

Vol. 797
No. 283



Tuesday
2 April 2019

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)

HOUSE OF LORDS

OFFICIAL REPORT

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Questions	
Tobacco Harm Reduction	103
Agriculture: Carbon Emissions	105
Police: Recruitment Criteria	107
Venezuela: Russian Troops	110
Animal Welfare (Service Animals) Bill	
<i>Third Reading</i>	113
Greater Manchester Combined Authority (Functions and Amendment) Order 2019	
<i>Motion to Approve</i>	113
NATO	
<i>Motion to Take Note</i>	120
<hr/>	
Grand Committee	
Aid: Anti-Corruption Measures.....	GC 1
Climate.....	GC 16
Historic Rights of Way	GC 31
Sexual Violence	GC 46
<i>Questions for Short Debate</i>	

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
<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2019-04-02>*

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
Lab Co-op	Labour and Co-operative Party
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 2019,
*this publication may be reproduced under the terms of the Open Parliament licence,
which is published at www.parliament.uk/site-information/copyright/.*

House of Lords

Tuesday 2 April 2019

2.30 pm

Prayers—read by the Lord Bishop of Peterborough.

Tobacco Harm Reduction Question

2.37 pm

Asked by **Viscount Ridley**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the levels of smoking and incidence of lung cancer in Sweden as a result of steps taken by that government; and what plans Ministers have to visit that country as part of their forthcoming review of tobacco harm reduction.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care (Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford) (Con): My Lords, the current smoking rate in Sweden is 13%, compared to England where the rate is 14.9% and, across the UK, 15.1%. There are no current plans to visit Sweden. Smoking is at the lowest level recorded in England but we are not complacent and remain committed to reducing the rate to 12% or less by 2022, as outlined in the tobacco control plan for England.

Viscount Ridley (Con): My Lords, I thank my noble friend for that reply. She will be aware that the policy of harm reduction, whereby a less harmful new technology is used to displace a more harmful technology, was pioneered in this country by the noble Lord the Lord Speaker when he was Health Secretary in the 1980s with respect to needle exchanges and HIV. Such a policy has since proved effective in the introduction of e-cigarettes. However, in Sweden, the adult smoking rate is now down to 5% because of another harm-reduction technology, snus—the little teabag of snuff tobacco that one presses against one's gum and is widely used in Sweden. As a result, there are low lung cancer rates in that country but, because snus is banned in the EU, we are currently unable to follow. Could we not save tens of thousands of lives if we were to legalise this technology when we left the EU at the end of next week?

Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford: I thank my noble friend for his question and join him in paying tribute to the noble Lord the Lord Speaker's role in harm reduction. No tobacco product is safe to consume, due to its links to cancers. As my noble friend says, snus is banned under the EU tobacco products directive as an oral product, except in Sweden. We have made a commitment under the tobacco control plan that, following EU exit, the Government will consider reviewing the position on snus and whether the introduction of the product to the UK market would promote the kind of proportionate harm-reduction approach that he proposes. However, there is no evidence that snus in Sweden has reduced smoking rates, so the matter is very much under review.

Baroness Thornton (Lab): My Lords, it is important to say that snus is snuff—let us be quite clear that we are talking about a tobacco product. It seems slightly odd that the noble Viscount should suggest that we swap one very carcinogenic product for one that might be slightly less carcinogenic and will give you only mouth and throat cancer. Will the Minister commit that the review of tobacco regulation will include an assessment of the continuing attempts by major tobacco companies to market their brand identities through advertising campaigns and sponsorship—for example, through Formula 1? Indeed, one of her colleagues recently had to write to Philip Morris, which makes Marlboro cigarettes, telling it to remove poster adverts for “healthier” tobacco products from shops around the UK.

Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford: Smoking remains the biggest cause of death in this country. Strict rules are in place to prevent tobacco companies promoting their products, including through sponsorship. We take the unlawful promotion of tobacco products extremely seriously and expect any organisation found to be flouting the rules to be investigated.

Lord Patel (CB): My Lords, although snus contains both nicotine and tobacco—that is why the Swedes use it—the lung cancer rate in Sweden has reduced, whether that is to do with the use of snus or other reasons. That is the main thing that we should be talking about. What strategies do we have to reduce our lung cancer deaths, which run at about 35,000 a year? Tobacco is a key cause—80% of them are related to tobacco. Does the Minister agree that we should think about a strategy for harm reduction, whether it is snus, e-cigarettes or any other product?

Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford: I thank the noble Lord, who has expertise in this area, for his intervention. He is absolutely right that we need to target a reduction in lung cancer rates. Cancer Research UK states that smoking tobacco is the biggest cause of lung cancer in the UK, with seven out of 10 lung cancers caused by smoking. The *NHS Long Term Plan* has a very heavy emphasis on prevention, including smoking cessation services. One of the first interventions from that plan to be rolled out is the innovative targeted lung health check, which will provide an easy-access gateway to lung health and smoking cessation services. I hope that he is reassured by that answer.

