was totally wrong of the Prime Minister to call those who intend to vote against him “terrorist sympathisers”. It was even more wrong of him not to apologise today. But it has also been wrong for those who are against action to threaten and abuse those who are voting in a different Lobby.

I am also very worried about the amount of abuse that British Muslims are getting at the moment. This is something that we all have to be extremely aware of. I represented a constituency in West Yorkshire which had the largest mosque in Europe and I know that the majority of my former constituents not only have no links with Daesh or terrorism but do not want any, and they are appalled that they are being condemned because of the actions of a very few.

There has also been a problem with the way in which the media have presented the arguments. The word “war” conjures up blanket bombing. “Bombing Syria” conjures up a different picture from “bombing Daesh”. We have to be realistic that we are talking about a very complex situation in a very complex region. Yet on one level the decision that the Commons is being asked to make today is very simple: to extend the action against Daesh that was agreed by Parliament—

[BARONESS TAYLOR OF BOLTON]

by the large majority that was mentioned earlier—just over the boundary into Syria, when no one there recognises that boundary at all. Yes, there are problems about ground troops, which have been mentioned. Yes, there is a difficulty in giving extra time to Assad. But no one is suggesting that there is a quick solution or indeed an alternative solution. The basic fact is that if we do not engage in this activity, Daesh in Syria will be stronger and we will all be more vulnerable.

I just want to say a word about the actual Motion that is before Members of the Commons today. It is not perfect but it is very well written. It says specifically that,

“military action against ISIL is only one component of a broader strategy”.

It talks about,

“the renewed impetus behind the Vienna talks”.

It mentions,

“the importance of planning for post-conflict stabilisation and reconstruction in Syria”.

It talks about cutting Daesh’s source of finance and weapons and the,

“continuing commitment to providing humanitarian support”—not enough. It makes it clear that our proposed air strikes will be only a part of that strategy, albeit a very important part.

The Vienna talks have been mentioned. We have to include the whole region and make all the countries in that region face their responsibilities for funding and assisting Daesh and for some of the doctrinaire ideas that are being propounded by some of the larger countries. There are difficulties here but it would be wrong to ignore the United Nations resolution that says we should take “all necessary measures”. We can do more to help in this situation. Military action is only one part of the solution—if there is a solution—but it is certainly not something that we should reject.

5.18 pm

**Baroness Falkner of Margravine (LD):** My Lords, I start by congratulating the noble Lord, Lord Hague of Richmond, on the brevity and clarity of his fantastic maiden speech. It was an important speech and the House needed to hear his voice today.

I have spoken in 43 debates on Syria since 2011. In the intervening five years, more than 9 million people have been displaced, more than 1 million injured and 250,000 killed. It is important for us to recognise that. For most of this period, I have argued for intervention because it was evident that, poorly governed as the Middle East is, it was incapable of resolution on its own. The rise of ISIL was not a surprise. Al-Qaeda and its affiliates have always mobilised in vacuums, as we know from Somalia and Afghanistan. As with AQ, so we have to deal with ISIL.

To those who have concerns about the UK’s belated engagement to degrade Islamic State in Syria, I say this: I am the first to admit that bombing cannot destroy an ideology, but it is undoubtedly true that the ownership of territory gives you the attributes of statehood. IS raises revenue from having 20 to 30 billion barrels of oil, pumped daily from captured fields in eastern Syria and northern Iraq and providing about

\$50 million a month. It raises taxes from the population trapped within its area of control and it administers summary justice—although on justice I say to the House that in our abhorrence of its justice, we seldom recognise that our ally in Saudi Arabia has similar and as barbarian punishments, some of which it is carrying out this week. The fact that ISIL runs like a state is what makes it attractive to other jihadis, including Western ones. To push back against its territorial gains therefore has to be an essential part of the strategy, and air power is already working in that regard. The Americans say that they have killed more than 20,000 IS fighters since August 2014, so to suggest that air power is therefore irrelevant is strange, to say the least.

There is also much concern that we do not have a developed strategy beyond air power. I do not want to get into a numbers game, but I will say that growing up in conservative Muslim societies, with 42 years in and out of the Middle East, has taught me one thing: that in the Middle East, allegiances shift in the sands as much as they ever did. The entire history of Islam—the Shia/Sunni schism and much more—is about shifting powers and then shifting allegiances. When the facts on the ground start to change as we join the campaign to degrade IS, so too will myriad fighters change sides. The US saw that in the tribal awakenings in Anbar in Iraq in 2007, and we may see it again.

Moreover, on strategy, we have seen in warfare that whatever the game plan was when you started out, a few months later it will not be what you expected. We cannot know how this will end; that does not mean that we are not right to try to shape events. I simply remind the House that the Islamic State’s motto is “Enduring and expanding”. That is their brand and their mission. We owe humanity a duty to try to prevent that.

5.22 pm

**Baroness Deech (CB):** My Lords, I do not claim to know the answer to the serious issue before us this afternoon; nevertheless, I have a point of substance to make. It is about the decision-making process and the royal prerogative. I have read as much as I reasonably can, but I do not believe that I—or most Members of Parliament, or even noble Lords—really know all there is to know about the pros and cons of military action in relation to Syria, let alone what might happen in the months and years to come. It may be that the noble and gallant Lords in our midst, or noble Lords with diplomatic experience—I was tempted to say noble and intelligent Lords, by which I mean noble Lords who are privy to intelligence—have the answer.

Having listened to ordinary voters giving their opinion in the media, I do not think they are very well informed, either. It is not sufficient to be pro-war or anti-war in a general way. It is a decision that might best be made by the Cabinet and the military experts. That is why there is much to be said for the historical practice of treating going to war as a matter of royal prerogative. For hundreds of years, and until very recently, the decision to go to war—however it was defined—was for the Crown to make: in practice, that is, for the Prime Minister. As far as I know, there was no vote when we entered the First and Second World Wars or defended the Falklands. Indeed, it has often been said that even

to debate the issues in Parliament means giving the enemy, whoever he is, advance notice of our intentions and involves disclosing information that ought to be confidential and might relate to the protection of our Armed Forces.

Undoubtedly, if there was a sudden attack on this country we would expect—and it would be perfectly legal—to defend ourselves at once, without recourse to Parliament. Whether the proposed Syrian action could be called an emergency, a matter of self-defence, an extension of existing action or a war of choice is debatable. But it seems to be expected now that, if there is time, not only should Parliament be consulted but the House of Commons should have the last word on whether to go to war.

The new convention started with former Prime Minister Blair seeking parliamentary approval for the Iraq invasion, and since then it seems to be accepted that Parliament makes the decision, not the Prime Minister. The weakening of the royal prerogative and the growth of a new constitutional convention have been considered, with approval, by at least two parliamentary Select Committees. But of course, it would be surprising if Members of Parliament did not think that they should have the last word—that is democracy. Nevertheless, I am anxious that complete and confidential information may be absent from consideration when a decision to go to war is being made, for example, by polling party members or to serve party political ends or show solidarity. Least of all should the decision depend on a guess as to whether more terrorism might be unleashed on our shores. That would be giving the enemy the very control it wants over our foreign policy. There is, even today, much to be said for the royal prerogative.

Fortunately, this House is doing no more than offering its advice. The noble Earl may be able to reassure us of this in his reply, but I would submit that there is not yet a solid convention that going to war is a decision for the House of Commons alone. In my view, it is a decision for the Prime Minister, who will be accountable for it and take the credit for victory or—although I hope not—the blame.

5.27 pm

**Lord Cormack (Con):** My Lords, that was an extremely thoughtful and important speech, and I for one believe that what the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, said should be taken to heart by leading figures in all political parties. This debate will be remembered I think, above all, for the notable maiden speech of my noble friend Lord Hague of Richmond, who is a very special person in my life. I have served six Conservative leaders, and he was the only one who had the sagacity to put me on his Front Bench.

This is a crucially important debate, in which we are being asked merely to give our views. This morning, I sat in the Public Gallery of another place and heard the Prime Minister make a powerful, convincing speech. In answer to the very important point made by the noble Baroness, Lady Taylor of Bolton, I would point out that he began by saying that he accepted unequivocally that however people voted tonight, they would be voting from sincere and honourable motives. It is important that that is firmly on the record.

Some of us know what it is like to go against the grain. I had the very good fortune of being among a tiny handful of Labour and Conservative Members of Parliament who lined up with the noble Lord, Lord Ashdown of Norton-sub-Hamdon, in urging action in Bosnia. I have never regretted that, and eventually the Government came down on what I believe was the right side—without, I would say to the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, a vote in Parliament.

The Motion before us today and being debated now in the House of Commons is, as the noble Baroness, Lady Taylor, said, a well-written Motion, from which I will single out two phrases. It talks about, “post-conflict stabilisation and reconstruction”.

What a pity that the resolution that was before us when we debated going to war in Iraq—which I supported—did not have a similar sentence in it. It seems to me that there would be a wonderful potential role for your Lordships’ about-to-be-established external affairs committee here, because it could monitor that with a degree of expertise and experience that no other body could bring to such a task. I warmly commend that suggestion to your Lordships and to my noble friend Lord Howe, who is responding.

The other part of the resolution that I would mention is the explicit commitment not to put in ground troops. I believe that that is extremely unwise. We have heard what my noble friend Lord King and the noble Lord, Lord Dannatt, said. We should not rule out that option, but we have. Unless, as I would like, we go down the road marked out by the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, there should be an amendment with a reference to Parliament, because we cannot and must not rule it out. Those who will the ends must will the means.

As my noble friend Lord Dobbs, who explained why he has had to leave the Chamber, said a few moments ago, we cannot make this an unfinished journey. We have to ensure not only that the evil represented by Daesh is eliminated from the face of the earth but that we see a proper, stable, reconstructed Syria at the end of it. That will demand unpalatable truths. We will have to line up with the Russians in a way that we have not in the past, and we will have to fight one enemy, not two—and that means Daesh and not necessarily Assad.

5.31 pm

**Lord Mitchell (Lab):** My Lords, I have been a Member of your Lordships’ House since the year 2000 and there is not much that I regret about being here—but one thing still weighs heavily on me. It is that I did not speak in the Syria debate in September 2013. To me, that debate was a defining moment, just like the one before us today. “Use chemical weapons against your people”, was the clear statement made by the Prime Minister and the President of the United States, “and we will drastically reduce your capability”. Well, Assad did use them, and we blinked.

The then leader of my party, having assured the Prime Minister that he had Labour’s full support, abruptly changed his position and the Government were defeated. Seeing his closest ally bottle out, Obama lost his nerve and the moment passed. Assad had won.

[LORD MITCHELL]

What were the consequences? Assad carried on as normal. With Putin's support, he went through the charade of dismantling some of his chemical weapons but continued using those that remained and then graduated to barrel bombing. Hundreds of thousands of Syrians were killed and many more injured. Thus was created the worst European refugee problem since the Second World War.

We in this Parliament could have stopped it or slowed it down but we turned our backs—all for the quiet life. The world saw our weakness and indecisiveness. It saw that we were paper tigers—none more than President Putin. He smelled blood in the water. Were we surprised that, just a few months later, Russia invaded Crimea? Putin knew that we would talk big and do nothing. He and others like him had our measure. Each time we back away in pursuit of the elusive quiet life, we store up a much worse fate in future.

Today, we face a similar dilemma. Doing nothing is an option, but it is a bad option. You cannot sit down with ISIL, have a cup of tea, a cucumber sandwich and a bit of a chat and reach an accommodation. ISIL members are not men of reason looking for a peaceful solution; they are vile terrorists in a quasi-state who will stop at nothing—no depravity is too great. We indeed crave that quiet life, but they will not grant it to us.

I look at my party's leadership and I despair. Since when has Labour become a party of pacifists? Since when do we run away when confronted by danger? I listened to the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, talking about the royal prerogative and I asked myself about NATO. Under the terms of the NATO agreement, we all have to come to each other's defence if one is attacked. If there were an attack on Poland, say, do we join them immediately or do we have a debate in the House of Commons to work out how we are going to respond? I do not like this precedent of Parliament deciding these issues.

I believe that the Prime Minister is right, and I am sad to say that I believe that my leader is wrong. If I had a vote, I would support the Government.

5.34 pm

**Lord Palmer of Childs Hill (LD):** My Lords, I believe that there is such a divergent set of opinions about what to do and what not to do about the situation in Syria because, in some people's minds, "Heads we lose and tails we lose". Whether or not the UK takes action in Syria, in addition to current actions in Iraq, there are likely to be further terrorist incidents in Paris, London and elsewhere. Although Daesh is under constant military pressure, it shows no current sign of heading for defeat.

Western intelligence shows that, after the horrific attacks in Paris, Daesh has shown a shift from inspiring and inciting terror to being the guide and perpetrator. Are we about to see a contest between Daesh and al-Qaeda in attacking western targets? We and our allies are already active in Iraq, but Daesh does not recognise a border between Syria and Iraq. Up to now, it slips across the porous border into Syria and we

have not been authorised to follow. Defeating Daesh in Iraq and Syria will not solve all the problems, but surely it must be the start of the solution.

Noble Lords are right to ask whether the UK's efforts can make a difference. My answer is that they can, by the very nature of our Armed Forces and weaponry, to which the noble Lord, Lord King, referred. Two extra Tornado aircraft, armed with Brimstone missiles, can seek out specific and very exact targets, and they have a fuse that can be delayed or even aborted. The local forces—Kurdish, Free Syrian Army, Southern Front and others—need to be equipped and trained with, for instance, the Exactor or Tamuz TV-guided missile, made in Israel and used by Britain successfully in Afghanistan. The Tamuz missiles are fired from an armoured personnel carrier from two launchers. The Brimstone and the Tamuz are but two examples of sophisticated weapons, and I hope that when he replies the Minister will give some indication of what sophisticated weaponry the UK forces can add to the conflict.

Quite rightly, we are not offering combat boots on the ground, but who can doubt that the ground war against Daesh in Iraq and Syria, using local troops, will be better co-ordinated with a moral, British, logistical input? Other noble Lords have rightly asked what happens after we join in the attack in Syria. As other noble Lords have also said, I hope that we will concentrate on the humanitarian aspect after the conflict as well. This conflict is a complex one, where it is difficult always to tell the "good guys" from the "bad guys". Surely, therefore, we should accept that this conflict must be waged with short-term and longer-term targets.

I emphasise that the Gulf states must be brought on board at some stage—as soon as possible—and when they see the resolutions in the other place, I hope that they will come on board. The first target must be to weaken Daesh, which not only aims for local terror but has been seen to send its terrorists into our western heartlands. Then, and only then, we must turn to toppling Assad and replacing him—but not make the mistake of necessarily replacing his Alawite supporters, who may be needed post conflict to restore some order to this troubled land.

5.38 pm

**Lord Hylton (CB):** My Lords, last summer I said that it was illogical to attack Daesh by air in Iraq but not in Syria. I think that it is now right to add air strikes to our existing reconnaissance flights. I must warn, however, that the longer the bombing continues, the worse the adverse effects are likely to be. That is why the Vienna process, bringing together the major states with direct interests, is so important. We should use every diplomatic and other means to make it work.

Multilateral negotiations can produce good results, as we saw in Iran over nuclear weapons. Partial solutions, such as ceasefires, should not be rejected just because they do not solve everything. They will save lives and prevent greater flights of refugees. At the same time, we should start on long-term plans over perhaps 20 or 30 years to rebuild both Iraq and Syria. They deserve good government and reasonable prosperity, of which tyrants and wars have robbed them. We should identify

the vital middle levels of leadership, both inside and outside the Middle East, and prepare them for the work of reconstruction that lies ahead.

As regards aid from us and from the EU, we should remember that Lebanon and Tunisia have sheltered huge numbers of refugees without using camps but with huge pressure on the stability of their societies. Above all, we should not forget the unresolved and worsening conditions of Palestine and Israel. Everyone in the Middle East and north Africa knows about it, even the illiterate. Failures on every side cast this country and the West in general as invaders, crusaders and oppressors. It is a constant spur to terrorism. We must use every possible channel, official and unofficial, for the crucial task of peace-building. Moral imagination suggests that new Palestinian elections after nearly 10 years might allow a younger and more united leadership to emerge.

I conclude by mentioning one area in which the Foreign Office seems to have failed—namely, the cantons of north and east Syria. Policymakers have swallowed whole the lies and half-truths put about by our Turkish allies and even by groups such as Amnesty International. The Kurds, Assyrians, Chechens, Turkmen, et cetera, of those cantons deserve better. They are our allies against Daesh; they can help their Syrian and Iraqi neighbours towards common citizenship, equality for women and democratic practices. When will the Foreign Office take the trouble to visit those cantons and see for itself?

5.42 pm

**Lord Hutton of Furness (Lab):** My Lords, I start my remarks tonight by expressing my very strong support for the Government's policy with regard to taking military action in Syria. It is clear to all of us in this country, and increasingly clear to people around the world, that the international community needs to develop an effective response to the problems in Syria; we need a political strategy. With the Vienna process, that strategy is beginning to emerge. Members of the UN Security Council are fully engaged in that process, which is a positive sign. Many other measures need to be taken in that context; noble Lords have referred to the problems about financing and the open borders, and all those issues need to be addressed.

However, it is pretty clear now that, if we are going to defeat Daesh and bring its reign of terror to an end, we will need an effective military component as well. If there is one thing that we should all be clear about, it is that. The only question is whether what has been proposed by Her Majesty's Government will help to bring that day closer—the end of Daesh terror. I firmly believe that it will, for a number of reasons. In the United Kingdom, with the Royal Air Force, we have important military capabilities, which we can bring to bear, that are missing at the moment. In the light of UN Security Council Resolution 2249, we should be prepared to commit that additional military resource. In fact, it is our duty to do so.

I fully accept the argument that we have heard tonight and elsewhere that airpower is not going to be enough for us to prevail in this campaign, but it can be an important part of that solution. As my noble friend

Lady Ramsay said, if anyone doubts that, they should start by consulting the Peshmerga in Iraq, who are fighting Daesh as we speak. The struggle against Daesh is just as much our fight as it is the fight of those in the front line of the resistance to this evil force in the region. In the struggle and in this fight, I do not think that we can be bystanders. That is not the country that we are.

Also—and for me this is a hugely significant event—we must respond to the French request for assistance. Thousands of British football fans singing “La Marseillaise” at Wembley a few weeks ago was a wonderful thing to see, but sadly it will not be enough to discharge our responsibilities to one of our closest and historic allies. Solidarity with France and, indeed, with other nations that face this threat will require an additional commitment from us. It is important for your Lordships' House to understand, and I am sure from the contributions today that it does, that if we are going to prevail in the struggle, it is important that we recognise tonight that we will have to mobilise all our diplomatic, political and military resources to ensure success.