Lord Rennard (LD): My Lords, Sweden has banned the advertising of tobacco products, introduced clean indoor air laws and increased the price of cigarettes. Together with the properly regulated promotion of e-cigarettes, have not these measures been shown across the world to be the best methods of tobacco control? Is there not a real danger with products such as snus that tobacco companies want to promote their dual use, pushing potentially dangerous tobacco products in clean air environments and continuing to push traditional tobacco smoking products elsewhere?

Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford: The noble Lord is right. E-cigarettes have proved to be a beneficial aid in quitting smoking, but the best thing that a smoker can do for their health is to quit smoking entirely. That is the priority of the tobacco control plan and the measures that are pushed through the NHS and by other means. In the UK, about 5.5% of adults—about 2.2 million—currently use e-cigarettes. It has proved to be an effective means of quitting smoking, which is why we encouraged this route through the tobacco control plan and will continue to do so.

Earl Cathcart (Con): My Lords, five years ago I smoked 50 cigarettes a day. Then I took up vaping and have not had a puff of tobacco since. Should the Government not do more to encourage smokers to switch to vaping?

Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford: I emphasise that smoking is now at the lowest levels recorded, and we should be proud of the fact that the UK is seen as a world leader in tobacco control. However, we are by no measure complacent, because there are variations between different groups and across the country. That is why the *NHS Long Term Plan* contains a commitment to do more to target smokers in NHS care, why NHS health checks offer an opportunity to smokers to quit, why PHE backs the very successful Stoptober campaign, why we are introducing smoke-free prisons, why we are introducing interventions for those within the mental healthcare system, and why we are introducing a new smoke-free pregnancy pathway. All those things will ensure that we continue to reduce the incidence of smoking in the UK.

Lord Foulkes of Cumnock (Lab Co-op): My Lords, will the Minister look at the experience of Scotland 20 years ago? A factory was opened that produced these small tobacco pouches, but it was closed down within a year—I was one of the people responsible—because of the incidence of mouth cancer. We saw that, in the United States and elsewhere, mouth cancer was caused by sucking those pouches. It really is a crazy suggestion from the noble Viscount.

Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford: I thank the noble Lord for his point. I shall certainly look at the experience of Scotland. There will be an evidence-based review, which will look at the risks as well as at the proposals.

Agriculture: Carbon Emissions

Question

2.45 pm

Asked by **Baroness Redfern**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to encourage the use of precision agriculture techniques in order to reduce carbon emissions.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Lord Gardiner of Kimble) (Con): My Lords, I declare my farming interest as set out in the register. The advantages of precision farming and technological innovation go

beyond reducing carbon emissions. They also provide a range of improvements to the environment and farm productivity. The Government committed £160 million to the five-year agritech strategy in 2013. We continue to support British food and agricultural innovation through the £90 million “Transforming food production” initiative to make food production more efficient while lightening our environmental footprint.

Baroness Redfern (Con): I thank the Minister for his reply. With agricultural management using those technologies in practice while increasing agricultural productivity and income, can the Minister confirm that, with the five-year agritech strategy in its final year, the data and results will feed into the 25-year environmental plan?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: My Lords, I should say that precision farming is widely used and has been very successful in raising productivity and reducing the amount of input, but certainly on the results of the five-year plan there are some very interesting schemes that are clearly going to take some time to move from laboratory to farm. As far as I can see, all of them confirm that precision farming is going to be of enormous benefit, and those results will come out into the farmland situation as soon as possible.

Lord Cunningham of Felling (Lab): My Lords, is it not clear on the evidence available that Britain has a relatively poor record on the introduction of precision farming? I say that as a former Agriculture Minister, so I am not blameless myself in that regard. But has the Minister considered not only the benefits of precision farming—which are well understood to be increased crop yields and the reduction of weeds—but also its impact on wildlife in agriculture? Precision farming has very serious implications for flowers, insects and birds.

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: My Lords, that is precisely why I think that precision farming—which, as I have said, is being used much more widely in both the arable and livestock sectors because it directs the product on to what is required—is going to be of enormous environmental benefit in terms of the fine tuning of the use of those products. It also enhances productivity, and both enhancing the environment and increasing food production is a good thing.

Lord Teverson (LD): My Lords, it is estimated by Natural England that some 600 million tonnes of carbon are sunk in English peatlands, yet they are degrading. Will the Minister tell us what urgent action the Government are taking to restore our peatlands? Should not the commercial exploitation and sale of peat stop now?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: The noble Lord is absolutely right. Peatland offers the best carbon storage—double that of woodland. It is immensely important, and that is why we are implementing four projects to restore more than 148,000 acres of peatland over the next three years. Clearly, as we have seen in horticulture,

the important thing is that—quite rightly—there is not quite the use of peat that there used to be, as it is such an important part of our ecosystem.

Lord Krebs (CB): My Lords, no doubt the Minister will be aware that the Climate Change Committee, in its 2018 annual report to Parliament, noted that there had been no reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture between 2012 and 2017. Does he agree with the Climate Change Committee's recommendation that the Government should "replace" the, "voluntary industry-led framework, which has so far failed to meet emissions targets ... with a stronger framework"?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: My Lords, clearly we endorse the greenhouse gas plan by industry, but we are looking at further ways in which we can improve it. In fact, we have commissioned research from Scotland's Rural College into greenhouse gas mitigation options to address what we think are existing knowledge gaps. Certainly we are working and commissioning on how best we can reduce emissions from agriculture, which produces about 10% of our emissions.

Lord Spicer (Con): My Lords, if and when we sign a trade agreement with the United States, is it not likely that food prices will fall and environmental concerns relating to standards will rise?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: My Lords, the basis of precision farming in this country is that we think we produce excellent food—the best in the world—both for home consumption and for export. Whatever trade agreements we have with any countries, clearly we have our own standards, which will remain. I think that people should buy British products because they are the best.

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall (Lab): My Lords, can I ask the Minister to return to the question of peat? If what he says is true—I am sure it is—that peat is the best capturer of carbon, can he tell us why peat-enhanced compost is still available for sale, even though common or garden gardeners such as myself try not to use it and there are alternatives available that are just as effective?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: I shall look precisely at where the supplies are coming from, but I can say now that we as gardeners and horticulturalists should be using alternatives. As I have said, peatland is one of the most important parts of our ecosystem, and that is why we are seeking to restore 148,000 acres of it.

Police: Recruitment Criteria

Question

2.52 pm

Asked by **Lord Mackenzie of Framwellgate**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the entry criteria for joining police forces in England and Wales; and what plans, if any, they have to reform such criteria.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Baroness Williams of Trafford) (Con): My Lords, this Government's reforms are designed to make the police workforce more capable, flexible and professional. We established the College of Policing as the first professional body for policing, charged with setting standards, including for police recruitment. The college has implemented a major reform of entry routes through its policing education qualification framework, which will ensure that policing can continue to attract the brightest and best recruits from a wide range of backgrounds.

Lord Mackenzie of Framwellgate (Non-Aff): I thank the Minister for her reply. Is she aware of the four pilot schemes—taking place, I believe, at the instigation of the College of Policing—in Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Leicestershire and south Wales, which require all recruits to undertake a three-year apprenticeship leading to a university degree? My information is that this training would incur an additional cost of £24,000 per recruit, with failure by the recruit leading presumably to dismissal. I understand that other forces are committed to this route for recruiting by 2020. Does the Minister think this is a wise use of taxpayers' hard-earned money, when there is a clear public demand for thousands more front-line, well-trained police officers on the ground in communities, with or without degrees, reaping essential intelligence, responding to calls and reassuring the public at a time of unprecedented increase in serious, violent street crime?

Baroness Williams of Trafford: It is important to have a wide range of entry routes for people who wish to join the police, which all conform to very high standards. I cannot comment on the cost that the noble Lord outlined, but it is really important that people should not have to have a degree to enter the police. There is no requirement for that, but the standard is set for degree-level qualification at the end of the training process.

Lord Lexden (Con): My Lords, will these reforms mean that, in future, only men and women of the very highest ability are appointed to the post of chief constable, unlike Mr Mike Veale, whose disastrous Operation Conifer has inflicted such dreadful and unfair damage on Sir Edward Heath?

Baroness Williams of Trafford: I have to admire my noble friend for managing to weave in something that is so important to him. To make a very serious point, the whole aim of this is to have the highest standards of policing in our forces.

Lord Paddick (LD): My Lords, the Scottish Justice Minister has ruled out direct entry into Police Scotland at inspector and superintendent level, because he considers experience of policing to be essential. He says:

"While training is, of course, important, officers must carry the authority and the respect of communities they serve, and also of their colleagues".

I strongly agree. Why does the Home Office not agree?

Baroness Williams of Trafford: Both are important. Those with the skills required to go into the direct entry scheme are subject to very rigorous training and a rigorous selection process. The noble Lord is absolutely right that training thereafter, and experience in policing, are essential.

Lord Kennedy of Southwark (Lab Co-op): My Lords, what action are the Government taking to ensure that requirements for degrees in many of the paths to become a police officer do not prevent good candidates with the required skills being appointed?

Baroness Williams of Trafford: It is absolutely right that good-quality candidates should be allowed to come forward. That is why there are a variety of options available to candidates. As I said to the noble Lord earlier, it is important that candidates do not necessarily need a degree to be able to go into the police force, but that they are educated and trained to degree level going forward, to make the best police officers.

Lord Hogan-Howe (CB): My Lords, does the Minister agree that the purpose behind the College of Policing's accreditation system is to do two things? First, as the Minister has already said, it aims to make sure that the training received is of a high standard—surely we all agree with that. At the moment, 50% of police officers recruited are graduates already. Secondly, for officers who have worked for 30 or 40 years in some cases, perhaps investigating murder, cybercrime, rape and other policing matters, it is really important that we accredit to graduate standard, because it allows those officers to move on to other careers at the end of their police career. It is not good enough to carry on as we have in the past, where we have not accredited great skills—but that does not mean to say that everyone has to be a graduate.