Finally, let us spare a thought for the RAF crews who will be charged, I hope, later tonight with a new and very heavy responsibility. They are the people who should be at the forefront of our thoughts this evening.

5.46 pm

**Lord Low of Dalston (CB):** My Lords, I was hesitant to join a debate to which so many noble Lords had already signed up to speak. I wondered whether to contribute the thoughts of a humble Peer in the street. I hesitated to mix it with the big beasts of the foreign policy and defence establishments, but I was scandalised into putting my name down to speak last night by David Cameron telling his MPs that they should not be walking through the Lobbies with Jeremy Corbyn and a “bunch of terrorist sympathisers”. Those are not the words of a statesmanlike Prime Minister seeking to lead a unified nation to war. They are a disgrace, for which he has refused to apologise. He should be ashamed of them and I hope very much that the noble Earl will disown them when he comes to reply this evening. These are complex issues about which honest people can disagree and it is quite inimical to the spirit of rational discourse—which is, after all, one of the values that we are supposed to be defending—to brand anyone who takes a different point of view as a sympathiser with terrorism. That is to adopt the mindset of ISIL, not that of the leader of a free country.

I cannot enter the debate without saying something about how the issues appear to a humble Peer in the street. They seem to come down to a few quite simple propositions. What ISIL has been doing is an unconscionable outrage and an affront to human and civilised values. Paris is only the latest and worst excess. ISIL should be completely eliminated if at all possible, but this is not straightforward. ISIL is not like a conventional army. It is a hydra. Take one head out and two more spring up somewhere else. I am not a knee-jerk opponent of military action, but we should beware of falling into the trap of saying, “Something must be done; this is something, so it should be done”.

[LORD LOW OF DALSTON]

What should be done has to be effective. The actions of the American-led coalition have been largely ineffective in degrading ISIL to date. No one believes that flying a few extra sorties over Syria will make a great deal of difference, as the noble Lord, Lord Ashdown, who has great experience, confirmed.

The political build-up has been quite extraordinary for such a comparatively minor extension. This is just gesture politics. As several speakers have said, to mean anything there will have to be troops on the ground. The Prime Minister assures us that there are 70,000 ready and waiting, but this has attracted widespread scepticism. If there are 70,000, they are a bit like Falstaff's army and do not always have very savoury credentials. The Iraqi army, if it can be called that, runs away whenever ISIL appears. The Kurds are the only ones who can be relied on, but they are already fighting to the limit of their ability. I am aware of the arguments about solidarity with our allies, but we can express solidarity without putting planes in the air. Canada does.

No one believes that military action against ISIL will make us safer in this country. I have never believed that that was a plausible expectation to have of foreign ventures against jihadist terrorist organisations—in fact, quite the reverse. Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe and intelligence and security chiefs all think that it will make us even more of a target.

This is the wrong action at the wrong time. As I was pleased to hear a moderate Syrian spokesperson confirming on the radio the other day, if we were to bomb Syria, it should have been in the first year, in support of the peaceful protests that President Assad was seeking to suppress, while they were still comparatively moderate and unified. Five years on, the situation has long since spiralled out of control and we should keep well out of it.

5.50 pm

**Lord Crickhowell (Con):** My Lords, I am speaking in this debate because this is one of those subjects about which individual Members should make their position clear, and this House should collectively indicate to the House of Commons where we stand.

Britain is already launching air attacks on Daesh in Iraq and carrying out reconnaissance around targets in Syria. To refrain from attacking Daesh's headquarters in Raqqa, its supply lines and its most important source of wealth—the oil wells—across what for Daesh is a non-existent frontier, represents a very peculiar act of self-restraint.

The United Kingdom and its people are already among Daesh's principal targets for acts of terrorism and brutality. In the light of what has happened in Paris and the requests of our allies in the coalition—supported by the unanimous United Nations resolution—to join the fight and make available our weapons systems, to stand aside and leave others to carry the burden of defending our people would be an act of very dubious morality. It would furthermore surely be a clear declaration that this country, at a time of international turmoil and danger, was unwilling to play a serious role in international affairs.

No one doubts that the task of bringing some kind of order and stability to Syria will be long and difficult. If we fail to join the fight, it is hard to see how we could make a serious contribution to any peace process and efforts to bring in a representative government to provide some security to Syrian society, with its complex tribal and religious mosaic.

More than 20 years ago my wife and I enjoyed a wonderful holiday in Syria. President Assad's father, like his son, had inflicted horrors on his own people, but we found branches of the Muslim faith that now display mutual hatred—Christians, Jews, Kurds, and others—living peacefully together. We have learned here, as in other places, that if you pull down a nasty dictator, you find yourself with an anarchy that is worse than the dictatorship and harder to replace. Assad cannot be part of a permanent solution, but the fight must first be with Daesh.

We need to squeeze Daesh and enlarge the parts of Syria in which people can feel reasonably safe and secure. Jordan has created a safe haven in the south by providing and obtaining the right support. We need to build a larger and safer haven in the north along the Turkish border. We can and must make a big contribution to humanitarian relief. I agree with the most reverend Primate: we must make a big effort on a global scale to combat religious terrorism in whatever form and wherever it occurs. First, however, we must support moderate Syrian groups to establish governance in areas from which Daesh or the regime are forced out. The Government have my backing in what they are about.

5.54 pm

**Baroness Symons of Vernham Dean (Lab):** My Lords, first, I thank the noble Lord, Lord Hague of Richmond, for his terrific maiden speech. I am sure that we all look forward to many more speeches from him.

I will raise three different questions during this short address. First, like many people, I remain to be convinced about the Prime Minister's confidence regarding ground forces, particularly the 70,000 Syrian opposition fighters who were highlighted in his Statement last week. In it, he said that they were principally from the Free Syrian Army—a point stressed by the noble Baroness the Leader of the House in opening today's debate. Can the noble Earl, Lord Howe, say whether the Russian Government have agreed to support the Free Syrian Army forces in taking on Daesh, or will the Russians continue to attack them because they are the forces that have principally been opposing the Assad regime? Have our Government engaged with the Russians actively on this point? Will Russia attack the Free Syrian Army as a force opposed to Bashar Assad, or will it support it as a force opposed to Daesh?

Secondly, the Prime Minister referred in last week's Statement to what he termed the “full answer”, which, “cannot be achieved until there is a new Syrian Government who represent all the Syrian people—not just Sunni, Shi'a and Alawite, but Christian, Druze and others”.—[*Official Report, Commons, 26/11/15; col. 1491.*]

Later in that same Statement, the Prime Minister referred to Iran and Saudi Arabia being at the same table as Russia, America, France, Turkey and Britain.

Again, an important question is: has everyone at that table agreed explicitly that the new Syrian Government must represent all the Syrian people? I can well believe that that represents the view of America, France and this country but I am very doubtful about the Russians, given their unswerving support of the Alawite regime, and I am even more sceptical about the attitude of the mullahs in Tehran.

My third point is a constitutional one that is very much along the lines of the point made by the noble Baroness, Lady Deech. It is right that Parliament should have its say on this crucial question. As Parliament is currently constituted, that means the elected House. This evening, it is right that we in this House debate but do not decide, and right that in the other place they debate and decide. However, does the Minister agree that even though the Government are seeking the approval of the House of Commons, it remains the responsibility of the Government—the Executive, not the legislature—to direct any military action? Moreover, while the Government are responsible for any military action, the House of Commons maintains a collective responsibility for its decisions. Once taken, the decision is the decision of the House as a whole, covering all the Members of the House whether they have voted for it or not. Voting against the Motion does not remove somebody from the responsibility of the collective decision the House has taken. Can the Minister say whether that is the right analysis?

If this House were to be elected, maybe we, too, would have a determinative vote. As it is, I, like many others, can only offer my support to the Government. I understand the many misgivings that have been voiced around the House, but we have the legal framework, the vision for the future and the military capability to offer real support. Above all, we have to do everything we can to stop this appalling and evil Daesh regime, which tortures, rapes and murders without mercy not just fighters who oppose it but defenceless women and children. The Government have made their case and deserve our support.

5.59 pm

**Lord Thomas of Gresford (LD):** My Lords, I speak for the many in my party who are opposed to beginning bombing the Daesh forces in Syria. First, there is the question of legality. A number of your Lordships have quoted Resolution 2249, but not in full. It:

“Calls upon Member States ... to take all necessary measures, in compliance with international ... and humanitarian law”.

Those final words have been omitted from all noble Lords’ quotations from the resolution. They mean that, in order for there to be legal force, it must be in self-defence or collective self-defence. I accept that that is the case. What I quarrel with is whether the proposed solution is proportionate in answer to the threat and, indeed, to the atrocities that have taken place in neighbouring countries.

I say that in this context. As the noble and right reverend Lord, Lord Harries, said, Daesh has melted into the population in Raqqa. This is not a supportive population. These are not citizens for whom Daesh has any responsibility. It could not care less what happens to the citizens—the men, women and children—who are left behind in Raqqa. If they are bombed

and killed, it is of no concern to Daesh. They are to be regarded as victims and in the firing line of our bombs. The noble Lord, Lord King, referred to the beauty of Brimstone. I do not believe that British bombs are capable of sorting out the difference between who is a terrorist and who is not, since they all dress the same in Raqqa at this time.

The noble Lord, Lord Hague, in a brilliant maiden speech, said that whatever we do it must be effective. Let us look at Iraq. We have been bombing in Iraq for well over a year, and in Iraq there are some 650,000 armed police and 350,000 in the army. By bombing and with the support of the boots on the ground, 30% of the territory Daesh took has been recovered. That is not a brilliant and immediate success. If we move over the border into Syria, where we have no invitation to be, what boots on the ground are we looking at? Where do they come from? Who leads them? What communication is there with our proposed forces who will do the bombing? What co-ordination will there be? My noble friend said earlier that tribal loyalties will shift. How reliable are they? Are they allies we can count on?

Finally, when they have finished—let us assume it is successful and Daesh is destroyed—what happens then? Will the forces of Assad and the Free Syrian Army then turn upon each other for the final of this contest? If so, will we not have on the one side western forces who cannot desert their allies—the Free Syrian Army—and Russian forces who cannot desert their allies—Assad’s Syrian Arab Army? What happens then? Do we not have the makings of a proxy war? We are getting into very deep and difficult troubles, and I know that many members of my party support that position.

6.03 pm

**Lord Ramsbotham (CB):** My Lords, I was very glad to note that the Motion excluded two words that were included in the Motion before the other place—“specifically airstrikes”. Like the noble Lord, Lord Ashdown, and many other noble Lords, I do not believe that bombing alone will defeat Daesh. With that long-held view in mind, I admit that I was not very pleased when I woke up this morning to find that after 41 years in the Army, many spent fighting terrorism, I had been branded as a “terrorist sympathiser” by none other than our Prime Minister.

Some noble Lords may recall the name of Robert Thompson, the British civil servant who was seconded to the Malayan Government, whose fortified canton concept was the battle-winning factor that defeated the Communist insurgency in that country in the 1950s. When the Americans escalated their operations in Vietnam, President Kennedy asked his advice. What he said was very interesting. It led to a delta project but, in particular, Thompson emphasised to Kennedy that in this sort of warfare you needed boots and brains. He added, “Don’t bomb villages”. He said that because of the vital importance of the military winning and retaining the hearts and minds of the population it was striving to support.

As we know, his advice was not followed but I could not help thinking about it during the recent hysteria over whether or not the RAF should deploy the Brimstone

[LORD RAMSBOTHAM]

precision weapon in Syria. This appeared to be much more party politics than military appreciation of the situation. I think a lot of the factors were in danger of being missed.

To return to Thompson, like the noble Lord, Lord Dobbs, and others, I was very concerned that the first sentence of the Motion before the other place notes that,

“ISIL poses a direct threat to the United Kingdom”,

and the 11th sentence says that,

“the Government will not deploy UK troops in ground combat”.

In other words, we are ignoring that boots in fact represent much more than just being on the ground. There are many other aspects of military support which may be requested of us.

At the same time, I have been encouraged by the Motion’s fourth sentence, which,

“notes that military action against ISIL is only one component of a broader strategy to bring peace and stability to Syria”.

I again question, why only Syria? If we are fighting against ISIL and ISIL represents a threat to many other countries, surely the aim should be a coalition against ISIL. If you do that in Syria, you have to include President Assad—whether or not he is going to be part of the longer-term solution—and the 70,000 people who appeared suddenly last week in the Prime Minister’s Statement. Surely the sensible thing to do is to create a coalition of all those who are affected by ISIL, and deploy the diplomatic, political, economic, military, moral and other aspects against it everywhere, rather than just limiting ourselves to an operation in Syria.

6.07 pm

**Lord Marlesford (Con):** My Lords, we are debating a largely symbolic extension of one of the longest-running conflicts in history—the global civil war between the Sunni and Shia factions of Islam that started with the death of the Prophet in 632.

However, I believe the Government’s Motion is morally and militarily justified, with the security of the UK being directly threatened. It makes no military sense to recognise a frontier that ISIL does not. Whether it is expedient is another matter. Where is the strategy? We are told that, with coalition air support, there are 70,000 moderate Muslim fighters ready to take territory from ISIL/Daesh. Will such a force materialise? In July 2006, I visited Afghanistan during Operation Panther’s Claw against the Taliban in Helmand. We were told there were already more than 90,000 trained members of the new Afghan army ready for battle. Yet in Panther’s Claw, with 15,000 coalition forces in action, fewer than 1,000 Afghan troops took to the battlefield.

No definition has been given of moderate. I offer one. A moderate Muslim is one who recognises and accepts that nation states are best governed by secular Governments who make the laws according to the needs of their citizens in the context of today’s world, with these laws being interpreted and applied by an independent judiciary. A Muslim jihadist fights for a theocracy in which clerics apply and enforce Sharia law, based on texts dating back to the eighth century.

I fear that some of our closest allies in this war are far from reliable as members of a coalition to destroy ISIL/Daesh. For more than three decades, the Saudis, supported by the Qataris, have financed the spread throughout the Sunni world and beyond of the malevolent influence of Salafist Wahhabism. ISIL/Daesh, and the other Islamist terror organisations, justify their actions by that credo.

Do the Saudis really want to destroy ISIL? The *New York Times* of 25 November, based on an interview with Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the Saudi Minister of Defence and Deputy Crown Prince, suggests that the prince believes that ISIS is,

“a counterreaction to the brutalization of Iraqi Sunnis by the Iranian-directed Shiite-led government in Baghdad of Nouri al-Maliki and to the crushing of Syrian Sunnis by the Iranian-backed government in Damascus”.

The Saudis, and certainly their clerics, see the removal of President Bashar al-Assad as a higher priority than the defeat of ISIL.

Of Turkey, too, I have doubts. There are convincing reports that Turkey’s political leaders and their families have been enriching themselves by trading in oil stolen by ISIL from Syria. The Turks certainly do not see ISIL as one of their top priorities. Those are to thump the Kurds and to get rid of Assad. I am glad that the Prime Minister has made it quite clear that our military assets will not be used against Assad or his army or in support of rebel operations against them. We shall find that Assad has to have a role in Syria for as long as we can predict.

When the Prime Minister listed,

“all the key regional players around the table”,—[*Official Report*, Commons, 26/11/15; col.1492.]

in Vienna on 14 November, he omitted one country: Egypt. Yet President Sisi is doing in Egypt what we want to see in Syria: establishing, in an Arab state, a secular Government tolerant of all religions on the road to democracy. There has been much talk of boots on the ground. Egypt has an army of 500,000, of which Sisi was commander-in-chief before he became President. When the Prime Minister met Sisi on 5 November, did he discuss the possibility of Egyptian forces being used against ISIL/Daesh in Syria and Iraq?

6.12 pm

**Lord Anderson of Swansea (Lab):** My Lords, of course we all have our doubts. We see through a glass darkly. There are many imponderables and cogent arguments on both sides, but was it not ever so in matters relating to foreign policy? Decisions have to be made. We should come to those decisions on the basis of mutual respect, recognising that colleagues will come honestly to different views. That is why I and others take such great exception to the reported views of the Prime Minister, which stand in stark contrast to the measured tones of the Motion. Will the real Mr Cameron stand up?

Of course, we approach the debate in the shadow of the interventions in Iraq and Libya, with all the misjudgments and unintended consequences which flowed therefrom. For example, if ISIL were defeated in Syria and Iraq, would there be a danger not just of arms spreading, as in the case of Libya, across to the

Sahel and Maghreb but of trained jihadists flowing across frontiers to the region and beyond? The examples of Iraq and Libya provide many cogent arguments for caution, not least in keeping the Administration in Syria afloat so far as possible, although inaction also has its consequences.

There is scepticism about the figure of 70,000. There are questions that include the danger of mission creep, apart from the bland statement in the Motion in relation to ground troops. Some of the arguments against the bombing are clearly cop-out devices to avoid action. “Bombing is not the answer”, it is argued. Of course, no one claims that, but it is part of the answer. The defence of Kobane and the retaking of Sinjar showed that, in co-operation with boots on the ground, bombing can indeed be decisive. Of course, there may, alas, be some civilian casualties and they will be used for public relations purposes, but I have seen the precision bombing in Novi Sad and other parts of Serbia. We are experts in precision bombing.

With all the hesitations and uncertainties, I support the Government’s Motion, remembering that we are already deeply involved in Syria—in reconnaissance, targeting and refuelling, and preparing the ground for others to bomb. The legal position in this case is rock solid. We have had a direct appeal from our French allies. Imagine the view that we would take if the situation were reversed, with an outrage in London and an appeal to our French colleagues being rejected by them. We have an overriding national interest in defeating Daesh, and there must be many other parts of the total policy. Most importantly, we have to press for progress in Vienna.

Finally, I turn to the question posed by the noble and right reverend Lord, Lord Harries: what is the definition of success? We have to be cautious and realistic. There is no tradition of pluralism in Syria after the two Assads. There may be a more benign dictator; there may be partition. We, and the international community generally, can only seek to give help from outside in forming a tolerable Government, but ISIS must be destroyed. In my judgment, the bombing is necessary but not sufficient—it is but a part of the process. I support the Motion.

6.17 pm

**Lord Alton of Liverpool (CB):** My Lords, the just war tradition insists that war must always be a last resort—a necessary evil in an imperfect world. Measured against the just war criteria, the Government’s case is undoubtedly strong but there are legitimate questions to ask. Let us take two of the criteria: a just cause and prospects of success. Is the cause just? Self-evidently, ISIS’s barbaric ideology is the antithesis of everything that a free society upholds and stands for. We will need a full-spectrum strategy to deal with it, and I welcome the references in the Commons Motion to non-military action.

How can we entrench in the popular imagination the justice of military action and the justice of the cause? For months in your Lordships’ House I have pressed the Government to formally declare the actions of ISIS in Syria as genocide. Our obligations are set out in the preamble to the sixth recital of the 1998 Rome statute of the International Criminal Court, which recalls that,

“it is the duty of every State to exercise its criminal jurisdiction over those responsible for international crimes”,

while the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide states that the obligation each state thus has to prevent and to punish the crime of genocide is not territorially limited by the convention.