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The noble Lord is absolutely right and, of course, speaks from the highest experience. To be able to go on and do something else with the skills that you have accrued through, say, policing is really important. On the point about accreditation, it has to be recognised that the pattern of crime, and therefore of policing, has changed so much over the years. Police need to be trained in the new and emerging activities that criminals are undertaking—digital crime, for example.

Lord Marlesford (Con): My Lords, in the days of national service—my noble friend will not remember those herself—12 weeks of very tough basic training, followed by 16 weeks at an officer cadet school, produced some outstanding officers who were well qualified for the job.

Baroness Williams of Trafford: I am not sure what the question was. However, my noble friend makes the point that the most rigorous training processes need to be gone through to make the best police officers. Also, because crime is changing, accreditation and standards need to be set for the new environment in policing.

Lord Grocott (Lab): My Lords, I welcome the Minister's assurance that she does not think it is essential for everyone to have a degree in order to be a police officer. However, does she agree that, with or without a degree, it is absolutely essential that those who get to the top echelons of the police service need the respect of people who have spent a career on the front line? Those on the front line are likely to have very little respect for people at the top if they have never had to do the day in, day out activities that police work entails, which are often dangerous and are essential to our community safety.

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The noble Lord goes to the point of leadership. The troops—the lower echelons, as he says—must have respect for those at the top. Therefore, those skills—which are not necessarily formed through degrees but rather through practical experience—are absolutely essential, in addition to the training and qualifications that they have.

Venezuela: Russian Troops

Question

3 pm

Asked by **Lord Lee of Trafford**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the deployment of Russian troops in Venezuela.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon) (Con): My Lords, given the deteriorating political situation in Venezuela, we believe that the arrival of Russian military aircraft, military personnel and equipment at Caracas airport on 23 March is provocative and ill-conceived. The United Kingdom supports a resolution to the current crisis in Venezuela through a peaceful, democratic transition following free and fair presidential elections in accordance with international democratic standards, as demanded by the interim President, Juan Guaidó, and the national assembly, in line with the Venezuelan constitution.

Lord Lee of Trafford (LD): I thank the Minister. As in Syria, an opportunist Russia comes in to prop up a hugely unpopular President, seemingly impervious to the appalling suffering of the people—only this time it is in America's back yard. President Trump has called on Russia to “get out”, and Secretary of State Pompeo has said that America,

“will not stand idly by”,

so clearly this is potentially a very serious situation. Can the Minister give the House any update on the scale of Russian deployment or its mission?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: My Lords, the noble Lord is quite right. Russia is sending military aid to Venezuela. Troops arriving in public view do not help to resolve the crisis in Venezuela, and the US—as he rightly acknowledges—has been strongly critical. While

Foreign Minister Lavrov's defence remains that this is part of a regular military deployment, bearing in mind the situation prevailing in Venezuela it is far from that. This is why we believe it is time to ratchet up the diplomatic efforts, as the United Kingdom has been doing in working hand in glove with the Lima Group.

Lord Collins of Highbury (Lab): My Lords, I think all sides of the House are at one in condemning Russia for this external interference and in saying that the only way forward is for Maduro to leave and for free and fair elections to take place. However, also key for the future is the terrible economic situation and the humanitarian crisis—inflation this year is forecast at 10 million per cent. What are we going to do? Are we working with our allies to ensure that once we get rid of Maduro, we will have economic support for the people of Venezuela?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: My Lords, I totally concur with the noble Lord. He and I have talked about the situation prevailing in Venezuela. He is quite right that the humanitarian situation is dire. In a recent survey of hospitals, 88% were reported to be in dire need of medical equipment. There is one small glimmer of hope: I heard this morning that it has been agreed that the International Committee of the Red Cross will be given access and, on the timeline for that, I can share with your Lordships that we are hoping it will start delivery of aid within the next two weeks. The noble Lord is also right to draw attention to the dire economic consequences. I assure him that we are working to step in with partners through the Lima Group and with European partners. What is required right now, I concur, is free, independent, fair elections, and support for the interim President to ensure this happens in a short time.

Lord Garel-Jones (Con): Can my noble friend bring the House up to date? As a counterpoise to military intervention by Russia, what progress has the United Kingdom made in bringing humanitarian aid to this terrible crisis? And has any progress been made in persuading the leader of the Labour Party that President Maduro should not receive any support at all?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: My Lords, I am sure that, like all of us, my noble friend heard the shadow Minister's words about the support for the position across your Lordships' House. It is important that, wherever we are in the world, we get behind the interim President, most importantly because he is the representative voice of the people of Venezuela. As I have already indicated, we are seeing a small glimmer of hope in the access provided to the International Committee of the Red Cross, but clearly much more needs to be done.