I recently chaired a meeting in Parliament attended by Syrians and the Archbishop of Aleppo. We were told how, in a village outside Aleppo, ISIS cut the tops off the fingers of a 14 year-old boy because his Christian father refused to convert. They then crucified the boy and killed the father. At the weekend, a mass grave of Yazidis was uncovered near Sinjar. Months ago, a former Yazidi MP, speaking here, said that she could not understand why the West had not declared these events a genocide.

In the battle of ideas, the rule of law is the best antidote to ISIS. Capturing and holding those responsible for these atrocities—whether in Syria, Paris, Tunisia, the Sinai or elsewhere—would underline the justice of our actions, and the declaration of genocide should have preceded further military action. We should name this for what it is.

My other question concerns the probability of success. Drones and Tornados have never captured anyone. I regret the phrase in the Government Motion in the Commons ruling out the use of ground forces. Without a commitment to an international ground force, as in Kuwait or the Balkans, I remain unconvinced about the probability of success and disturbed that Parliament is being asked to believe a Panglossian figure of 70,000 so-called moderate fighters in Syria. This is no army: it represents a kaleidoscope of opinions, objectives and capability; they are split into a hundred factions and are geographically spread across Syria. Unlike the Peshmerga and SDF alliance, made up of Kurds, Arabs and Syrians, which has taken 1,300 square kilometres from ISIS in northern Syria and which I have repeatedly pressed the Government to support—and do so again today—this dodgy figure of 70,000 will not provide a ground force capable of ensuring success. When the Minister comes to reply, I hope that he will tell us what additional support will be given to the SDF.

Western air strikes in Syria cannot succeed without ground forces. In a Question that I tabled yesterday, I asked the Minister to give us his assessment of the statement by General Sir Richard Shirreff that even a force of that size—of 70,000—would be incapable of liberating a city of 350,000 people such as Raqqa. On this question hangs the just war principle of “probability of success.” It also begs the post-Iraq question which hangs over the debate: what plan is in place for the aftermath once the bombing is over? What is the end game? I ask the Minister to address these specific questions.

To express doubt or scepticism is not to be confused with either appeasement or an unwillingness to fight.

6.22 pm

**Lord Lester of Herne Hill (LD):** My Lords, in 2003, I marched against the proposed invasion of Iraq and spoke in this House with my then noble friend Lord Goodhart

[LORD LESTER OF HERNE HILL]

doubting its legality. I believe that Chilcot will vindicate that view. The situation that we are in today is completely different. With great parliamentary backing, we have taken part in lawful armed intervention against Daesh in Iraq. It would be absurd to argue that we cannot lawfully do the same in Syria, in accordance with UN Resolution 2249, taking necessary and proportionate measures. The unanimous resolution describes Daesh as,

“a global and unprecedented threat to international peace and security”.

It says that the Security Council is determined to combat by all means this unprecedented threat to international peace and security. It calls on member states to take all necessary and proportionate measures on the territory under the control of Daesh in Syria and Iraq and to redouble and co-ordinate their efforts to prevent and suppress terrorist attacks committed specifically by Daesh and other terrorist groups. It calls on member states to,

“eradicate the safe haven they have established over significant parts of Iraq and Syria”.

International law has developed to meet the challenge posed by these terrorist bodies, even though they are non-state actors. There is no good legal reason to argue that what is happening already in Iraq should not also happen across the border in accordance with our Government’s commitments. Daesh does not recognise the frontier between the two countries in committing its barbarous acts.

I fully respect the views of colleagues who doubt the wisdom of joining the United States, France and Russia, but I do not agree with them. I doubt whether the issue of legality will make a difference to the outcome of the debate in the other place, but I am quite clear that what the Government propose and what the UN Security Council authorises fully accords with international law. What matters is the unprecedented threat that we now face from terrorism by Daesh, sometimes using British nationals as its agents. I believe that the right of collective self-defence amply covers British military intervention and compliance with the UN charter. What is proposed is, in my view, necessary and proportionate.

6.25 pm

**The Lord Bishop of Coventry:** My Lords, coming from Coventry, a city bound in solidarity of suffering with bombed cities in Europe, I am kept in daily remembrance of the costs of military action, especially to civilians. Against such costs, the benefits must be clear and the chances of success especially high. We all agree that the evil of Daesh needs to be stopped, but will extending strikes from Iraq into Syria do it?

We have heard much about the arbitrary nature of the Sykes-Picot border. However, during last year’s debate on intervention in Iraq, the Government recognised that the factors increasing the chances of success on one side of this border did not apply to the other. To my eye, untrained as I admit it is, they still do not.

We have heard it many times already that wars are not won from the air. Yes, our operations in Iraq have had some success in stopping the spread of Daesh, but

this has been thanks to close collaboration with the Iraqi Government and armed forces. This will not be the case in Syria.

No one doubts that the best partner would be an inclusive Syrian Government and army, honouring a ceasefire with moderate groups and able to participate in long-term reconstruction and reconciliation. Such a political process would be wishful thinking without the plan and timetable from Vienna that would make it a reality. However, the Vienna process is at an early stage and has not yet been given a chance to bear the fruit of the transitional Government, which the Leader of the House referred to at the beginning of the debate. Without waiting for its results, are we not at risk of being perceived as the unwitting allies of the Assad regime?

Military action has unintended consequences. It will cause collateral damage, both physical damage and, as the most reverend Primate the Archbishop of Canterbury noted, ideological damage in the region and beyond. I do not doubt the military skill and highest standards of our RAF pilots and equipment, but there is no such thing as a perfectly surgical strike from the air and we will be implicated by the less precise bombing of other forces, Russian included. Do we not risk handing Daesh a further propaganda victory in the form of civilian casualties? Furthermore, in what is fundamentally an ideological conflict, we must be keenly aware that collateral damage takes ideological forms. Any western action will only reinforce Daesh’s apocalyptic narrative of western aggression.

How will UK air strikes be viewed by the millions of Sunni Muslims, regionally and in Britain itself? Daesh prospers because it champions the perceived grievances of Sunni Arabs against other groups in Syria and Iraq. How will the Government seek to address these grievances legitimately and counter Daesh’s narrative so that tactical victories in Syria do not come at the cost of fuelling its perverted cause?

I began with reference to the chances of success, which must be high to offset the virtual certainty of collateral damage from military action. Along with the noble and right reverend Lord, Lord Harries of Pentregarth, I do not believe that the necessarily high threshold for this prospect of success has been met. Yet if we are to intervene, as seems probable, our attention must turn to minimising the collateral damage—in the widest sense—that will result as the battles rage. Therefore, I conclude by asking the Minister how the Government’s review of progress will ensure that the success of action is measured not only in victories against Daesh’s military capacity, but also by the political settlement and peace that will ensure that its poisonous ideology, contrary to its own strategy, will not endure and expand.

6.30 pm

**Lord Renwick of Clifton (CB):** My Lords, it is an honour to follow the noble Lord, Lord Hague, on the occasion of his maiden speech in this House. I believe that he will be as pleased as I am that the outcome this evening is likely to be more in line with his wishes than it was two years ago, when we were unable to respond to the killing by the Assad regime of 1,400 people by nerve gas. The regime has been using chlorine gas against its opponents ever since.

We are all aware that the situation in Syria is fiendishly complicated, but the question before us this evening is not complicated at all. Are we going to support our principal allies in action against a common threat or not? Let us suppose, as did the noble Lord, Lord Anderson, that the atrocity in Paris on 13 November had taken place in London, as it very well might have done. How would we feel if France declined to fight alongside us in such circumstances? It is no use us all standing up and singing “La Marseillaise” unless we intend to do something about it. The “better not” report of the House of Commons Foreign Affairs in November dismayed our allies. The chairman of the committee, I am glad to say, has since then changed his views.

Of course bombing alone will not defeat Daesh but it will make a crucial difference to those fighting against it, as it did for the Kurds in Kobani and at Mount Sinjar. The argument that a few Tornados and drones will make no difference is incorrect, given, as the noble Baroness, Lady Stowell, pointed out, Britain’s particular capabilities in precision-guided missiles. As several speakers have pointed out, Arab and Kurdish forces on the ground are very unlikely to be able ultimately to prevail without the involvement of western Special Forces and forward air controllers of the kind that the Americans announced yesterday they will now be sending to Syria. The Government will, I hope, reflect on this.

Attacking Daesh in Syria will not prevent attacks by its followers here, nor will leaving things as they are. The security services have disrupted seven ISIL-related attacks in Britain so far this year. It will take many years to win these battles but this is not a challenge we can evade, still less outsource to our allies in Syria. It has been forced on us not by Islamists but by those whom my friend Christopher Hitchens used to describe as Islamofascists and who have been denounced by all the Arab leaders, including the Saudi monarch, as an evil cult.

I conclude by commending the statement of the shadow Foreign Secretary, Mr Hilary Benn, that, “inaction also has a cost in lives”, as the mass graves resulting from Daesh terrorism across the region testify. I hope that noble Lords of all parties will support the Government’s Motion.

6.32 pm

**Lord Flight (Con):** My Lords, I support the Government’s proposals for military action against ISIL. I thought that the article on terrorism written by the King of Jordan in one of today’s newspapers was particularly moving. He made the point that it is imperative for all opposing ISIL to be united and that what is being fought is, “a war within Islam against the outlaws of Islam, the Khawarej”. These barbarians threaten not just the West and the Middle East but the world. Their war extends already to Africa and Asia. He made the point that the participation of the UK in military action is important both in supporting our allies and friends and in bringing some unique technical resources and capabilities.

The ISIL barbarians have not just committed crimes against the innocent about the world but have brutally murdered Muslims as well as Christians and members

of other religions in Syria, and committed horrors in terms of foreign hostages. The world cannot afford to wait much longer to act and to purge itself of ISIL.

The actions of the RAF in Syria will be helpful, but bombing cannot in any way be sufficient successfully to conquer and destroy ISIL without major ground force involvement. I hope that the potential 70,000 troops of the Free Syrian Army and the 20,000-strong Kurdish forces will play a major role but it would be much more appropriate for there to be a large global coalition force, potentially organised by the United Nations. That force should ideally include not just NATO but Russia and the armies of reliable Middle East allies. As the noble Lord, Lord Marlesford, pointed out, Egypt has half a million men under arms, has had its own ghastly experience of ISIL and is surely an important military ally in the area. Sorting out Assad and a new Government or Governments for Syria will have to wait until after ISIL has been dealt with. Clearly, as well as diplomatic initiatives, Syria will need major additional humanitarian aid and, in due course, major funding to rebuild the devastation that the civil war has led to.

I close by reading out an important recent letter in the *Times* from a British Muslim, echoing comments made earlier by the most reverend Primate and the noble Lord, Lord Marlesford. It states:

“Your leader ‘Decapitating the snake’ ... implies that Raqqa in Syria is the head. The head of the snake is not in Raqqa, it is in Saudi Arabia — which is the main source of Wahhabi and Salafi ideology ... It is this ideology that breeds terrorists inside and outside Islamic countries ... Wahhabis and Salafis are a minority within the Sunni Muslims, and have hijacked and twisted Islam in an evil way”.

I hope that our military intervention will succeed and help to purge the world of these evil people.

6.36 pm

**Lord Judd (Lab):** My Lords, as has been stressed in this debate, the responsibility of us all and of the Government is the safety and well-being of the British people—and, as has also become clear in this debate, the well-being of the Syrian people. Let us remember that more than 250,000 people have been killed in Syria and that, effectively, more than half of Syria’s citizens are displaced. Four million of them are refugees and 7 million are displaced people within their own country. Civilians are the worst affected by the battles due to, for example, indiscriminate barrel bombing on cities such as Aleppo.

We therefore have to ask how what we are proposing to do will help. It would be very dangerous and stupid to be doing something simply for the self-satisfaction of polishing our own consciences. We are dealing with cruel, horrible, calculating people. Whatever happens tonight in the Commons, there will be some wider ongoing issues. First, there is a battle throughout the world for hearts and minds, and we have to win that battle in minds. Impressionable, highly intelligent young people have to be won over to something worth while.

The second challenge is how the world sees us, and I do not think that we face up to it. We like to congratulate ourselves on how good we are at doing things. I have worked a great deal all over the world and I must say that an awful lot of intelligent people in

[LORD JUDD]

the world see us as part of the problem, not part of the solution. The way that they look at us is as if to say, “We don’t want any more, thank you, to go on being managed by the traditional powers, being asked to fall into line with their solutions. We want to be part of taking responsibility and asking the outside world for what we see as appropriate support”. These are immense challenges to the future of foreign policy.

Consistency is also essential. If, as is absolutely right, with no doubts whatever, we condemn the beheadings, the brutality, the cruelty, the crucifixions and the rest, we have to be seen by young people, particularly those in the region, to speak out just as clearly about the lack of justice, when it occurs, the beheadings, the lashings and the cruel imprisonment in much of the Arab world.

In the immediate situation, part of our credibility depends on us recognising that we have to have a fully convincing and watertight case for whatever we do, not least militarily. The question that we have to ask ourselves is whether we have had a convincing call from those who are struggling for their freedom in Syria and convincing evidence that they are ready to provide the co-ordinated support from the ground that will be essential for bombing. I have never seen anywhere in the world where bombing on its own achieved anything. Co-ordination with ground activity is crucial. This was even true of the French resistance in the Second World War.

Have we thought through what we are doing? There will inevitably tend to be mission creep. I applaud what the noble Lord, Lord Cormack, said: if you wish the ends, you must wish the means. Have we thought this through and are we sure that we will provide all the means that may be necessary? How does it relate to an inclusive political solution? With a heavy heart, I have come to the conclusion that the case is not yet proved.

6.42 pm

**Lord Greaves (LD):** My Lords, if we had the Motion in front of us to vote on tonight I would vote against it. In doing so, I would be voting for the views of the majority of members of my party. Last night, when the Liberal Democrat MPs said they were going to support the Government, with various caveats, a ripple of surprise and shock went through the party. Some of us spent a great deal of time last night talking to people who were angry and felt they had been let down by our MPs.

British bombing will have little effect in practice. On its own it will not make any real difference. In that and many other respects I associate myself with the remarks that have just been made by the noble Lord, Lord Judd. The danger of mission creep is a real problem.

The main impact of the Government’s Motion, this debate and the debate in the past few days has not been on international politics but on British politics. I have tried to understand why the Government have brought this forward at this time but I find it difficult to do so. My noble friend Lord Taverne may have some ideas.

Last week, the Liberal Democrats and Tim Farron, as leader, stated five conditions for supporting the Government today. He wrote to members of the party and said:

“We are writing to outline the criteria against which we will judge our response”.

He referred to five conditions. I emphasise the word “conditions”. The first was legal and I do not want to say anything more than my noble friend Lord Thomas of Gresford has said because he is an expert on these matters and I am not. The second was a wider diplomatic framework,

“including efforts towards a no-bomb zone to protect civilians.

I see no evidence that there has been any progress on that. The third was the United Kingdom to lead—I underline the word “lead”—a concerted international effort to put pressure on Gulf states, specifically Saudi Arabia and the Emirates, to stop the funding of jihadi groups and to do much more to assist in the effort to defeat ISIL, establish peace in Syria and help with the refugee situation. It was added:

“They are currently doing very little”.

I think that was a reference to the Government. I see no progress whatever on that or any commitments given. The fifth was domestic. Among other things he said:

“We call on the Government to step up its acceptance of Syrian refugees, and opt in to Save the Children’s proposal to rehome 3,000 unaccompanied refugee children from within Europe”.

The chances of this Government agreeing to that are close to zero. If I am wrong, I will hold my hand up and praise them to the heavens.

We are also told that things have changed because the Vienna talks are taking place and that this means there will be co-ordinated international action, a plan for the future, plans for the regeneration of Syria, rebuilding and so on. That seems to be an argument for waiting until that is in place before taking the kind of action now being proposed.

I do not believe that what is being put forward by the Government will work. In three or four or six months’ time we will be debating this issue again and people will want to do more. There is an old maxim: if you are in doubt about things and not completely convinced, first do no harm. Bombing at this time in Syria and Raqqa will do more harm than good.

6.46 pm

**Lord Birt (CB):** My Lords, the Middle East has been tragically riven by religious, sectarian and tribal strife and difference. It is a region where feudal rulers, cruel despots and now barbaric terrorism have flourished. Much of the area’s wealth flows from a single, much sought-after commodity. The West’s imperial past and more recent superpower intervention have fermented an already deadly mix. Like a nightmare video game, one scene of horror effortlessly morphs into something new, unexpected and worse. The human cost for people trying to live ordinary lives within the region is appalling. Now the problems spill over on to our and other shores.

For centuries, Europe itself was in turmoil, so we may hope that one day peace, harmony and prosperity may characterise the Middle East, too. The journey to

that destination will be prolonged indeed, but the Vienna talks offer a hopeful sign. Barbarism may yet prod us into starting that long haul now.

My difficulty with the Government's position is one of emphasis. I would like to see us marshal the peerless skill of our diplomats to deploy their expertise and wisdom to exploit what prestige and influence the UK still has in the world. I would like to see us sharing the lessons of our own experience, including of failure. I would like to see us defining a path to peace across the whole region.

That is an awesomely difficult task, but the history of the past 70 years surely tells us that piecemeal solutions do not work. It is in that context, with clearly defined goals, widely supported in and outside the region, that I would sign up to wholehearted military action using the full power of the West's might. But, for all the undoubted brilliance of the RAF and the bravery of our pilots, it is hard to believe that extending their reach across a desert border marks a significant step on that long path to peace.

6.49 pm

**Lord Inglewood (Con):** My Lords, two years ago, I came up to London to speak in the debate in your Lordships' House about whether this country should bomb Syria. I spoke against. I believe that I was right to do so then because Syria, the potential target of the bombing, seemed to have done nothing against us and was not the kind of threat that might justify such action. I anticipated that many innocent Syrians would be killed. Indeed, some of those whom we actually intended to help have turned out, as a number of us said at the time, to be active enemies of this country.

I believe that the situation is different now. Daesh has taken over large parts of the country, and as its actions have conclusively shown, it is our enemy. In my view, the most recent attack in France is also an attack on us, quite aside from the reports we have had about disrupted attacks directly on this country. As has been said, we, together with our allies, are already engaged in the war—using those words in the layman's sense—against Daesh in Iraq, and it is simply an accident of geography that parts of Daesh are beyond the general authority given to our military. Geography and jurisdiction are not relevant to terrorism and criminality—something that became quite clear to me during the work I did last year chairing your Lordships' ad hoc committee on extradition law. I believe that our national response must not be straitjacketed by old-fashioned and outdated views. After all, Daesh pays no attention to them.