Viscount Waverley (CB): Would the Minister agree that Russia becomes more assertive with failing western diplomacy and when it perceives weakness? If strength is the answer, how will our policy towards Venezuela be sharpened to counter the Russian presence?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: My Lords, diplomacy is one Britain's great strengths on the world stage, and I assure the noble Lord of the strength of our diplomacy, both in the region and with European partners. Indeed, 24 EU member states have now recognised Juan Guaidó as the interim President. I believe we need to pursue that particular avenue to ensure international pressure continues. We are looking at broadening sanctions on Venezuela but at the same time ensuring humanitarian aid, both food and medical, is delivered, which the people of Venezuela are in dire need of.

Lord West of Spithead (Lab): My Lords, the Minister will be aware that Venezuela owes Russia \$3.1 billion in payments for military and other equipment, and it owes Rosneft \$2 billion, so that is \$5 billion altogether. Clearly, one can understand the Russian interest in this, but we must have been aware that Russia was going to deploy troops, yet it seems to have gone under the radar. In that context, can I ask the Minister how concerned we are with the huge Chinese investment and the pull that they are beginning to put on to Venezuela in the same way?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: As the noble Lord will be aware, both Russia and China continue to recognise the Maduro regime. In terms of the justification for what Russia has done, as I have alluded to, Russia has a long-standing commitment to sharing military deployments and is claiming that this is part of that. We recognise that the situation in Venezuela tells a different story, and that is why it is important that we increase our diplomatic efforts, broaden international alliances in the region through the Lima Group and add our efforts to ensuring that we isolate those who are responsible. To Maduro there is a simple message: "Step aside. The people of Venezuela demand it; the people of the world demand it". I hope our Russian and Chinese colleagues are listening very carefully. We continue to work bilaterally and through international organisations to deliver just that message.

Lord Wallace of Saltaire (LD): My Lords, I am glad that ratcheting up diplomatic efforts is going well with our European partners. Has the Foreign Office done sufficient work yet on how we will replace that European diplomatic network if we crash out of the EU without a deal within the next 10 days?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: My Lords, I can speak directly to that: we continue to work with European partners. Last week, I was at the United Nations, where we were working hand in glove with both Germany and France on important issues, including the promotion of women in peace-keeping. We will continue to strengthen those international alliances. I want to be absolutely clear that, notwithstanding our departure from the European Union, we remain part of Europe. Our European alliances are important, and we continue to strengthen and collaborate on them. The Iran nuclear deal and the nuclear proliferation deal are recent examples of how European partners continue to work together. We are beyond Brexit when it comes to international co-operation—that will continue internationally and with our European partners.

Animal Welfare (Service Animals) Bill

Third Reading

3.08 pm

Motion

Moved by **Viscount Trenchard**

That the Bill do now pass.

Viscount Trenchard (Con): My Lords, I am delighted that I was asked by my right honourable friend Sir Oliver Heald, Member of Parliament for North East Hertfordshire, to take this Bill through your Lordships' House. I give great credit to my right honourable friend for supporting Finn's cause and, with his customary doggedness and skill, successfully steering the Bill through all its stages in another place. The Bill will make it easier to prosecute people, under the Animal Welfare Act 2006, who are suspected of causing unnecessary suffering to service animals, chiefly police dogs and horses, and dogs working for the Prison Service. Our Second Reading debate showed that the Bill received unqualified support from all sides of the House. I am sure that all noble Lords will agree that it is most reassuring that there are indeed matters on which we all unreservedly can agree.

I also congratulate PC Dave Wardell, along with Sarah Dixon and her colleagues on the Finn's law team, on their successful campaign which led to the introduction of the Bill. Lastly, I thank my noble friend Lord Gardiner and his officials for supporting the Bill and for the assistance that they have provided me throughout this process.

Bill passed.

Greater Manchester Combined Authority (Functions and Amendment) Order 2019

Motion to Approve

3.10 pm

Moved by **Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth**

That the draft Order laid before the House on 30 January be approved.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and Wales Office (Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth) (Con): My Lords, 10 orders have already been made in relation to the Greater Manchester Combined Authority. If approved by Parliament and made, this 11th order will be the next step in bringing to life the five devolution deals which the Government have agreed with Greater Manchester since 2014. It fulfils the commitment that the Government made to the combined authority in the first devolution deal, agreed in November 2014, that the mayor would have powers over bus franchising and smart ticketing.

As agreed by Greater Manchester, the order makes the mayor responsible for all operational matters relating to bus services. It will enable the mayor to fund and deliver improved bus services across Greater Manchester.

This means that people will be able to see clearly who is responsible for changes to bus services and hold the mayor to account for this. It will also replace the existing Transport for Greater Manchester Committee with a new committee of the same name, chaired by the mayor and with representatives of all the constituent councils, to co-ordinate transport across Greater Manchester.

This order will be made, if Parliament approves, under the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009, as amended by the Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016. As required by the 2016 Act, along with this order we have laid a report which provides details about the provisions for the transfer of powers on concessionary bus fares from Transport for Greater Manchester to the combined authority, to be exercised by the mayor.