What is clear is that not all Syrians are our enemies, although many of them may not like us and, for all I know, we may not like them. That is no reason to bomb them. Therefore, while in general I am not in favour of bombing other people, I believe that there is a case for so doing in respect of Daesh. I therefore support the Prime Minister, as I do when he says that intervention should be confined to Daesh and its supporters. Indeed, I will go further. I am sure that he is right that this military action must be a component of a wider diplomatic and political initiative which must not only help degrade Daesh's overt and more covert supporters but at the same time promote

and strengthen our allies in the Middle East, not least Egypt. This wider project must be the priority, since without it, there is no hope of success against Daesh and what it represents.

6.52 pm

**Lord Davies of Stamford (Lab):** My Lords, I support the Government on this. Incidentally, I am glad that they are now referring to "Daesh", which is the proper way of referring to that group. It is a serious absurdity that if an RAF aircraft, manned or unmanned, identifies a Daesh target in Iraq, it can take it out, but if it identifies the same target in Syria, it has to call up an asset from a coalition partner. That may take 10, 20, 40 minutes or however long it may be to get there, and then the target is missed. Thank heaven that at last the Government are taking action to do something about this anomaly.

But I have to say that the Government have unnecessarily made life difficult for themselves this evening. Two years ago they came to Parliament with what I think was the wrong resolution, designed to give them the authority to attack and overthrow the Bashar al-Assad regime. I was amazed at the time—and I said it then—that anyone, after the experience of Iraq and Libya, would once again want to engage in a campaign to enforce regime change on a volatile country in the Middle East, but so it was. Perhaps not surprisingly, Parliament turned that initiative down, and then the Government made a second mistake. They tried to pretend that the Bashar al-Assad regime did not exist, they did not recognise it, and they went around saying that it was about to collapse anyway. It has not collapsed, and that was a serious misjudgment. That statement of course is not a normative opinion of mine; it is now a matter of fact.

That has made life difficult this evening, because quite a number of people in the House of Commons who will vote against military action will do so because they are not satisfied that air support can deal with the problem, and they are right about that. Some degree of ground operations will be necessary at some stage, but the Government have ruled out using British troops. I personally think that it would be very desirable not to use British troops if that can be avoided, but I do not believe that before engaging in military action it is sensible to tell the enemy in advance that one is excluding anything a priori. However, that is where we are now and that is the position the Government have created.

If we are going to have ground troops at some stage, and probably early in order to make any sense of the air bombing campaign, the question arises about where they will come from. There are three possible answers. One is the so-called Free Syrian Army. I very much fear that the Free Syrian Army is a depreciating asset, and I would be grateful if the noble Earl, when he sums up the debate, would tell the House whether there is any truth in the reports I have seen that the Americans have ceased their training programmes for the Free Syrian Army on the grounds that those people were receiving their weapons and tactical training and then slinking off to join Daesh or the al-Nusra Front, which are the same thing. That is a serious matter, so if it is true the House should be told about it.

[LORD DAVIES OF STAMFORD]

There are two other possible forces in the Syrian theatre, one of which is the Kurds. They have been doing very well, but they do not operate more than 20 miles from their own territory. The other, of course, is the army of the Government of Syria, which has also been doing well in its own terms. It has recently retaken the centre of Antioch and of Homs, the second and third cities of Syria, and is holding them. As I told the House last week, I spent the weekend before last in Syria—I need hardly say entirely on my initiative and at my own expense. I have absolutely no brief at all for Bashar al-Assad, but I was interested to discover and make my own judgment as to whether it is true that the regime is about to collapse. I am quite certain that it is not. I also wanted to discover whether the regime would be prepared and in a position to provide serious military support, and support of other kinds which I will not go into in public, if we decide to try to open up that opportunity. The answer to that is definitely yes.

I urge the Government to recognise above all that this is an existential war we are fighting; the Paris attack made that absolutely clear. In these circumstances, we have to be completely open-minded and pragmatic about the means we use. We must win this war and we must put together the coalition which is most effective. We should remember that in the Second World War we had to deal with Stalin. That was a fact and I do not think that any of us regrets it now, albeit that at the time we knew all about a lot of his crimes. It is important that the Government should make a great effort not to allow themselves to be influenced by wishful thinking of any kind, and to concentrate on the vital task of winning this battle and war against Daesh.

6.56 pm

**Lord Taverne (LD):** My Lords, I have a brief point to make which I believe has not yet been raised in the debate. Our friend and ally, France, has suffered a traumatic experience which deserves our deepest sympathy. President Hollande has appealed to us to make common cause with France in its hour of crisis. If we reject his appeal, it will foster a strong and probably lasting resentment throughout France. When Britain needs the support of France, as we will in the negotiations for reform of the European Union, we will be likely to receive a frosty if not hostile response. French hostility could well be a decisive factor which will decide whether Cameron comes back with a deal that he feels he can recommend to the British people, and whether we stay in the European Union. It makes a satisfactory outcome of the negotiations less likely.

To me, and to those who feel that Brexit would be a disaster for British influence in the world, and would also be likely to mean the end of the United Kingdom, that issue is a further and compelling reason why we should support France and the other members of the coalition.

6.57 pm

**Baroness Kidron (CB):** Only few weeks before the Paris murders, we held a debate in this Chamber to take note of the humanitarian impact of developments in the Middle East and north Africa. Whatever our

individual views, it was clear to all contributors that there was no plan of sufficient scale to combat the tide of humanity fleeing conflict. All we could do was disagree about the scale of our own compassion and welcome. But while we had the luxury of safely debating where our responsibilities lie, three year-old Alan Kurdi was just one of dozens who had been found lying dead on the beach. Desperate families were escaping Syria in their millions only to face the razor wire fences of a hostile Europe. If we cannot agree to embrace those displaced by conflict, do we have the right to contribute to it? I ask the noble Earl whether, if as expected the other place supports the Prime Minister's call to bomb Syria, we can expect a shift in our refugee policy, in order that we might reach out to those who will, as we add our firepower to the existing violence, leave Syria in ever greater numbers.

In our press and in both Houses of Parliament, we talk of radicalisation, jihadis and terrorists, terms that elevate murderers and wannabes from the ordinary to the anti-heroic. Meanwhile, we carelessly ignore the alienated among us. In the political wrangling in the other place, the divisions in the Opposition and a 24-hour news cycle obsessed by the numerical chances of winning a vote, we have failed to win the battle for hearts and minds at home. Those who perpetrated this mass murder were brought up in the suburbs of Paris and Brussels, just as the 7/7 bombers were brought up in the suburbs of UK cities. We have a battle to win at home, in which our weapons are our commitment to equality, freedom and humanity—weapons that we need to put at the forefront of our response right now. ISIL uses a distorted version of faith to ply its criminal trade and we need to provide an alternative narrative.

This morning, the Prime Minister seemed to suggest that there would be either air strikes or inaction. That is not so. The trail of oil, money and arms must be broken. The newly invigorated diplomatic work started in Vienna must be pursued with the certainties that we hear today for bombing. A generous response to the refugee crises must be found, not only for orphan children. A zero-tolerance attitude to the abuse of British Muslims must be vocal, loud and proud. These are the actions—intractable and hard as they are—that speak of our values and of who we are.

As outraged as we are at the senseless murders in Paris, there is no strategic difference this month from last. If we had no appetite for war on 12 November, why are we answering the call of ISIS, which, by bringing its perverted fight to European soil, taunts us to provide it with an enemy—an enemy that will inevitably kill and displace the innocent and then turn its back as they reach our borders, and which will further alienate those who are persuaded that this as a religious conflict? Our high-precision strike capability is not precise enough and has claimed many civilians' lives in the regions. The figure of 70,000 ground troops is disputed by all. Inciting hatred can be done from any part of the world; you do not need to be in Raqqa. No one has a plan for Assad.

I am very sorry; I am out of time. Finally, I say to the Prime Minister that this is not a sports field. Calling those who oppose this war “terrorist sympathisers” is an outrage for which he should publicly and abjectly apologise.

7.02 pm

**Lord Callanan (Con):** My Lords, it is in debates such as this that this House truly comes into its own. I have listened with tremendous interest and respect to the many outstanding contributions on all sides from many noble Lords much more experienced in these matters than myself. However, I have been somewhat surprised to listen to some of the breathless commentary on radio and TV proclaiming in various forms that somehow, depending on a decision in the other place, we could be at war tonight. Surely, as part of our international coalition, in those terms we are already at war and have been since last September. We are discussing the extension of that action into Syria across a border that Daesh itself clearly does not even recognise.

Whatever we may think, Daesh and its affiliates clearly believe that they are at war with us and make no secret of it in their prodigious social media output. They have killed and maimed scores of our citizens and those of our allies. They also make no secret of their plans to kill many more, regardless of the decisions we make tonight. The key question for me is: will extending our current military action into Syria help to reduce or degrade their ability to attack us further? I believe that the answer to that question is undoubtedly, in a limited way, yes. Therefore, we should support that action and rely on the tremendous skills and bravery of our fantastic Armed Forces to prosecute that campaign.

It is also worth speculating on a “what if?” question. What if the atrocities that we saw in Paris recently had occurred—as, indeed, they very well might—in London or one of our other cities, as they may well in the future? We would undoubtedly wish to take retaliatory action against the people responsible. I am sure we would want to rely on our friends and allies in France and the United States to stand by us and support us in that action. In those terms alone, we should support our French allies and provide all the help and assistance we possibly can.

I respect those in this House and elsewhere who call for peace and negotiated settlements. Surely that is the ideal. But where is their evidence that Daesh is the slightest bit interested in any kind of peaceful settlement, irrespective of what we choose to do tonight? They are barbaric zealots. They are not interested in treating and talking peacefully with us, or in any kind of negotiated settlement. I am afraid that there is no non-violent alternative or solution to this. I totally accept that we must take action. We should support the Government in their campaign. I also believe that it will undoubtedly involve the use of ground forces in the future, I hope alongside Muslim Arab allies. I think that that is the way the campaign is going. Sadly, I see no alternative, so we should support the Government tonight.

7.05 pm

**Viscount Hanworth (Lab):** My Lords, I do not favour extending our strategic bombing campaign to Syria. I am well apprised of the logic that declares that if we should be bombing ISIL in Iraq, we should also be bombing it in Syria, but my conclusion is that we should be bombing it in neither. There are better ways of defeating ISIL.

Bombing is a blunt and heavy-handed way of attacking the enemy. It causes grave collateral damage. It not only damages the military environment, but kills civilians and destroys their livelihoods. The civilian population in the areas controlled by ISIL should not be mistaken for the jihadists. They may be fellow travellers of ISIL, or they may have opportunistically allied themselves to the dominant power within their domain, but they should not be counted with the enemy. If they are to suffer heavy aerial bombardment, the likelihood is that they will become aggrieved and overtly hostile to the bombers. This is not the outcome we should wish for. If ISIL were to be obliterated by an irresistible force—it is doubtful that an aerial bombardment could amount to this—there would be a vacuum, which would serve only to attract further corruption and turmoil. We know this from repeated experience.

How, then, should ISIL be defeated? I propose that it should be corralled and starved of resources. ISIL is still managing to profit from the abundant oil in the region. It continues to import arms and munitions to supplement those it has captured from the Iraqi forces, which were a bequest of the Americans. It is this porosity that allows ISIL to flourish and it must be stopped. If this could be achieved, ISIL could be reduced to a small rump and the failure of its monstrous ambitions would be clear for all to see. The hard tissue surrounding the infection would be allowed to last for as long as the infection lasts, but one could be assured that, eventually, it would dissolve.

How should this outcome be achieved? Apart from taking the measures to stem the flows that I have described, we should provide enhanced logistic support to the native forces resisting ISIL. The support need not be confined to the materiel of warfare. We should also provide a modicum of personnel to be embedded in the native forces. We might remember how this was done during the First World War, when we effectively supported Arab insurgents who were intent on defeating a foreign hegemony. We might also remember some of the lessons from our colonial history. A notable example already alluded to is the defeat of the communist insurgents in the Malaysian peninsula in the 1950s, for which Field Marshal Gerald Templer deserves credit. Had the Americans heeded the lessons from that campaign, the war in Vietnam might have had a very different outcome. Instead, they resorted to strategic bombing as a means of defeating the enemy.

Such lessons as those of the Vietnam War are hard to learn and they are quickly forgotten. The Russians ought to have learned similar lessons from their incursions in Afghanistan and Chechnya, but they have not. The presence of the Russians in Syria is now a complicating factor that has to be addressed. We need to co-operate with them to remove Assad, but in a way that implies at least a partial preservation of their interests. Embarking on a bombing campaign parallel to theirs will hardly assist this objective.

7.09 pm

**Lord Hussain (LD):** Organisations such as Daesh—known by some as ISIS—in the Middle East, the Taliban in Pakistan and Afghanistan and Boko Haram

[LORD HUSSAIN]

in Africa were born from the ashes of wars in Iraq, Libya and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and injustices in the Middle East.

My country of origin, Pakistan, has seen some of the worst atrocities committed by the Taliban targeting mosques, shrines and schools, killing more than 45,000 Pakistani men, women and children. Pakistan's army is currently fully engaged in eradicating these extremists and terrorists from the country, with the unanimous approval of its Parliament, including the religious parties, and the full support of its public.

Daesh is known to be responsible for current mass killings in Tunisia, Lebanon, Turkey and France. It has forcefully acquired a large area of Iraq and Syria by defeating both armies. That shows that it has some of the most modern weapons and military force. I believe that terrorists who kill children in schools, worshippers in mosques and churches, innocent shoppers, passengers and other ordinary peaceful men, women and children, or blow themselves up in busy marketplaces, causing carnage, have no religion or faith. They need to be defeated.

The question in front of us today is whether Britain should join its allies in military action against Daesh in Syria. I am not a legal expert, so I will not argue about the legality of the air strikes against Daesh, as many legal experts in this House have already given their views on it. However, some serious questions need answering. I wish to ask the Minister a few questions.

First, the use of force should be undertaken as a last resort. Have we exhausted all the peaceful means to neutralise Daesh, particularly by depriving it of weapons and finance?

Secondly, from the information available it seems that the allied forces have very little, if any, intelligence on the ground in Daesh-controlled areas, so they rely heavily on images taken from the skies above these areas. How do they distinguish Daesh from groups of students, religious congregations, funeral gatherings or the Free Syrian Army?

Thirdly, would victims of any potential friendly-fire air strikes not radicalise more people? Russian forces are involved in bombing anti-Assad forces. What pressure is being applied on Russia to see an end to that? Will more bombing not create more destabilisation and lead to more people fleeing Syria? Are the UK Government willing to accept more refugees? Will our actions make the UK and the rest of the world any safer?

7.12 pm

**The Duke of Somerset (CB):** My Lords, the Government have made a very persuasive argument in their memorandum to extend military action into Syria. It is a pity that it has not been more widely disseminated outside Westminster. However, it still leaves some questions unanswered. I query whether a Syrian family would consider the arrival of more bombs to be in their best interests in defeating the evil and despicable Daesh. Bombs have often killed innocent people. Daesh has long learnt not to drive in convoys and has learnt to live among families in flats in places such as Raqqa.

We are told that the RAF's weapons are now precision guided and accurate, so we will just have to hope that no innocent child is killed by a misdirected weapon because, if it is, Daesh will seize on its propaganda and recruiting value. Even worse, it will make the efforts of wise British Muslims trying to steer young hotheads away from radicalism much more difficult.

The Government make much of their desire to support our allies in France after the terrible events in Paris. I suggest that one of the drivers for this atrocity was actually the abysmal conditions in the ghettos of the Parisian and Brussels banlieues. These disadvantaged young people, often from north Africa, have very few prospects of work or respect. These are bound to be places of radicalisation and dissent. The link to Daesh training in Syria may have been opportunistic.

Far greater efforts need to be made to alleviate the poor conditions in the fringe countries of Daesh, such as Yemen, Nigeria and Libya, especially in education and employment. If the money for the bombing was spent there—and then rolled back across the Middle East—to remove the cause of this terrible cancer, our bombs might not be needed.

We need to put greater effort into our own backyard, too. It is imperative that UK Muslims do not feel alienated, excluded or angry due to ill-judged words and actions. It seems odd that, while we shut out most of the refugees who want a safe haven here, we plan to deploy more weapons in their country. Where should they go to escape the inevitable sense of vulnerability, even if the weapons are accurately targeted?

Would the expected mandate from the other place allow for other military action in Syria? It is not clear. It seems that an SAS-type Special Forces team on the ground could direct intelligence and effect sabotage just as accurately as bombs. Intelligence is vital to avoid mistakes, yet we are told that there are to be no western boots inserted. This is probably the weakest point in the Government's argument.

This is linked to the problem with Russia. What plans have been made in the event of a successful push-back of Daesh, leaving a Russian-controlled Assad in charge? How will we challenge that? The Government have rightly emphasised the importance of post-conflict planning, but it is not apparent how such a scenario would be resolved. This should be tackled first by diplomatic means.

Many potential extremists get their views from hate-filled internet videos and websites. Cannot greater efforts be made to disrupt, corrupt and block these sites? We have previously prosecuted bored teenagers who successfully hack into sensitive government systems. Instead, they could be recruited to GCHQ to thwart Daesh's recruiting websites.

There seems little doubt that the Government will achieve their object tonight, but this will undoubtedly increase danger to UK citizens, the remaining Syrian people and our Armed Forces. However, Daesh has to be confronted. I can only hope that the end justifies the means.

7.17 pm

**Lord Morgan (Lab):** My Lords, I take a view which differs from that of the majority of noble Lords who have spoken, although I agree with the view expressed by the noble Lord, Lord Low, and others. However, I do not wish to endorse the views expressed the other evening by the leader of the Labour Party, which I thought were quite mistaken. In particular, I oppose his view that somehow a political settlement is opposed to a military settlement—it is either jaw-jaw or war-war. That is not so. They are not alternatives but part of the same process. You need military pressure to get negotiations going and to protect them after a settlement is created.

As the noble Baroness, Lady Stowell, rightly observed, Syria is not Iraq. I was strongly opposed to the invasion of Iraq in 2003, and marched against it. That was a great disaster. The situation is different now. Our relationship with the United Nations is different. Our relationships with our allies—notably France—is very different. France was, of course, totally opposed to British action in 2003 and now it is begging us to come in. My views have been much influenced by having been in Paris the day after 13 November and seeing the appalling grief of French citizens, including my wife, over what had happened.

However, I say with all deference that I am not persuaded by the Government's arguments. There are sufficient resemblances to Iraq to make one very cautious. This action will be seen as a foreign invasion. We will be intervening in a prolonged civil war. The action will help to radicalise Muslims in this country, will probably lead to large-scale loss of civilian life and will make this country less safe in the immediate future, so we need to be very clear about the justification.