Before laying this order, the Secretary of State has considered the statutory requirements in the 2009 Act. He is satisfied that these requirements are met. In short, he considers that making the amendments to the combined authority's powers would be likely to lead to an improvement in the exercise of the statutory functions across the Greater Manchester area. He has also had regard to the impact on local government and the identities and interests of local communities. Further, as required by statute, the 10 constituent councils, the mayor and the combined authority have consented to the making of this order.

I turn to the details of the draft order, which builds on the powers that were given to combined authorities when the Bus Services Act came into force. This Act gave mayoral combined authorities new powers to improve bus services in their areas using a range of options such as smart ticketing, bus franchising and partnership delivery models with bus operators. The order we are debating gives responsibility for those powers, which are currently exercisable by the combined authority, to the mayor. This also means that the mayor will be able to raise a precept to pay for these changes. Currently, the councils that make up the combined authority pay for transport through a levy issued by that authority.

In addition, the order transfers the concessionary travel power from Transport for Greater Manchester, which is the public body responsible for delivering transport services across Greater Manchester, to the mayor. Reimbursing bus operators in Greater Manchester for both mandatory and discretionary fares and subsidies currently costs £86.7 million, funded by the 10 constituent councils. This order means that the constituent councils will carry on paying for these fares and subsidies to fund bus services, but caps the amount at £86.7 million. If the mayor wants to provide further funding for buses, he will have to do it through his mayoral precept.

3.15 pm

As this order transfers the exercise of bus powers to the mayor, new governance arrangements are needed for transport. The order allows for the establishment of a new Transport for Greater Manchester Committee, which would replace the current one, and permits the mayor to delegate most of his transport functions to this new committee. The order sets out the number of

members that can sit on the committee and who can appoint members to it, and gives the mayor the power to appoint the chair or to chair the committee himself.

The order also makes some minor amendments to the constitution of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority. Currently, when votes are taken on constituent councils to provide additional funding to support the mayor in exercising his powers, the standard is that seven out of 10 constituent councils must consent for the motion to pass. The order brings into line with this standard three powers where currently a simple majority is required. These are: first, the ability to designate mayoral development areas and create mayoral development corporations; secondly, the ability to pay grants to the constituent local authorities; and, thirdly, the ability to prepare local transport policies and a local transport plan.

In conclusion, Greater Manchester has undertaken two consultations on the matters in this order. The first was published on 21 March 2016 and ran for six weeks, ending on 18 May 2016. It covered the introduction of bus franchising and making it a mayoral function. Of the 145 people who responded on bus franchising, 52 agreed with the proposals and 26 disagreed, while others gave no view. The second consultation also ran for six weeks, from 4 July to 15 August 2016. It included questions on the proposed funding arrangements for transport, including concessionary fares. It also consulted on the formation of a new Transport for Greater Manchester Committee. Of the 278 respondents to the section on transport, 183 were supportive of proposals, while 48 were not supportive, 30 neither agreed nor disagreed and 17 did not comment.

In short, when the order is approved and made—it has already been approved in the other place—it will drive real improvement in how the residents of Greater Manchester move around the region using buses, trams and trains in a truly integrated way. This integrated transport system, fit for the 21st century, will help drive growth across not only Greater Manchester but the whole of the northern powerhouse. I therefore commend this draft order to the House.

Lord Stunell (LD): My Lords, I am very pleased to contribute to this debate. I represented one of the constituencies in Greater Manchester for 18 years, and served on one of its councils—Stockport—for eight years. Although I will make comments, ask questions and seek reassurances from the Minister, my view is that this Motion should be agreed. I am grateful to Transport for Greater Manchester for the briefing it has supplied to me and, I am sure, to other Members of the House.

It might be helpful, however, to remind noble Lords how we got here. The 10 local authorities have a history of vigorous rivalry stretching back more than 100 years: in sports, obviously, but also in civic matters—which is why we have an outstanding collection of amazing town halls, of which Manchester's, which most closely resembles this building, is the one that your Lordships will be familiar with.

A less positive side of that history is that for many years, and in many places, zero-sum politics has been played between the different authorities. It is very

much to the credit of the leadership of the local authorities in Greater Manchester that, over the past 15 or so years, zero-sum politics has been replaced by co-operation and joint working on an increasing scale.

The new working arrangements which have been developed, first in the local democracy Act 2009 and then in the moves by the coalition to start the combined authority on its current route, have been very much in response to co-operative working, rather than being pushed upon those councils. It is extremely important in implementing this order to retain that bottom-up push for devolution, rather than imposing a solution on any or all of the local authorities and civic societies. That requires the careful balance of different interests which is in place at the moment. This is very much admired, not just in the UK but around the world. Greater Manchester has a constant stream of visitors from other cities and regions asking how it was done and how they can emulate it.