First, it was said in this morning's *Independent* by Patrick Cockburn that the plans are based on, "wishful thinking and poor information",

and I agree. The Prime Minister's Statement said almost nothing about the likely effectiveness or the precise military impact of air strikes. As many other noble Lords have said, air strikes have not had an effect in Libya and in other campaigns. It would be absurd to say they will not have any effect. They might well help to limit the spread of Daesh/ISIL. They might assist in the disruption of oil flows, but they will not make Daesh/ISIL withdraw. As the noble Lord, Lord Cormack, correctly said, they will lead to ground forces coming in, and that was not discussed.

Secondly, very briefly, who are we fighting with? I believe that the phantom army of 70,000 will be the Prime Minister's "45 minutes"—a purely imaginary construct. They are miscellaneous, quite as barbarous as Daesh/ISIL. They see us as enemies just as much as Daesh/ISIL does.

Finally, where is the strategy for obtaining a settlement? There will have to be a settlement. Daesh/ISIL are barbarians, desperately cruel, but we know that in the end there will have to be a negotiated settlement, however appalling our enemies are. So it happened with Lloyd George and Sinn Fein/IRA in 1921, and it will happen again. I do not see any particular steer about how negotiations will take place or what view we

will take of Sunni grievances in Syria. We need more detail and I am afraid, for me, the Government's case is less than compelling.

7.21 pm

**Lord Owen (Ind SD):** My Lords, painfully and agonisingly slowly, I believe we are beginning to develop a strategy for dealing with ISIL in both Syria and Iraq. The first, most important step was a Middle East solution, and that is the Vienna process. Having Iran around the table—very difficult for Saudi Arabia to accept—is extremely important, and those two countries, Shia and Sunni, have to start working together far better than they have done for decades past. It has been done before.

Secondly, the UN resolution, very skilfully drafted by the French, with the British in the chair, is an extremely important resolution and is the most we will get; we will not get a Chapter VII resolution. We can build on it and the UN has been given the task of negotiating ceasefires within the Vienna process. The more the profile of the UN is raised, the less we will hear about crusades and the more we will come to grips with the reality that there are Muslim countries and countries with a lot of Muslims that are fully engaged in trying to deal with the problem of ISIL, and with us.

Today a very important statement was made by the NATO Secretary-General that NATO is going to resume contact with Moscow in the NATO-Russia Council. That can provide the overall co-ordinating mechanism for aircraft over Syria and Iraq and for regional forces. Much stress has been put on forces on the ground. This is one of those wars which must involve regional forces, helped by the five permanent members and by co-ordinating mechanisms within the NATO-Russia Council.

The next step is that we have to face reality. Assad is strong in the coastal region and with Russia and the Alawites. Assad is still strong in Damascus, but Damascus has problems. In the suburbs of Damascus an ISIL grouping is just waiting. I think it would be very helpful if each permanent member of the Security Council took a geographical responsibility, and France is the ideal candidate to go into Damascus to work with Assad. I do not think Russia is particularly keen to go into that area. What do we do about Aleppo? It is very difficult, probably the hardest area to get a ceasefire. There, both the United States and the UK can help. There is a real problem with Turkey and its feelings. There is also a need to deal with the Kurdish area.

Those four areas can start to contain the fifth and largest area, which is that controlled by ISIL. It will be very difficult to do but there are forces that could be mobilised and co-ordinated. Jordan has very effective forces and knows the area very well. The Iraqi forces are beginning to strengthen but we must remember that they still have not been able to take back Mosul. The Saudi forces must be mobilised, as must the Turkish forces.

It is an extremely complex and difficult problem and we must not despair when we do not achieve immediate success. But slowly it is beginning to happen

[LORD OWEN]

and the co-ordinating role of the permanent members of the Security Council is crucial. The Security Council has done nothing for two years. Sarin gas was its last success. We should have used that mechanism—I am glad we have done so now—and it is one of the reasons why I did not support bombing in 2013. Now bombing has a use but only a marginal use and we must work on co-ordinating with ground forces, first on the containment and then on the removal of ISIL from both Syria and Iraq. We will also have to look at ISIL's presence in Libya, and that may well have to be done by an Arab country in Africa.

7.25 pm

**Lord James of Blackheath (Con):** My Lords, it has been an intermittently recurring theme today that some frustration has been expressed by noble Lords about the impact of Mr Putin's apparent loyalty towards Mr Assad, to the extent that he would block and preclude any restructuring of Syria post this crisis. Yet nobody seems to know the nature of the connection between Mr Putin and Mr Assad. Without knowing that, I do not see how we can have any concept of what might be possible in the future for Syria.

Six years ago, this House may have had an insight into what this mysterious reason was through EU Sub-Committee B, which was at that time chaired dynamically by my noble friend Lord Freeman. I had the honour of being on the committee and our agenda included the question of the Gazprom pipeline into Europe, on which the security of our own European energy resources for the future so much depended. We were deeply sceptical about whether this was sensible, given the power that it appeared to give Russia to control us and turn the lights off any time it wanted to.

The Foreign Office was prevailed upon to find a Russian expert—yes, it has one—and sent along a bright young man to come and talk to us. We told him of all our concerns: Ukraine, Georgia, Chechnya all bordered on the pipeline. The scope for interference and blackmail from Russia was terrible. How would we make it work? This bright young man looked at us very tolerantly. He did not quite say, “You are a load of fuddy-duddy old idiots”, but he got very close to it. He said, “You have not understood a thing of what is happening here”. We said, “Tell us”. He said, “The whole point is that the pipeline is in fact going to be the personal financial source going directly into the private hands of Mr Putin and it is going to be the only means by which he will be able to hold on to power in Russia personally, so there is not the slightest risk that he is going to do anything which interferes with the continuity of your supply”.

If that was true then and is still true now, is this the explanation of Mr Assad's hold over Mr Putin? Mr Assad would be in a position to open up the shores of Syria—in a very narrow band, only about 30 kilometres long—for a new pipeline, which has long since been rumoured, to be created out of Iran, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, all merging on the Syrian shore and then crossing to the mainland of our European homeland. This would destroy Mr Putin's position. Is this what the connection is? If it is, surely we can have a diplomatic initiative with Mr Putin to put his mind at rest as to

the impracticality of this and to give him some assurance that we would never entertain it, even if it had to be done at a European Union level. But this is ridiculous as it stands. I believe that this is the barrier for Mr Putin to the reorganisation of Syria and we should be addressing it at this level.

7.29 pm

**Lord Soley (Lab):** My Lords, this is a difficult issue and the views of all sides ought to be respected. I want to make just a couple of points. First, to those people who say that we should not be involved, there is a follow-up question for them to answer: do they therefore think that the coalition is wrong to be involved? If they think that, they have to face the other question: could Daesh win? There are implications to that. Secondly—and I have been critical of the way that the Prime Minister has handled this verbally—we are not raining down or proposing to rain down bombs on Syria, yet the argument has been presented too often in that form. I do not want to get into the technical arguments about it as I do not know enough, but I know that we are talking about more targeted bombing. If anyone is raining down bombs, there is a case against Russia using its heavy bombers and freefall bombs, which are a seriously bad idea.

The other thing that follows from this is that if you are concerned about civilians being killed, which they probably will be, you have to set that as a moral judgment against the fact that we, the rest of the world, have sat around for four or five years and watched the most appalling killing and suffering, and done nothing about it. I understand the reasons why we have not been able to do things about it, but please be careful of moral arguments saying that we should not get involved because a few civilians might get killed. Important as that is, the bigger argument is that if we can be involved and stop it happening, that would be the greater good. The problem, as we all know, is that the United Nations has been frozen because of the splits between Russia and China, on one side, and the three western powers, on the other, about the enthusiasm, or lack of it, for intervention.

My last and most important point is about the Vienna process. The reason I can say confidently that I support the Government's position is that in that resolution, and in some of their recent comments, they have made the point that the Vienna process is the political arm. It is absolutely right to say that there has to be a combined military and political approach. The strength that we have at the moment is that, for the first time in this wretched war, we have all the major powers in the region and the major powers of the United Nations involved. That means we have the chance of doing what everyone, quite rightly, is asking the Prime Minister about: what is the strategy? There is still no strategy but you can now see emerging a military and political approach, which can deliver a strategy.

It is profoundly important in view of the failure to hold the situation in Libya, and after the Iraq war, that the Vienna conference is looking not only at a ceasefire and peace process but at how to police the areas that are occupied by the various groups. Of one thing I am sure: if there were no policing mechanism for them,

there would be killings of the usual type as people settled old scores, took advantage to expand their territory or whatever. That Vienna conference must not only work on a peace process but look at the post-conflict situation, which means, as I think the noble Lord, Lord Owen, said, troops from other powers. There should also be the involvement of officers and NCOs to ensure that those patrolling troops are well controlled. It is not directly relevant here but it is worth saying that after the collapse of Japan and Germany in the Second World War, we patrolled areas with German and Japanese troops led by British officers and NCOs. That bit is important if you are to control the situation. We lost control in Iraq, we have lost control in Libya but we must not lose control in Syria.

7.33 pm

**Lord Maginnis of Drumglass (Ind UU):** My Lords, while it may be unnecessary for me to inform the House of this, I want to make it clear that although I have a deep reservation about the Prime Minister's fixation on bombing Syria, I am not a "terrorist sympathiser". My reservations derive from my own experience of terrorism, from my belief that to win against terrorists, whether that be Daesh or the Provisional IRA, one has to dominate the ground not just from a military perspective but in terms of liaison, of communication and of administration.

I am concerned that where the United Kingdom was once the exemplar in co-ordinating allies with a common objective towards a common cause, we are relegating ourselves merely to "other" status. I have not heard a word from the Government about our relationship with the Peshmerga, for example, or about any efforts that we could make towards reconciling our friends among the Turks and the Kurds. Why not? When the Peshmerga drove Daesh out of Sinjar, was there any viable initiative to establish any sort of cordon sanitaire in that region, so that we might begin to restore even a modicum of order and administrative opportunity to day-to-day life in that area? When we invaded Iraq and then virtually abandoned it to Nouri al-Maliki, to manipulate under the direction of the Iranian mullahs' regime, did we shoulder any of our assumed responsibilities?

Let me give an example regarding intelligence. I have been berating our Foreign Office for months on its ability to secure the safety of refugees in Camp Ashraf, and now Camp Liberty. On 12 October this year the Foreign Office wrote to me saying:

"I am pleased that certain positive steps are being taken by the Government of Iraq to improve ... conditions at Camp Liberty. We continue to support the United Nations",

and so on. This was supposed to reassure me. That was on 12 October and 18 days later, as noble Lords will know, a mortar attack on Camp Liberty—permitted by the Iraqi regime—killed 26 men, women and children. Need I say more?

More bombing, whatever its collateral damage may be, cannot be justified if we are merely sustaining dubious Administrations such as those of Assad and al-Abadi. Let us recognise that if we could round up every member of Daesh today, that organisation would be replaced by another within weeks. Do any of us remember al-Qaeda? I have not the time to even touch

on the reality where the Russian bomber flying alongside ours would have totally different short-term and long-term objectives. When we know who our allies are, we can clearly envisage alternative Administrations in Syria and Iraq. Maybe then, but now is not the time to fly our planes into the diplomatic fog that we have appeared to develop.

7.38 pm

**Lord Bilimoria (CB):** My Lords, when Parliament was recalled in August 2013, I remember speaking on whether to intervene in Syria. I made the point that in the summer of 2003 my late father, Lieutenant-General Bilimoria, on his last visit to Britain before he passed away, was asked by a senior journalist, "General, do you think we should have intervened in Iraq?". My father replied, without any hesitation, "No, we should only have intervened with the authority of the United Nations". Today, as the noble Lord, Lord Owen, has said, we have the authority of the United Nations to take whatever steps are necessary to get rid of the evil that is Daesh, ISIL, ISIS, Islamic State, IS or whatever name these evil monsters are given. Last year, we made the decision to intervene in Iraq but not in Syria. I remember saying categorically at the time that this did not make sense and that it was a half-cocked measure, involving a border that Daesh does not recognise. I said that I feared we would need to revisit that measure in a few months', or even a few weeks', time. Here we are now, a year later. Does the Minister agree that with hindsight, we should have gone into Iraq and Syria a year ago?

A key difference between our situation now and the debates we had over the last two years is the recent publication of the 2015 SDSR. The Government have listened and they have committed to the 2% NATO spend. The SDSR of 2015 is a far cry from that of 2010. This review will strengthen our Armed Forces for situations exactly like the one we face today.

One of the primary reasons we need to intervene in Syria now is to support our allies, as we have heard, particularly after the horrific atrocities in Paris. However, as so many noble Lords have said, air attacks alone will not work. I agree with the points about the precision weapons at our disposal made by the noble Lord, Lord King, and also share the views of the noble Lord, Lord Ramsbotham, about the important role ground troops can play in the conflict. As the noble Lord, Lord Dannatt, said, we need to co-ordinate this. We must take note of what the noble Lord, Lord Hague, said in his brilliant maiden speech and accept the case for combining these strikes with Special Forces. Will the Minister confirm that? The local ground forces are not enough: they are too small and too fragmented. We need to build on what the noble Lord, Lord Owen, said. Can the Government clarify who will be leading these local ground forces and who will be co-ordinating them in a manner that renders them a viable force?

Hamish de Bretton-Gordon, one of the world's leading chemical weapons experts, who has extensive dealings with Syria, has said that if allied forces launched a ground offensive, Daesh could be defeated in a matter of weeks. The problem, as we have seen in recent history, is that this would leave a vacuum.

[LORD BILIMORIA]

We must be able to use diplomatic methods to rebuild society in a proper manner and not allow the area to descend into the kind of situation we have seen with our operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. We have spent more time there than the First and Second World Wars combined—let alone the billions of pounds spent, the lives lost and the number of wounded. The noble Lord, Lord Hague, said that we must be prepared for the possibility of partitioning the region and that we must accept the enormous political and economic changes required to achieve lasting stability throughout the Middle East. Does the Minister agree that, sadly, partitioning of the area might be necessary?

Last year, we intervened late and without the required force. I said a year ago that we may be required to intervene again. That is now the case. However, we must accept the reality that these air strikes alone will not be enough. The House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee has said that they will have little more than “marginal effect” and are,

“unlikely to be effective without reliable allies on the ground ... and these would not be easy to find”.

We must go ahead with these air strikes, but let us not think that this is all that is required, or we will be back here once again in a few months’ time debating the next round of measures. Now that we are intervening in Iraq and Syria, we must do this in a fully committed way, with our eyes wide open.

7.42 pm

**Lord Turnberg (Lab):** My Lords, to bomb or not to bomb; that is not the question. The real questions are, how we defeat Daesh when we know bombing alone will not do it, and what our plan is for Syria as and when Daesh is removed. Bombing has an effect, of course, but Daesh has a strong territorial base, and its ability to survive aerial attacks by the major powers lends it a sense of invincibility that adds to its attraction for vulnerable youngsters. It is winning a battle for hearts and minds.

It is inevitable that we will need boots on the ground; the question is, who should be wearing those boots. We have a heady mix of participants, with conflicting aims: Russia is supporting Assad against the rebels, although recently also against Daesh, while the US is supporting the rebels against Assad. I would love to have listened to the conversations between Putin and Obama in Vienna and Paris recently. Can the noble Earl tell us whether he has any insights into how they resolved their differences? Turkey is opposed to the Syrian regime, but at the same time is attacking the Kurds, when the Kurds are the best local fighting force against Daesh. Saudi Arabia is distracted in Yemen, and the Gulf states are standing back. On the ground in Syria we have this mixed bag of groups, often with conflicting aims.

We may ask whether Assad should be considered an ally, at least for the time being, and how far we should rely on Iran to play a role. We know that Iran’s intention is to create a strong Shia arc across Syria and into a completely dysfunctional Lebanon, in hock to the terrorists of Hezbollah. Iran and its proxies threaten Jordan and Israel, both strong supporters of the West and both of which feel very threatened. Incidentally,

there is this strange idea floating about that all the problems of the Middle East are somehow due to Israel’s inability to reach agreement with the Palestinians—the Saudi ambassador said as much in the *Times* today. Does anyone really believe that if Israel did not exist, all would be sweetness and light with Daesh? That hardly seems credible.

What is to be done? Yes, let us bomb Daesh, but who can we get to do what is needed on the ground? America and Germany are now sending in some personnel, but local efforts will inevitably be needed. The Kurds in the north, with about 25,000 men, are a vital resource, and if we can get the Turks off their backs they will be invaluable. Have the Government exerted any pressure on Turkey to lay off the Kurds and give them some autonomy? Among the other militant factions, there are some more moderate rebel groups that could be taken into a coalition against Daesh. Considerable effort would be required to support, co-ordinate and train these forces, and it is here that we could play an important role. What efforts are we making with the Americans to do just that? This is obviously a strategy that we have to pursue, but I fear that at the end of the day, if we are serious about removing Daesh, we may well have to see NATO playing a more active role on the ground.

Finally, we have to be able to offer the anti-Assad forces a slice of the Syrian cake. It seems inevitable to me that, post-Daesh, Syria will not exist as it has done up to now. How will it be carved up? Will it be a sort of federation of states, some run by successors to the rebel forces? Will Assad continue to rule a subset of Syria or will he be removed? How far will Russia go to sustain him? How do we prevent Iran taking over, with all its support for terrorist groups? These are the thorny issues we will need to resolve soon, rather than leaving them until after the conflict with Daesh is over. We cannot have a post-Iraq situation again.

7.46 pm

**Baroness O’Loan (CB):** My Lords, I listened very carefully to the Leader of the House, but I cannot agree with the Government. Syria is complex. We say Assad should no longer be leader. There is political turmoil, we have Daesh, a quarter of a million people at least have died and 11 million have been displaced. When I visited Jordan’s Camp Zaatari, I was told by the UN that it believed that jihadis were using it for R&R purposes. Around 80% of Syrians now live in poverty, and education, health and social welfare have all collapsed. This is not simple.

If we move to further develop our air strikes in Syria, that bombing must be supported on the ground. The forces of 70,000, about which so many noble Lords have spoken this afternoon, are from many factions and have different allegiances. We cannot expect coherence of response from them.

The current bombing campaign, in which we participate already through our drones—we are not doing nothing—has caused widespread destruction. We do not know the true extent of civilian casualties, but we do know that the level of Daesh attacks across the world has increased tenfold in the last year. The question therefore is whether further bombing is the best option. I do not believe it is.

The Leader of the House assured us that further military participation in Syria will not increase sympathy for Daesh in the UK. With great respect, I do not believe she is right. We know that the experience in conflicted countries across the world has been that of enhanced engagement by young men, and now young women, with the armed struggle, as they used to call it in Northern Ireland. Terrorism is not defeated by force of arms.

The call has gone out to people across the world to support Daesh in its struggle. The attack in Tunisia was just the kind of random, disparate activity for which Daesh is calling. The message seems to be, “Do what you can, where you can”. A couple of young men or women, some powerful guns—easily obtained in so many countries—and explosives, which are not difficult to acquire and utilise, and there you have the making of a very serious terrorist incident. Those involved in Paris lived in Europe most of their lives. The message to these people is that if you carry out these attacks, you do not do wrong, and there are those who will respond to that message.

The question is what we should do with our existing resources. We are currently spending £200 million a year. Do we say that we are doing enough of a military nature and that we need to do more—for example, to address the Vienna talks, to provide humanitarian support to refugees, to contribute to stabilisation, to fund intelligence activity and to fight radicalisation here? The Leader of the House told us that Daesh is spending £1.5 million a day. What more can be done to cut off the sources of that funding?

This is not a religious war, and we should ensure that it is never characterised as such. We have to tackle it in the most effective manner. We will not do that by expending our scarce resources on bombs; what we will do is prevent the use of those resources for other purposes, and by virtue of the deaths and injuries which will ensue, we will grow the very terrorism which we seek to curtail.

Pope Francis said:

“Everyone is aware that this war weighs in an increasingly unbearable way on the shoulders of the poor. We need to find a solution, which is never a violent one. Violence only creates new wounds”.

Like other noble Lords, I am not a terrorist sympathiser, but I have been the victim of terrorists. I do not believe that this is a proportionate or effective response. I urge the Government to step back from enhanced military activity and to concentrate on peaceful ways forward.

7.49 pm

**Baroness Uddin (Non-Aff):** My Lords, few will fail to recoil at the horror of the atrocities committed by the brutal force of Daesh, and events in Tunisia, Turkey, Iraq, Mali, Kenya and Paris last month will have brought into our sharpest focus the wantonness of the threat from the terrorists.

Fewer still will not want to see the eradication of a dissolute band of fanatics whose ideas undermine the very universal values of fundamental human rights and conventions that have been hard fought for over many centuries in our countries. I am all too conscious of the fact that the victims of these acts of barbarism

are so often majority Muslims, who are on the receiving end of increasing numbers of Islamophobic attacks here and in Europe.

I believe that the vast majority of people in our country are not convinced that we should write the death warrants of more of our soldiers and civilians in Syria. The Prime Minister’s case for war is predicated on the belief that military success will be assured as a result of the combined ground forces of the Iraqi Army and the so-called moderate Syrian opposition to Assad and Daesh, along with precision-targeted bombing by the allied forces, including Britain. Most military strategists understand that for there to be any possibility of defeating Daesh, a substantial ground force is required, as has already been said. Much has been made of local opposition forces amounting to 70,000—a number which is rightly being challenged. I agree entirely with the noble Lord, Lord Morgan, that the phantom numbers of available boots may indeed be the Prime Minister’s 45 minutes.

What is evident is that the fundamental foundations of the Government’s arguments are flawed. With regard to so-called precision bombing, I argue against the logic that there will not be destruction and deaths of innocent civilians—men, women and children who will not have anywhere precise to go.

Significantly, there have already been 8,289 air strikes by the US-led coalition in Iraq and Syria. What is officially called Operation Inherent Resolve demonstrably failed to achieve its objectives. How differently will we do precise bombing to make it more effective and less bloody? If we determine the number of bombs we dropped by the precise and comprehensive nature of our intelligence information, I ask the Minister to report to the House what is our intelligence about the numbers of civilians—men, women and children—who are likely to be the casualties of our actions.

Should we simply ignore the advice of one of our most senior military figures, NATO General Sir Richard Shirreff, who has warned that air strikes on Syria will not defeat Daesh and could be the first step towards Britain being involved in a bloody and protracted war? The former NATO Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe spoke this week of the inevitability of Western forces needing to be deployed alongside local groups. What of these local groups? Are we ready for the inevitability of sending our young men and women into harm’s way to fight alongside an undisciplined and questionable collection of armed militants and extremists whose numbers and capability have been grossly exaggerated and whose loyalties are seriously in doubt? Are we saying that it is okay as long as these militants are on our side?

I sincerely hope that I will not be dismissed as one of the terrorist sympathisers when I say no—no to the killing of innocent people. We cannot pretend to imagine that there will not be thousands of women, men and children among them. Millions of citizens marched against the Iraq intervention, which has caused an estimated 800,000 deaths and utter chaos, not only in Iraq. It is largely responsible for today’s chaos in Libya and Syria, so to argue that we are capable of resolving the current desperate situation by more indiscriminate bombing is preposterous.

[BARONESS UDDIN]

I hope that our Government heed the wisdom of our seasoned professionals, clear the fog from their eyes and ears, see the suffering and the pain and hear the cries of the victims of our inevitable forthcoming gesture of political solidarity with our allies.

7.56 pm

**Baroness Morris of Bolton (Con):** My Lords, in August 2013, when we last debated whether the United Kingdom should engage in military action in Syria, I said that although there was an understandable desire to do something, we were torn by the drive to act in the certain knowledge that in a desperate and complicated situation, there were no easy answers.

There are still no easy answers, but the situation then was very different, as was the question posed. Faced then with the atrocities of Assad and his indiscriminate use of all manner of evil against his people, particularly the use of chemical weapons, we were being asked to take direct action against him. That was direct action against a despot with a horde of nasty weapons who had, and still has, powerful friends.

There seems to be a lack of a clear strategy and legitimate concern that our actions would inevitably carry unintended consequences. Despite having sympathy with the Government's argument that bombing Assad was necessary, if your Lordships' House had been given a vote that day, I would have voted against military action.

Today is different. In an initiative sanctioned by the United Nations, we are being asked to help a large coalition of Governments from across the globe, including Arab countries, to counter an evil and thuggish organisation which masquerades under the name of one of the world's great religions and yet thinks nothing of killing and maiming innocent Muslims. Daesh is a threat to us all, and we have an obligation to help in whatever way we can.

I understand the concerns raised in this important debate and share some of them. I also recognise that those who oppose this Motion do so with principle and a firm belief that we should combat Daesh in a different way, but I believe that we have to act now, and therefore I support the Government in their actions to try to make this world a safer place. However, military action has to take place against wider diplomatic efforts: that imaginative diplomacy of which my noble friend Lord Hague of Richmond spoke in his brilliant maiden speech. I was pleased to hear my noble friend the Lord Privy Seal stress that military action should be seen in the context of a comprehensive solution encompassing political, diplomatic and humanitarian dimensions.

In October, I had the privilege of meeting Syrian refugees in Zaatari camp in Jordan. We can only imagine what life must have been like when they are prepared to risk their lives and the lives of their children in seeking a safe refuge. If they are ever to have the hope of returning home, it is, in the words of King Abdullah of Jordan—a country which has borne more than its fair share of the burden of this conflict—up to all of us to face this moment of truth with determination.

7.58 pm

**Lord Rooker (Lab):** My Lords, the case is clear: Daesh is coming for us. It tries to use our innate tolerance to undermine us, in exactly the same way as the anti-British Trots in the Labour Party are using our tolerance to try to get control. It has been made clear: the aim is for the caliphate to raise its flag over Westminster and Downing Street; it will not remain in the Middle East. So we have to be prepared to fight: to fight to preserve our way of life, which is not perfect, not always fair and certainly not always equal, but is far, far better than having women sold into sexual slavery, the abolition of the rule of law, where you cannot complain about anything, and all the other things happening there, which really cannot be described in public.

We have a UN resolution in support—indeed, actually requesting action. We have Labour Party policy from the 2015 conference in support, with all four tests met—all four, contrary to what was said from the Labour Front Bench this afternoon.

I have had no briefings, except from meetings I was at with Hilary Benn last evening and others from both Houses. I was a Minister in 2003, here in the House of Lords, where we do not vote on these things. I supported the action of the Government: I wanted regime change in Iraq. Like others, I am annoyed beyond belief about the lack of post-war planning in 2003 and being misled about weapons of mass destruction. But I want to see the Chilcot report before I make a final decision.

The history of Munich tells me not to give in to the easy route. If you do not fight when attacked, you lose; and we are under attack. Neither Syria, nor our new allies, Iran, are a threat to the streets of our cities and towns. Daesh is a threat to our cities and towns.

Some say that my party is in a difficult position; I do not think that it is, really. My party leader cannot be accused, like the Prime Minister, of misleading anyone. To my knowledge, he has never agreed to protect the realm, the British way of life or western liberal democracies—and he will not. I am in the terrible position, having been in Westminster since February 1974, of believing that there are Members of the Cabinet who I would trust more to be Prime Minister than my own party leader. We need to get rid of him before we face the electorate and have a leader fit and proper to offer themselves as our Prime Minister. If I was still in the Commons, where I was for 27 years, I would be voting with the Government tonight.

8.01 pm

**Lord Williams of Baglan (CB):** My Lords, I should say at the outset that I support the Government's proposal, albeit with some reluctance, principally because of the continuing absence of a meaningful political and diplomatic strategy worthy of the name and which should accompany military action. That said, three of the permanent members of the Security Council, the US, France and Russia, are already engaged in military action in Syria, which leaves us standing in the unhappy company of China at the moment. Moreover, many of our other key allies, including Australia and Germany, are involved, whereas we are not. I have just returned

from a visit to the United States, where the perception of the UK in Congress, the media and academia is one of a declining power, rightly or wrongly. That should not dictate our policy, but it is certainly something we need to heed carefully.

If Parliament decides tonight to support the Government's motion, I would urge that we pay greater heed to the urgent necessity of developing a meaningful strategy. It is not a strategy to say that Assad must go, but a caricature of one. When I joined the UN in the 1990s, we negotiated with the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, who certainly killed far more people than Bashar al-Assad ever will. The noble Lord, Lord Owen, is not in his seat now, but I worked with him in the 1990s. In the Balkans we negotiated with Milosevic, Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic, all of them subsequently arraigned before war crimes tribunals in The Hague. As a great German theorist, Clausewitz, taught us many centuries ago, the enemy can only be defeated on the battlefield, or negotiated with. The former is not going to happen in Syria, especially since the Russian intervention on the ground.

I would encourage the Government to be more imaginative in this regard. What we should be saying is that, yes, Assad must go, but there would be no intention of outlawing the ruling Baath party. After all, that was one of the greatest mistakes of the ill-fated Bush Administration invasion of Iraq in 2003. We need to develop a strategy of detaching Baathist rank and file, and the Alawite community that supports it, from Assad. That is a strategy—not simply wishing the man will disappear. We should also be mindful of the fact that Syria has a vice-president, Farouk al-Sharaa, a Sunni by background, who has been under house arrest for several years now. The UN has been denied access to see him. I ask the Minister if he can raise the question of Vice-President Sharaa and access to him with the Russian and Iranian Governments. I also ask the Minister to reflect on our position with regard to the Baath party generally. That would be helpful in developing a meaningful political strategy.

Finally, and most importantly, can the Minister inform us when the Vienna talks will resume? They have not convened since November 2015, and I believe that they are not due to do so until January. Surely that is unacceptable. We have seen terrible terrorist attacks and military counterattacks; we need, above all, to see more diplomacy.

8.05 pm

**Lord Naseby (Con):** My Lords, I want to make clear that I broadly support the Government's motion in another place. I commend the speech of the noble Lord, Lord Williams of Baglan. I think that the Government would be very wise to reflect on what he has said. It has taken five years for the diplomatic dimension to get started. As has already been made clear by many noble Lords, it is starting but is pretty slow. Somehow or other, the UK has to put real energy into making it move forward considerably faster.

I suspect that I am the only former RAF pilot in this House who had anything to do with Suez. I can remember flying at weekends to catch up, in preparation for the continuation of the Suez exercise. However, it

collapsed so quickly that I did not see active service. I hope and pray that the mission of our own RAF today will be much more successful than that one was.

To my noble friend on the Front Bench from the Ministry of Defence, I say: will he make sure that those crew members and support staff who are going to be rushed out to Akrotiri and other places, are remembered this Christmas, and that we do not have complaints that this, that and the other have not happened, and the families at home have been neglected? Can we make a special effort to make sure that they are looked after properly?

Of course, as a former RAF pilot, I recognise above all that, despite developments in bombing techniques and so on, bombing is not enough. I do not need to repeat the speech by the noble Lord, Lord Dannatt, earlier today. Again, I think the Government would be well advised to reflect on it.

I have been chairman of the All-Party British-Sri Lanka Group, and draw a parallel with the Tamil Tiger war. There, they had 28 years of war; we have had five so far. I do not want to see any war of that length here. The House needs to recognise, though, why the Tigers were so successful. They were single-minded and well trained, with plenty of resources and money flowing in from the diaspora all over the world. They were putting child soldiers on the front line, with soldiers being dressed as civilians. The same will happen with ISIS. We have to find a way to stop the money flowing, which is flowing from this country and the whole of Europe, into ISIS. We have to stop the ammunition getting there—we can talk to our Belgian friends, who are usually a very good source of ammunition.

Somehow, we have to get to a situation where we have a strong, well-organised, committed, enthusiastic ground force. Frankly, I do not see how that is going to come from the 70,000 that we are being told about. We have to be realistic: is it not time for Her Majesty's Government to show some realism and recognise, as the French appear to be doing now, that Assad's army, with his allies in Hezbollah and Iran, have the conviction to deal with ISIS? That is the primary target that has to be dealt with. If they are successful—and I believe that they will be—that will be the end of the fourth Sunni-Shia war. How long will it take? Perhaps 18 months, from the day that we actually start in a co-ordinated fashion.

Finally, we need never to forget that wars often have strange results. After the Second World War, Churchill, our hero, was thrown out by the electorate. After the Sri Lankan war, Mahinda Rajapaksa, hero of the Sri Lankans, was thrown out at the next election. Who knows? Perhaps, if we ensure that Assad's forces do win the war, he might be thrown out as well.

8.09 pm

**Baroness Crawley (Lab):** My Lords, I add my congratulations to the noble Lord, Lord Hague of Richmond, on his stunning maiden speech. We are all going to have to up our game.

Had we been voting on the Government's Motion tonight, I would have voted in favour of the Government's position to extend military air strikes into Syria.

[BARONESS CRAWLEY]

Like many noble Lords whose views and judgments I respect and who may not agree with me, I have not come to this conclusion lightly. Despite being a Government Defence Whip between 2002 and 2010, I am not someone who believes that military intervention is always the answer to global conflict; it often is not. But in this instance, to degrade the murderous activities of Daesh in Syria, and to make our own citizens safer from its murderous intent, I believe that we have no other serious option.

I cannot see the logic of agreeing to air strikes against Daesh in Iraq—which we have been carrying out fairly effectively for the past 14 months—where it is less prominent, and not agreeing to allow the RAF to cross a border that, as noble Lords have said, Daesh does not recognise, to where Daesh is headquartered and where its communications network is based. If we are to stop this death cult, as many of my Muslim friends call it, from poisoning the minds of our young people here in Britain, and to degrade as much of their communications and ordnance as possible, it is a no-brainer. I have reached this conclusion, too, on the basis that my party set out a number of conditions, as my noble friend Lord Rooker said, for extending the current air strike programme, and it is my belief that those conditions are now being met: blocking where we can the vast financial and economic aid to Daesh; convening the Vienna peace talks; the further significant pledge of humanitarian and restoration aid to the Syrian people; and, most significantly of all, the unanimous vote of the UN Security Council two weeks ago, calling on all of us to take action against ISIL/Daesh. There are those who say that it was not the right kind of UN Security Council resolution and we should wait for another to come along. Respectfully, I say, tell that to the Yazidi women and children enslaved, raped and executed as we speak by Daesh. Tell it to the hunted gay community in that region, and to the journalists and aid workers who have been murdered in front of Daesh cameras for all the world to see. If not now, when?

There are, of course, many serious questions remaining, the most obvious being the nature and scale of the ground troops needed to complete this operation. Could the Minister address the question of ground troops in his summing up? Even with such outstanding questions, I do not believe that they negate the need to begin inflicting serious damage on Daesh. On these Benches, we pride ourselves on being an internationalist party, and our sister party in France has asked for our solidarity, following the dreadful attacks on Paris last month. What are we to do—ignore them? Yes, Paris means a lot to us, but not that much. I was proud of my grandson singing the Marseillaise at Wembley, although he did mention to me how fierce the lyrics were.

Finally, our solidarity needs to continue to embrace the Syrian people, who simply want the peaceful, democratic, boring, quiet lives that we all take for granted. Air strikes in co-operation with the international coalition will not be the full answer—we all know that. But they are part of the answer if the Syrians are ever to have their homeland returned to them, and if we are ever to be free of—

**Lord Ashton of Hyde (Con):** My Lords—

**Baroness Crawley:** My Lords, I apologise and I conclude my remarks.

8.14 pm

**Lord Oates (LD):** My Lords, as the noble Baroness, Lady Taylor of Bolton, remarked earlier, deploying the RAF to attack Daesh in Syria is in some ways a relatively simple decision. We are already attacking it in Iraq and providing surveillance and refuelling to our allies over Syria. I support that action. Daesh is a monstrous organisation that poses a direct threat to our citizens. We have every legal and moral right to respond to that threat. Indeed, as my noble friend Lord Ashdown said, the UN resolution places an obligation on us to act. However, the reason that this is also such a complicated decision is that we will not simply be attacking Daesh. We will be entering into a multipronged civil war, a religious war and a proxy regional war, not as a disinterested party determined only to destroy Daesh but as a protagonist committed to regime change by our preconditions regarding President Assad, but without any credible strategy to bring it about.

It would be tempting, given these complexities, to wash our hands of the whole thing but, as many noble Lords have said, inaction is not without cost. That cost is being paid in the towns and cities of Syria and Iraq every day. It was paid just a few weeks ago on the streets of Ankara, Beirut and Paris. What we need is action that can defeat Daesh and bring peace. Without peace, even if we do defeat them, we will soon find another vile incarnation filling the vacuum. The Prime Minister said, in his response to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee, that,

“our objective would not be to attack the Syrian regime”.

Yet regime change is the stated intention of the Prime Minister; indeed, the UK is involved in training the armed opposition to the Syrian Government. How does that fit with the wise stricture of the noble Lord, Lord Dobbs, that we must seek peace, not victory?

Before we proceed, we surely need, as a minimum, an agreement between those countries participating in armed action as to how they will end the fighting once Daesh is defeated. In the absence of such agreement, even if we can defeat Daesh without our own ground forces, what will prevent the Syrian Arab Army turning its fire on the moderate forces, with the backing of Russian air power? What would be the response of the western allies in such circumstances? Would the Russians have international law on their side? What would the legal position of the allies then be?