I regret that in 2016 the new Conservative Government imposed a mayoral model, which makes some of this consensus working more difficult. However, in the policy framework we have at the moment, we have to get on with it and make the best we can of it. When the combined authority was set up, the 10 local authority leaders were unanimous in rejecting the mayoral model, which is why it did not come in in 2011, during the coalition period. The current Government, as well as imposing the mayoral model, has not always had a consistent view about what the outcomes should be. I was pleased to hear the Minister mention the northern powerhouse, but he skipped over the fact that the attempt by Greater Manchester Combined Authority to have a handle on the allocation of the Northern Rail franchise was not accepted; indeed, Transport for the North has also found it difficult to get the leverage it believes is important to make sure that transport investment goes to the right place.

The order gives important expanded powers—not just expanded functions but expanded powers of taxation. My questions, and the reassurances I seek, are very much focused on how the mechanics will work and how the admirable pattern of co-operation, joint working and decision-making that we have in Greater Manchester at the moment will be entrenched, emphasised and enhanced in the new order. Crucial to this will be, first, the operation of the mayor's powers to appoint members of the new joint transport committee and, secondly, his capacity to delegate those decisions. There are two big issues there at the moment, and probably others as well: the whole bus franchising issue, and smart ticketing.

The joint transport committee clearly has to have broad geographical representation. It needs to have expertise and be representative of the various strands of political opinion and thought in Greater Manchester. It is important to look at that, but also at the actual delegation of decisions which are going to be handed to it. You clearly need people on the committee with local knowledge, and people who are able to evaluate—and possibly have a hand in agreeing—what the tax and precept-setting power should be and how it should be exercised.

That brings me to my first question on the big issue of the taxation trap. The £86.7 million is currently raised on a per head basis. Any additional precept will

[LORD STUNELL]

be raised on the basis of house value, through the council tax system. To quote from the brief provided to me by Transport for Greater Manchester:

“One of the effects of the above is that councils with a high council tax base relative to their population benefit from expenditure being financed through a levy or statutory contribution, whereas councils (and their council tax-payers) with a low council tax base relative to their population benefit from expenditure being funded through a mayoral precept. The effect of switching from a levy to a precept produces significant winners (e.g. Manchester) and significant losers (e.g. Trafford)”.

It might just as well have also added: “e.g. (Stockport)”. In other words, the power to raise the precept will have a differential impact on the different boroughs within Greater Manchester.

The formula is described in the paper as requiring the “unanimous approval” of the 10 councils for it to be varied. What is the mechanism for actually raising the precept as opposed to changing the formula? Will it be via the mayor’s decision-making? Will it be via the new joint committee by majority? Will it be via the new joint committee by unanimity? Or will it require all the councils to reach a unanimous decision? Who will call the shots in the decision-making that lies ahead?

Linked to this is a consideration of the make-up of the committee itself. The present oversight committee—the Transport for Greater Manchester Committee—has 33 members. Under the new order, a committee with the same name but extra powers will be reduced from 33 members to 23. They will consist of: a representative of each council, except for Manchester, which will have two; an appointment by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, which sounds as though it would be a council leader chosen collectively; an appointment by the mayor, which could mean that the mayor himself or an appointee of his will chair it; and 10 appointments from a pool of councillors who would be from the 10 authorities and representative of the political opinion across Greater Manchester. To quote again from the briefing of TfGM:

“Such appointments must ensure that the political balance on the joint committee reflects the political balance of councillors across GM and will be made in accordance with the preferences proposed by the three main political parties. This will be reflected in the Operating Agreement which will be agreed by each District”.

The Minister mentioned the parallel change in the rules whereby in future a number of decisions which can be taken simply by a majority of councils will be subject to the seven out of 10 rules. I certainly welcome that as making sure that there is a broad consensus, but does he understand and agree with the importance of delivering the same element in this order as far as that committee is concerned? What consideration was given to making that process easier to deliver by retaining the membership at its existing size of 33, rather than 23, which would allow two councillors from each authority to be appointed and make the questions of proportionality and representation easier to meet?

The joint working and co-operation of local authorities across Greater Manchester has been hard won and is now a model which many others seek to copy and which some, such as those just across the Pennines, have sadly failed to achieve. In giving assent to this

order, I hope that noble Lords will share in our belief on these Benches that its operation must enhance that joint working and in no way become a lever to return to the bad old days of zero-sum politics.

3.30 pm

Lord Bradley (Lab): My Lords, I shall speak very briefly to this order to give it my strong support. I declare my interest as a resident of Manchester and in the light of the opening comments made by the noble Lord, Lord Stunell, I am also a former city councillor and a former Member of Parliament for the city. The people of Greater Manchester desperately want an integrated transport system across the area. The order is a further step in the right direction to achieve this by unblocking some of the logjams currently in the system. Its primary purpose, as the Minister has well explained, is the transfer of further powers to the elected mayor of Greater Manchester—Andy Burnham—particularly transport functions of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority relating to buses. This is in line with the devolution agreements in Greater Manchester, which specifically provided that any potential future bus franchising and/or smart-ticketing functions should be the responsibility of the mayor.