President Assad is using brutal force to suppress his people. However, as the noble Baroness, Lady Helic, said in her powerful speech, we cannot allow an obsession with Assad to paralyse the chances of peace as it has done to date. It was foolish of the American President to set this precondition, and foolish of the Prime Minister to repeat it. It is time to set it aside. The longer we make it a precondition, the less likely it is to be achieved and the more people who will be killed in the mean time. If Assad going is the precondition for peace, there will be no peace—that is the brutal truth.

Our closest neighbour and ally has suffered a terrible attack and has asked for our assistance. We cannot easily stand aside in such circumstances, but we urgently need a more compelling strategy than the Government have presented to date. If we are to embark on action, we must have no preconditions to peace; our only objectives must be to defeat Daesh, halt the conflict, and secure a political settlement that will allow the people of Syria to live in peace and security once more.

8.18 pm

**Lord Green of Deddington (CB):** My Lords, I was very strongly opposed to military attacks on Iraq and Libya and, two years ago, to the proposal to attack Syria. This time I see no alternative, for the reasons that many noble Lords have given. That said, I should like to focus on the political aspects. The noble Baroness the Leader of the House spoke of a new Syrian Government, representing all the Syrian people, which will be our partner.

It is there that I have my doubts about the Government's approach. This could prove to be a fatal flaw. I come to this question having followed events in Syria since I first arrived in the Middle East 50 years ago, almost to the day, and having been ambassador in Damascus, following in the distinguished footsteps of the noble Lord, Lord Wright of Richmond, a few years later.

This talk about a political transition in Damascus carries great risks. I am no defender of the extremely cruel Alawite regime, but we need to be clear about two points. First, the collapse of the regime would lead to the most terrible bloodshed. These are revenge societies, and you would see revenge on a terrible scale. We would see the collapse of the civil order, just as we saw in Iraq, which was mentioned by the noble Lord, Lord Solely. We shredded that society. That could happen again and must not be allowed.

Secondly, Russia and Iran will do everything possible to sustain an Alawite regime in Damascus for their own strategic and political reasons. I therefore agree with the noble Lord, Lord Dannatt, that it should not be our aim to overthrow the Damascus regime. This is a complex struggle that we cannot avoid. It will have many years to run. No one at this point can see a viable way through the web of conflicting interests. As the noble Lord, Lord Hague, said, we may eventually have to consider partition, but a useful start would be to reappraise our attitude to the Damascus Government, including our attitude to the Baath party, as was suggested by the noble Lord, Lord Williams. This is partly because it is indeed the enemy of our enemy, and partly for fear of worse—much worse.

8.22 pm

**Lord Robathan (Con):** My Lords, if you are the 64th speaker in a debate it is hard to find anything original to say, so noble Lords will judge whether I achieve that. As a former soldier, I assure noble Lords that I am not in favour of any air strikes or warfare unless it cannot be avoided. Anyone who has seen the death and destruction caused by war does not want to see it again. We should always approach any military action with caution and deep foreboding. I shall briefly make five points.

First, like the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, I regret the convention that appears to be being established that military action cannot be taken without parliamentary approval by Members of Parliament in the Commons, some of whom will not be well informed and some of whom will be, some of whom will be influenced by self-selecting personnel who send emails, by social media, by groups such as Stop the War, Momentum and 38 Degrees and by political activists who should not be allowed to influence the debate. No Government can survive without the support of, first, Parliament and, secondly and ultimately, the electorate. We do not need this. However, since Parliament is being asked, the Commons and the Lords must back the Prime Minister and trust him. That may be difficult for some, but we must trust him. Governments often make catastrophic mistakes, but so do individuals and MPs.

Secondly, the vote in 2013 hugely damaged the standing of the UK and the West. A red line had been crossed and no action was taken. It sent a signal to Assad, Daesh, jihadis everywhere and indeed to Russia that the West was not to be taken seriously. We were seen as a pushover. Ask Mr Putin in Crimea, Ukraine or Syria and very recently on the Turkish border. By the way, I have been put on a blacklist by Mr Putin for such disobliging remarks and I am unable to go to Russia for my holiday as a result.

My third point is for the Prime Minister and the Government—and I urge noble Lords to trust the Prime Minister's judgment. I should say that I told him this when I was a Minister in the Ministry of Defence and I survived: the cuts that were introduced in 2010 and 2011 were too drastic. The Armed Forces were cut far too much. We have too few aircraft and ships. This is being rectified to a certain extent by the recent SDSR. Above all, though, we have too few troops. Should we wish to put these much-vaunted boots on the ground, there are precious few of them. There are too few to assist in a multitude of tasks including civil disorder, terrorist attacks and overseas operations.

My fourth point is linked to that. We have excellent Special Forces, but they are special. A rigorous selection process makes them special, and we cannot create Special Forces on a whim or because we wish to do so. The pool of talent has been shrunk by cuts. The Army is now half the size that it was when I joined 40 years ago, whereas the Special Forces are bigger. It is difficult, if not impossible, to increase the size of the Special Forces further without dropping the standards, and that makes them no longer special and no longer capable of the task that we ask them to do.

Finally, the military campaign in 2003 was a complete success. It was very rapid and over within a matter of a week or so. The aftermath was a disaster. Post-conflict planning, reconstruction, stabilisation, development spending and whatever else are essential. I note that this is in the Commons Motion, but it needs more than mere words. It needs action, whatever happens.

8.26 pm

**Lord Triesman (Lab):** My Lords, like many others, if I had a vote tonight, it would be unequivocally with the Government. Of course I accept that the

[LORD TRIESMAN]

decision involves balance and judgment, but I would vote with the Government precisely because I want peace. The remarkable speech by the noble Lord, Lord Hague, essentially made that point. There is much consensus in this House. We agree that we are facing a barbaric force in Daesh. Daesh has murdered huge numbers of Muslims; it is an indiscriminate, vile murderer of individuals and behaves with unbelievable brutality towards women. Daesh is as dangerous on our streets as it is in Paris or Ankara and it exports violent objectives to a small fragment of our population. Our airmen are combatants over Iraq, with the consent of the Iraqi state, and for that reason are a Daesh target in Iraq. So far we cannot attack Daesh's centre, communications or supply lines, and in effect are further endangering our airmen by that prohibition.

Our response is plainly legal under UN Article 51. Resolution 2249 confirms the point and calls unanimously on members to act to end Daesh. The UN plainly sees this as a just issue. It is extraordinary that those who always prioritised UN decisions and UN authority above all now find it inconvenient to accept the clearest of UN unanimous decisions. Here, tonight, we have no room for ducking and diving. The UN cannot be the subject of cynical manipulation in that way with a parade of excuses for endless delay and complete inaction. We have an obligation to work with our allies, not least to underscore the credible authority of the UN. It would be thoroughly demeaning for this country to turn its back on the UN decision or to place our security in this country in other hands.

Of course I respect the views of others in this debate, but I am confident that the people of the United Kingdom will never settle for a Government who will not act coherently to protect their security. People are not so foolish as to think that this is easy or that no balance of judgment is involved, but their expectation at the end of it is that they will be protected and that that responsibility is overriding. People quite rightly expect a comprehensive approach balancing the need for diplomacy, force and aid—not any one of them, but all three.

Vienna has now generated diplomatic options, but we all know from serious strategic analysis that without the willingness to project power, diplomacy is usually fatally weakened. If we believe in diplomatic effort—and I do—and its value and efficacy, then we need to strike the very best available balance. To do this to achieve the optimum balance, we must surely take the action that is set out in the Motion being debated in the House of Commons. Politics will fail without the projection of force, and force will fail without the diplomacy that is needed to achieve a settlement afterwards. Nothing will work long-term in either regard without aid, and I applaud the noble Lords, Lord Ashdown, Lord Hutton, Lord Williams of Baglan and Lord Owen, for the imagination that they have brought to possible solutions. The task of the allies is to create conditions on the ground in which local alliances can be created and have prospects of success, as we are beginning to see in northern Iraq. We must of course also assist in the work of a fundamentally different and peaceful Islamic narrative.

I support the Government. I hope that the PM will have the grace to withdraw gratuitous comments about people with whom I profoundly disagree. It is unhelpful and will become more unhelpful as time goes by and we want to hold people together. To the leadership of my party, who say that those of us who support the PM will have nowhere to hide, I say: I do not want or need anywhere to hide. There is no joy in advocating military action, but there is no credit in hiding from the conclusion that we must show that we are strong enough in our determination to protect our country.

8.30 pm

**Lord Wright of Richmond (CB):** My Lords, I understand why the Government want to respond positively to the requests of our allies to join them in air attacks against ISIS in Raqqa. Nothing that I say in this necessarily brief intervention should be interpreted as any sympathy whatever for ISIS, or disagreement with the objectives of that powerful statement last week from the United Nations.

However, I find the Prime Minister's response to the report of the Foreign Affairs Committee unconvincing, if not dangerously misleading. Mr Cameron's claim that the Syrian opposition forces could put 70,000 men in the field against ISIS, under the command of the so-called Free Syrian Army, ignores the reality that they are deeply divided groups of Syrians and others, about 90% of whom are Islamic fundamentalist radicals supported and funded by Turkey and the Gulf states. These are the so-called moderates that the Government expect to form the basis of a transitional Government in Damascus. Is it not high time that we recognised that although the present Syrian Government, with their powerful and growing support from Russia and Iran, are undoubtedly part of the problem, they must also be part of the solution? Surely all the Government's efforts and our still considerable diplomatic resources should now be directed towards supporting the diplomatic talks in Vienna and encouraging their early resumption.

Have the Government taken adequately into account the chaotic military situation in northern Syria, where the Jordanians have withdrawn support from the Free Syrian Army; where the Turks are primarily interested in bombing the PKK and opposing the Russians; where the deployment of Russian S-400 anti-air missiles have effectively transformed most of northern Syria into a no-fly zone under Russian control; and where the United States suspended air strikes this week? If our Tornados and Typhoons are sent into action in the next few days without adequate co-ordination and consultation, is there not a serious risk of collision with the Russian and Syrian forces?

The Government tell us that there is no question of our putting ground troops into Syria. President Obama has said the same, and yet we saw yesterday a decision by the United States to send in more special ground forces. If that is not mission creep, what is?

It is argued that it is illogical for the Royal Air Force to attack ISIS in Iraq but not in Syria. The Government may be content with the legal advice that they have received. However, let us not forget that we are in Iraq at the request of the Iraqi Government, whereas we do not even accept that the Syrian Government in Damascus even exist.

We have given facilities to our allies in our sovereign base areas, and no doubt we are sharing as much intelligence as possible with both the United States and France. Should we not leave it at that and devote all our diplomatic weight and experience to the talks in Vienna? If we do, what more should we be doing about ISIS in Syria? We should accept, however much it sticks in our throats, that President Assad was right when he said yesterday that the only forces effectively confronting ISIS in his country are his Russian allies. Should we not persuade our Gulf allies, which have given financial, material and ideological support to ISIS, that they should more actively discredit, confront and cut off funding from what is, after all, their creature?

As we have just reached four minutes, I will make just one quick postscript. I note that the Government prefer to call ISIS “Daesh”. Can I just tell noble Lords, as a much decayed Arabist, that the “D” in “Daesh” stands for “the state”?

8.34 pm

**Lord Howell of Guildford (Con):** My Lords, it is easy to be the backstop speaker at the end of this great debate, because almost everything that is wise and profound about this complex situation has been said by your Lordships, not least by my noble friend Lord Hague, my former boss, whose superb maiden speech I think we all recognise was the beginning, we hope, of many contributions in this place.

As the noble Lords, Lord Ashdown and Lord Ramsbotham, and other noble Lords have said, obviously the RAF bombing, however skilful, will make only a limited difference to the outcomes, and bombing alone will not eliminate the repulsive ISIS, or Daesh, which anyway now operates in many other places far away from Syria and Iraq—in the Maghreb, for instance. Air-supported intense ground operations at the very least are needed to make any lasting impact.

This is a global conflict against a global poison, as the most reverend Primate the Archbishop of Canterbury reminded us, in which many nations are already involved and which is different in horrific degree from all other conflicts raging around in the region. Even the Chinese are offering to lend a hand. Nothing will begin to be solved in this region until this pure evil is eradicated, and it is not just a western issue. In many ways I find the whole public discussion of whether we should somehow join in at this stage a demeaning and inward-looking process—small power politics in a big world that is moving on. The real issue is how we work, at least temporarily, with the Russians, our French neighbours, America, Iran, Turkey and the other regional powers such as the Peshmerga Kurds.

As to what kind of ground troops, again it is obvious that the front-line street fighting needs to be done not just by the slightly shaky Free Syrian Army but by units from the regional powers—as many as will play—plus expert support from our own special units, which we have available and of which we plan to have more. We will be discussing that in this House tomorrow. Where do we start? By far the most promising point is at the northern end of Jordan, where the Jordanians are seeking support for establishing a buffer zone—indeed, two buffer zones—cutting right into the ISIL heartland.

This is a new kind of conflict, not just with guns and troops but equally through information technology, cyberattacks, bank accounts and oil flows. We have ample capacity to impose devastating damage on ISIL in all these areas, and I only hope that we are already doing so and not just hanging about waiting for armchair experts in Parliament and the media to give us permission. Indeed, I must confess that I rather agree with the noble Baronesses, Lady Deech and Lady Symons, and others that the whole process in which we are now participating is somehow wrong. The job of Parliament is not to govern but to call the Government to account for their actions. I am told there is a convention that Parliament should decide this sort of issue. It is not a convention at all. It is a passing arrangement, a passing fad. It may be necessary in times of coalition but mercifully we are no longer there. The Executive, the Queen’s Ministers, should get ahead with their strategy and then win support for it in Parliament.

Of course there are many other fearsome security, refugee and humanitarian issues all lying ahead for us, particularly in the Middle East, but I say first things first. Let us have a co-ordinated strategy to destroy the crucifiers, the beheaders, the mass murderers, the rapists, the burn-us-alivers. Whatever the means, I cannot understand how anyone in their right mind could be against that.

8.39 pm

**Lord Wallace of Saltaire (LD):** My Lords, this has been a very powerful, moderate and constructive debate. We are all attempting to judge a very difficult situation, and the balance in all our parties is one that we come to with great difficulty. I stress all our parties because we know that when it comes to it this evening, all parties will divide to some extent, except for the rather Stalinist SNP. Certainly in my party over the last few days we have had some extensive and intensive conversations about the costs and benefits, the judgments that one has to make and the deep uncertainties as to where we might end up if we take either course this evening.

I was very glad to see the Prime Minister in the speech he made earlier today in the other place moderate his language of last night and say:

“There is honour in voting for; there is honour in voting against”.

I say that to my own party, as well as to others.

The Liberal Democrats are an internationalist party, not an isolationist one. We believe very strongly in working with our neighbours in facing common threats. We believe in an open society and a well-integrated international society. We take full account of France’s appeal for support and of the Dutch, Danish and now German commitment to the long-term struggle against Daesh. We welcome the UN resolution authorising “all necessary measures” to contain this common threat. We are instinctively reluctant to use force, but sadly recognise that we have to play our part in what will be a long-term conflict, which cannot be won by military means alone.

However, we offer only conditional support for the Conservative Government in the policy that they have set out so far. We warn the Prime Minister to carry the

[LORD WALLACE OF SALTAIRE]

country with him, not to give way, as he did last night, to inflammatory language or to play partisan politics over fundamental issues of national security. Supporters of all parties and none are hesitant about further bombing in the Middle East. They need to be persuaded that the Government will at last prioritise diplomatic efforts to end the civil war in Syria and to promote reconciliation between Saudi Arabia and Iran, as well as pushing Daesh out of the territory that it controls.

Many British Muslims are desperately unhappy about the dangers of civilian casualties. They need reassurance that Muslim states are working with us to contain the terrorist threat and to rebuild stable government across Syria and Iraq. This is a global conflict in which Daesh attracts its fighters from across the world, including from within the UK. The noble Duke, the Duke of Somerset, made a powerful point that how we treat our marginalised communities—the second-generation and third-generation children of immigrants uncertain of their acceptance within western society—matters in preventing the recruitment of new fighters to Daesh, al-Qaeda, Jabhat al-Nusra and the rest. Our Government need to take that argument on board as they cut local government spending across the Midlands or the north of England and cut spending for schools and further education. I spend my weekends on the outskirts of Bradford. The cuts in our local authority's budget will weaken local efforts to integrate our substantial Muslim minority, to offer young Muslims training, jobs, self-respect and a sense of British citizenship within our national community.

Last week, we set out five conditions before we were willing to support the Government's proposal to extend our military commitment over Syria. We are grateful that the Government have engaged with these conditions, including the need to look into external funding for radical perversions of Islam within the UK. The UN resolution satisfies our concerns about the legality of further military action, but the Vienna talks are only just beginning and the broad coalition that the Prime Minister talks about remains, at best, fragile. We want to witness, and to be regularly briefed about, the active British diplomatic engagement in strengthening this coalition, working closely with our European partners. We also want to hear from a Conservative Party that has been far too uncritical in its relations with the Sunni Gulf monarchies that the Government are working with the Arab League and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation—which at present are almost uninvolved in the situation—pressing the Sunni states of the region to play active and constructive roles.

Many noble Lords raised the question of forces on the ground and demanded that we and other western states be willing to commit ground troops to defeat Daesh and stabilise the region. I suggest that they have forgotten the lessons of Afghanistan and Iraq: that the commitment of western troops, which do not understand local languages or local cultures, risks strengthening our enemies, not creating stability. The Prime Minister was right to quote in the other place today what the Iraqi Government have clearly told him—that,

“the presence of western ground troops can be a radicalising force and can be counterproductive”.

So we have to look to the states in the region to step up to their responsibilities and contribute to stabilising these ungoverned areas. Several noble Lords have rightly criticised the Saudis and the Gulf states for standing by as Daesh perverts the message of Sunni Islam, disastrously embarking instead on a military campaign in Yemen, imposing the model of the Sunni/Shia conflict on a far more messy local civil war.

The traditional leaders of Sunni Islam came from Al-Azhar in Cairo and from Mecca. The legitimacy of the Saudi royal family rests upon this claim. So we are entitled to ask the Saudis to accept their political responsibilities and to stop promoting Wahhabi Salafism against other interpretations of Sunnism across the Muslim world, which now stretches into communities within Britain. The Saudi ambassador's article in the *Times* today was an inadequate answer to this demand.

In the middle of the Napoleonic Wars, when many British nationalists saw Roman Catholicism as the enemy as much as French imperialism, the Whig Government responded to the Irish rebellion of 1798-99 by setting up a Catholic seminary within the UK. In spite of persistent Tory attacks over the following years, Maynooth successfully trained generations of Catholic priests who were willing to seek a reconciliation between Catholicism and English values, until the collapse of home rule and the approach of the First World War. Our Conservative Government would now be wise to invest, through our universities, in strengthening the centres of Islamic studies, which have now been established, to train future generations of British imams here.

Daesh promotes the narrative that it is defending Islam against the West. We have to work with Muslim states to promote an alternative narrative of reconciliation and moderation, as the noble Baroness, Lady Kidron, in particular, said. That will need to include working with Iran, pushing back intolerance between Sunni and Shia and between Islam and other faiths. I am an Anglican and I welcome what the Anglican Church is doing in this regard. Over the last 12 months I have attended services in Westminster Abbey that have been Christian and Jewish—I recall that the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, was present—and Christian and Muslim. That is absolutely the way that we have to go, and I know that the most reverend Primate the Archbishop of Canterbury also feels that strongly. I look forward to further work in that direction to promote better understanding between the people of the Book and their three faiths.

Extending Britain's military operations over Syria is not in itself a game-changer, and we should not pretend that it is. This is in some ways a symbolic issue. Deepening our diplomatic engagement in order both to push back Daesh and to resolve the Syrian civil war is at least as essential. So long as the war in Syria continues, more refugees will struggle to reach safety in Europe. Tim Farron, my party leader, has asked the Government to take in some thousands of the unaccompanied children who have reached Italy in order to offer them security and hope, and to show that we are sharing the responsibility at our end.

Bombing is not enough, as my noble friend Lord Ashdown and many others have said. We look to the Government to develop a far broader strategy together

with our allies and partners and to work for reconciliation across the Middle East, for the reconstruction of Syria and Iraq, and for humanitarian assistance for those suffering from the interconnected conflicts across the region.

8.48 pm

**Lord Touhig (Lab):** My Lords, if ever there is a need to make a case for showing how this House adds value to our parliamentary system, then today's debate deserves to be highlighted. In particular, the maiden speech of the noble Lord, Lord Hague of Richmond, enhanced our reputation. He is an author, parliamentarian and statesman, and I could not give him greater praise than saying, as he is married to a Welsh girl and has a home in Wales, that he is an honorary Welshman to boot.

Should we join the campaign in Syria to help destroy ISIL or should we take a different route that would not involve direct military action? Both sides of this most crucial argument have been put before us. In the other place, a debate is taking place, but I doubt that the two sides of the issue have been argued with any more knowledge or passion than that which we have seen in this House. The key difference is that the Members of the other place are charged with voting for or against the Government's Motion recommending air strikes. Whether or not to commit our forces to engage in a conflict is a decision rightly taken by the elected House. Whatever our views, our thoughts—and yes, perhaps our prayers too—must be with the Members of Parliament who have to take that very important decision tonight.

For me, I see three strands in this matter. First, do we join our friends and partners from around the globe in engaging in direct military action to help destroy ISIL? Secondly, what can Britain do to help accelerate the Vienna talks to bring peace and an end to the Syrian civil war? Thirdly, what can we do to ensure that any peace settlement endures?

The Prime Minister has sought to address these strands in his Statement to the Commons and in the document that the Government produced last week when he responded to the Foreign Affairs Committee report. His Statement has thrown up many questions and there are two that cause me some anxiety. The first is the question of ground support. Second, and linked to it, is the issue of post-conflict management. The first worry is whether or not there are some 70,000 fighters, not infected by ISIL or some other terrorist group, able to fill the vacuum and occupy those parts of Syria that the air bombardment is supposed to free from terrorist control. If there are no reliable ground forces—no allies to occupy, pacify and govern the areas liberated as a result of an allied air bombardment—then anarchy, terror and much worse may follow. I think the whole House will be listening with great care when the Minister replies to the debate on that particular point. Can he also confirm that the Americans have ceased to train the Free Syrian Army, a point made by my noble friend Lord Davies of Stamford?

What equipment do these 70,000 fighters the Prime Minister has said are ready to engage in a ground war have at their disposal? We have a pretty good idea of what ISIL has. We are told it has weaponry that

includes US-manufactured Abrams tanks, MK16 rifles, 40-millimetre grenade launchers and Russian M46 130-millimetre field guns. Can our potential allies—the 70,000-strong army—match this? They will need to. Air attacks can inflict considerable damage on an enemy but well-equipped ground forces will be needed too.

Turning to the issue of air strikes, what is the Government's assessment of the number of targets that the coalition air forces have to destroy before a ground offensive can be mounted? I share the concern of my noble friend Lady Smith of Basildon about the danger of civilian casualties. How will co-ordination between air power and the ground offensive be achieved?

Turning to the post-conflict period that we all want to see in Syria, here the Government give me some real concerns. When the Select Committee on Soft Power and the UK's Influence, in a report published in March last year entitled *Persuasion and Power in the Modern World*, recommended a "lessons learned" from co-operation in Afghanistan, it was rejected by the Government. The committee said that the Government should review how well DfID, the MoD and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office co-operated in that unfortunate country to provide lessons learned for any future post-conflict reconstruction efforts. The Government replied that they totally disagreed. That makes many of us worry about what comes after the end of the Syria conflict, and I am not encouraged by the phrase in the SDSR last week that Britain is the "world's leading soft power". I hope the Minister can say something about this in his reply.

In responding to the Foreign Affairs Committee, the Prime Minister said:

"The Coalition's military campaign is just one—albeit key—strand of its strategy to degrade and ultimately defeat ISIL."

The Government have argued, rightly, that we need a full and comprehensive response, including cutting off ISIL's finances. It is by having the wherewithal that ISIL is able to pay its men, encourage the flow of foreign fighters to join it, acquire weapons and sponsor mass murder in the streets of Paris, on the beaches of Tunisia and in the skies above Sinai.

So, I have a few more questions for the Minister. ISIL is able to sell oil. Who is buying it? If we know, we should use whatever power we have to put a stop to it. With the coalition's intelligence and cyber capabilities, we should be able to discover who is buying this oil. Perhaps we already have that knowledge. If we have, what are we doing to destroy this lucrative source of its income? Tracking money moving around the globe is more of a challenge, but London is the world's leading financial centre. What intelligence can we glean about ISIL's money and investments? What do we know about its movement of funds? Can the Minister say anything about this? I believe that the Prime Minister had something to say about it in the other place earlier today.

Like my noble friend Lady Smith of Basildon, I cannot stress enough the importance of the recent peace talks in Vienna and the need to focus on both the short-term and long-term political process in Syria. That is the real end game that we all want. Getting the Americans, the Russians and, most of all, the Saudis and the Iranians into the same room is a significant

[LORD TOUHIG]

diplomatic feat, but it is vital that these sides are ready and willing to make concessions and take difficult decisions. But the absence of any Syrians at the conference to end the civil war in their own country is obviously problematic. Understandably, one of the main reasons for this is that it is unclear who would represent the opposition. How will the UK intensify its international engagement, including building trust between all parties? Crucially, this means efforts to keep Iran and Russia as players in the process and maintaining the UN's position as a credible broker throughout the process.

The timeframe agreed in Vienna for political negotiations is: to begin by the end of the year; a transitional Government in place within six months; and a new constitution and free and fair elections within 18 months. This is incredibly ambitious, and concerted political support is needed for that to succeed.

Finally, I echo the concerns expressed by the UN humanitarian chief, Stephen O'Brien, about the lack of funding for humanitarian operations in Syria and the region. Jordan and other countries are already under immense pressure in providing relief for refugees, and the international community needs urgently to step up to the appeal for resources to fund essential life-saving and protection work needed across Syria.

Peace in Syria, relief from a life of misery for its people and the destruction of this most evil of terror groups must be our main focus and our objective. Britain cannot stand aside.

8.57 pm

**The Minister of State, Ministry of Defence (Earl Howe)**

**(Con):** My Lords, we have had an extremely thorough, considered and well-informed debate, and that is entirely right. The decisions that may soon be taken in another place will ultimately impact on our brave service men and women, as well as their loved ones at home. This House should be in no doubt whatever about the seriousness with which the Government approach this issue. That is why the Prime Minister held a debate on the issue last week; it is why there has been a full day's debate both here and in the House of Commons; and it is why we have made sure that both MPs and Lords have had detailed security briefings by senior advisers.

I cannot hope to address the remarks of every speaker in this debate, for which I apologise, but it may be appropriate for me to remind noble Lords of the case that we are making. The case for action is unambiguous and it is threefold. First, ISIL—or, as I shall call it, Daesh—poses a clear and present danger to both international stability and our own security. The noble and learned Lord, Lord Wallace of Tankerness, summed this up well. We have seen the atrocities perpetrated by Daesh fanatics on local populations in Iraq and Syria. We have witnessed its horrific attacks on the streets of Paris, on a Russian airliner, and in a Malian hotel. We know, too, that what happened on the streets of Paris could easily happen here on the streets of London.

But the truth is that we are already under attack. Thirty innocent British holidaymakers were murdered by Daesh on the beaches of Tunisia over the summer. In the past six months, our security services have already foiled seven plots against us, orchestrated by Daesh.

The time to act is now. We need to strike Daesh now to prevent it once again striking us. Furthermore, it would be wrong for us to stand by idly while others take on the burden of protecting us from the terrorists. So there is a case in self-defence and in collective defence.

Secondly, a point made by my noble friend Lord King, we are already targeting Daesh in Iraq and it makes no sense for our strike fighters to turn back once they reach Syrian airspace. Syria is where its headquarters are based and that is where it receives reinforcements and supplies. Daesh recognises no border between these two countries: nor should we in attacking it. That is the common-sense, practical case for action.

Air strikes are, of course, not the whole answer—the noble Lord, Lord Ashdown, is right—but they can be effective. Our support in Iraq has already halted the extremist advance in its tracks. It has already helped Iraqi and Kurdish forces push Daesh back but, to hit it at its heart, we must be able to act in Syria.

Thirdly, we have a strong mandate. The United Nations Security Council Resolution 2249 was both unequivocal and unanimously supported. It called on states to take “all necessary measures” to prevent and suppress Daesh's terrorist activities. Other states are now responding. In recent weeks we have seen France stepping up its efforts and Germany committing forces as well. Our allies are now asking us to join the fight. They know that we can bring our particular specialist capabilities to bear, including precision-guided Brimstone and Hellfire missiles. As we have heard, these weapons can minimise innocent loss of life on the ground. Our allies also know that we are already providing up to one-third of the coalition's high-end intelligence capability in Syria. With a strike capability we can use this to even better advantage.

We need to be with our allies in Syria as we are with them in Iraq. That is the moral and political case. It is also the military case. On the moral case, noble Lords have expressed concern about civilian casualties resulting from UK intervention. Military operations are inherently risky and nothing can ever be wholly guaranteed. However, since the start of air operations by the RAF in September 2014, we are not aware of any claims, credible or otherwise, being made from within Iraq that RAF strikes have caused civilian casualties. We are engaged in a conflict with a terrorist organisation that glorifies in the most bestial treatment that it can inflict on those who do not share its warped and depraved values. Given that the very reason for our military effort is to protect innocent civilians, our highly professional aircrew take great care to assess and minimise all possible risks and have on occasion decided not to engage legitimate terrorist targets rather than take such a risk. Furthermore, every strike is subjected to careful post-mission scrutiny to double-check the assessments made by the aircrew.

Noble Lords have asked about the estimate of 70,000 moderate opposition ground forces in Syria. Let me provide some clarification. We estimate that there are around 70,000 opposition fighters in Syria who do not belong to extremist groups. About 40,000 are open to political participation and western influence. A majority of those are linked to the Free Syrian Army. The other 30,000 are more Islamist but still

open to political participation and a western role in achieving a settlement in Syria. No one is claiming that the 70,000 comprise a unified army. There are many groups, but all of these forces have a proven track record of rejecting Daesh. Many of them have helped to stop Daesh's advance across Syria.

For more than a year now, leaders of those armed opposition groups have worked to build a common vision of a Syria free of Assad's rule and to commit to negotiate a political settlement based on the Geneva communiqué principles set out in 2012. All of them are working to preserve the unity and integrity of the Syrian state and to uphold the values of citizenship, representation, pluralism, freedom, rule of law and respect for Syria's commitments to human rights and international law. These are politics that we can work with and they are people that we can work with, both militarily and politically.

A number of noble Lords have advocated keeping open the option of putting UK troops on the ground. Let me cover that point very briefly. Mr Abadi has said repeatedly in the media, first in September 2014 and most recently yesterday, that he does not want coalition western troops on the ground in Iraq. We are clear that committing western ground forces to Syria would serve only to further inflame the situation and cause radicalisation. That lies behind what Mr Abadi's injunction to us has signalled.

The noble Baroness, Lady Symons, asked about the approach adopted by the Russians. I believe that the Russians are currently modifying their military and political stance in the light of recent events. It is true that so far they have concentrated their military strikes on non-Daesh targets, but the bombing of the Russian airliner has undoubtedly brought about a reassessment. We have seen Russia hosting a conference in Moscow that included members of the moderate Syrian opposition. We have seen the Russians support United Nations Security Council Resolution 2249. We are seeing them play a full and energetic part in the Vienna process, and we have started to see some increased targeting of Daesh. I do not wish to overstate where we are with Russia, but these are helpful signs.

Many noble Lords focused on the diplomatic and political negotiations, and I pay special tribute to my noble friend Lord Hague on his exemplary maiden speech. The International Syria Support Group has now met twice in Vienna. For the first time since the conflict began, it brought together all the major international players behind a common vision of what is needed to end the war. States with both Sunni and Shia majorities, including Iran and Saudi Arabia, as well as Russia, the US, France and Turkey, have for the first time accepted the principles set out in the Geneva communiqué, along with the need for Syrian-led and Syrian-owned political transition. While there are differences to resolve, there is now real momentum. It agreed a timeframe for political negotiations, including a transitional Government within six months, a new constitution, and free and fair elections within 18 months. We will continue to support the efforts of the UN Secretary-General and his special envoy, Staffan de Mistura, to bring together the Syrian parties for these important discussions.

It is important to understand that we are seeking to do two things in parallel: to put our weight behind the political and diplomatic process in Vienna, which we hope will lead to a transitional governing body in Syria and an end to the civil war there, and to degrade Daesh through air strikes. An end to the civil war would enable Syria to unite against Daesh, and air strikes against Daesh now should not only make that task less difficult but make Daesh less of a threat to us and our allies in the mean time. It is a twin-track approach.

How is it envisaged that transition in Syria will work once Assad has gone? What is the vision? We know that we must stabilise the country before we can start to reconstruct. That means a ceasefire, security and political inclusion for all Syrians, and importantly it means not dismantling the institutions of the Syrian state. But it is important not to underestimate the scale of the challenge. Syria has experienced 40 years under an oppressive regime. It has experienced a brutal civil war. Conflict has reversed Syria into poverty. It is estimated that reconstruction could cost up to \$170 billion. But we are already working to build capacity in preparation for a political settlement. That includes working through the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund with local councils in opposition-held areas to help them to clear rubble and to police local areas. It means building the capacity of local civil society through our work with international humanitarian partners and supporting the United Nations in its work at scale inside Syria.

None of this will be easy, but we have been planning for the end game since the beginning of the Syrian conflict and throughout the Geneva process. We are now updating our planning to reflect the timeline envisaged in the Vienna process and we are asking others to do the same. To answer a question from the noble Lord, Lord Williams, I can say that it is hoped that there will be another meeting of the Vienna talks before Christmas. Indeed, next week we expect the Syrian regime to nominate a team of people to negotiate under the auspices of the UN. In the coming days, Saudi Arabia will host a meeting for opposition representatives in Riyadh.

Noble Lords have asked about Daesh's sources of finance. It has three main sources of funding: extortion from communities living in territory under its control; selling oil and antiquities, including to the Assad regime; and donations from individuals pursued by international law enforcement. The international community is working together to cut Daesh off from the international financial system, including through action in the UN. The global coalition has already damaged or destroyed 260 oil infrastructure targets. On 15 November, coalition air strikes in Syria destroyed 116 Daesh oil tankers. The United Kingdom has led UN efforts to make it illegal to sell oil and oil products to Daesh. We helped to pass UN Security Council Resolution 2199, which requires all states to prevent transfer of economic resources to Daesh, including its infrastructure. These sanctions require countries to freeze Daesh's assets and prohibit any person from making funds or economic resources available to it. In this country, our law-enforcement agencies have a sophisticated system for investigating and shutting off

[EARL HOWE]

sources of finance for terrorists, including Daesh, but there is more that we can and should do in Syria. It is worth saying that UK precision weapons could assist the coalition in taking out more Daesh oil facilities and supply convoys.

Noble Lords have asked what we are doing to engage with Muslim communities in tackling extremism. There are several strands to the work that we are doing. A key pillar of the counterextremism strategy is strengthening our partnership with the Muslim community to tackle extremism in all its forms. We have the Prime Minister's engagement forums, two of which have been held. We are directly addressing concerns being raised by the Muslim community on rising anti-Muslim hatred. There will be a specific recorded offence from April next year in that regard. We have regular conversations and discussions with representatives of the Muslim community, including imams and community-based leaders. We are doing our utmost to strengthen international relations with Muslim countries.

There is a lot of work going on. In particular, the Prevent strategy is a key part of our counterterrorism strategy, preventing people being drawn into terrorism. The Prevent strategy is on a statutory footing in the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015. Since February 2010, the Counter Terrorism Internet Referral Unit has taken down more than 120,000 pieces of unlawful

terrorist-related content online. It is worth my quoting what the Prime Minister said today in the other place:

"Far from an attack on Islam, we are engaged in a defence of Islam, and far from a risk of radicalising British Muslims by acting, failing to act would actually be to betray British Muslims and the wider religion of Islam in its very hour of need".

Let me make one point clear: strikes are only one element of a much broader strategy which looks to cut off Daesh's sources of finance, stop its fighters crossing borders, cut off its weapons supply and counter its poisonous ideology. Noble Lords on all sides have also reminded us of the importance of the need to provide humanitarian support for Syrian refugees. On that front, Britain has so far given more than £1.1 billion—by far the largest commitment of any European country, and second only to the United States of America. Britain is prepared to contribute at least another £1 billion for the task of reconstruction in due course.

The first duty of government is to protect our people. Daesh poses a direct threat to our security, our interests and our way of life. The bottom line is this: by putting more pressure on the fanatics, we reduce their ability to launch international attacks against us. That will make us safer in the long term. There is a time for debate but there is also a time for action, and that time has surely come.

*Motion agreed.*

*House adjourned at 9.17 pm.*



---

## CONTENTS

Wednesday 2 December 2015

### Questions

Housing: Office Conversions .....	1095
United Nations World Humanitarian Summit .....	1097
Devolution: England .....	1100
Banking: Financial Crime.....	1103

### Immigration Bill

<i>First Reading</i> .....	1106
----------------------------	------

### Syria: UK Military Action

<i>Motion to Take Note</i> .....	1106
----------------------------------	------

---