I wish to make three quick points. First, I welcome the establishment of the joint transport committee to cover Greater Manchester. I hope that this smaller group will bring a new, coherent focus on an integrated transport system across the area, covering not only the buses but the Metrolink light rail system and the region’s train services, with a particular emphasis on establishing a multimodal through-ticketing system, which is so strongly supported by all local people.

Secondly, we have heard some detail about finance, and it is pleasing that the 10 districts in Greater Manchester have agreed that all transport functions relating to buses that currently sit with the combined authority should become mayoral functions and the current expenditure level of around £87 million will continue to be paid by those councils. However, any additional expenditure on buses beyond that figure should be funded by the mayor through the transport precept or other resources available to the mayor. I believe that this should underpin the cost of new bus passes for 16 to 18 year-olds, which are about to be piloted and then rolled out for all 16 to 18 year-olds for the future. However, the amount of the precept does not form part of the constituent districts’ budget, and the mayoral precept itself will be subject to its own referendum triggers—perhaps a topic we should not pursue on this occasion.

Thirdly, the Bus Services Act 2017 allows an assessment of a proposed franchising scheme. While this is not full reregulation of the buses, which London benefits from, it is clearly the best option available in the circumstances. The order facilitates the franchising option, and I now hope that the mayor, Andy Burnham, will grasp the opportunity and see it as a vital step in the overarching aim of delivering the integrated transport system that the people of Greater Manchester dearly want.

Lord Kennedy of Southwark (Lab Co-op): My Lords, I draw the attention of the House to my relevant registered interest as a vice-president of the Local

Government Association. Like my noble friend Lord Bradley and the noble Lord, Lord Stunell, I very much welcome this order. It is another part of the transfer of powers to the northern powerhouse, to the mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham, and to the combined authority. It will be able to deliver bus franchising, smart ticketing and the multimodal ticketing system that my noble friend talked about.

I was involved in the passage of the Bus Services Act through your Lordships' House and I am very supportive of bus franchising; the mayor will be able to set the fares, the routes and the timetables and the bus companies can then deliver those services. I think that is a very good way forward and I endorse what my noble friend Lord Bradley said: I hope that the Mayor of Greater Manchester will be able to move forward and introduce bus franchising, which is what people want to see locally.

The noble Lord, Lord Stunell, raised a number of questions I was going to raise, so I hope he will get a response. They were about the taxation trap—we clearly have the same briefing—and the issue of the oversight committee, so I look forward to the comments of the noble Lord, Lord Bourne, on those matters and on the question raised by my noble friend Lord Bradley about bus passes for 16 to 18 year-olds. I shall leave the matter there because those points have been raised. As I said, I very much support the introduction of the order, like the other noble Lords who have spoken.

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: My Lords, I thank the noble Lords who have participated in the debate on this important SI. It is worth noting that in the other place there was just one contribution from the Official Opposition, which welcomed the SI and commended the Government for acting very quickly in bringing it forward following the request from Greater Manchester. I am very grateful for that support in the other place.

The noble Lord, Lord Stunell, rightly referred to the civic pride and sense of togetherness in Manchester, and the rivalry between some of the boroughs and authorities that now make up the Greater Manchester Combined Authority. All that is absolutely true—I was in Manchester recently and saw the strength of the Manchester area. Of course, we were all very conscious of that at the time of the dreadful terrorist attack on the Manchester Arena—the sense of coming together in the area was very strong. I was there recently to launch the ESOL funding programme. There was a very good bid from Manchester and I was very conscious, again, of the sense of coming together and civic pride.

The noble Lord, Lord Stunell, also asked about financial arrangements, particularly in relation to the mayoral precept. It is the position that the mayor makes proposals which can be overturned by a two-thirds vote, which is a veto of seven of the 10 authorities. The noble Lord went on to ask about measures in relation to oversight in this committee. It is a streamlined committee, a fact welcomed by the noble Lord, Lord Bradley, for which I am very grateful. The order reflects the request for flexibility on the membership of the committee. Greater Manchester asked for the reduction to 23 members, and based on what the noble

Lord was saying about responding to the bottom-up approach and sensing what is important in the area, we went along with the request. We judged that it is reasonable and will lead, as the noble Lord, Lord Bradley, said, to more streamlined decision-making. I think it maintains—not in the same proportions, I accept—some of the checks and balances that are needed.

I am grateful to the noble Lord, Lord Bradley, for saying that transferring powers to the Mayor of Manchester is a step in the right direction. Although the mayor is not of my politics I think that people locally recognise that he has been doing a good job and giving some sense of direction to Manchester. That is a good thing and it is true of all our metro mayors. It is something we should welcome widely and, as the noble Lord rightly said, it opens up possibilities in relation to the franchising schemes and so on as well. I confirm that I think it does underpin the costs of the young people's passes in relation to the financial settlement.

I am grateful to the noble Lord, Lord Kennedy, for the welcome he gave to the order; he reiterated some of the questions I hope I have dealt with. This is an important part of the suite of powers that were promised to Manchester: we have been listening to the people of Manchester and responding to what they have asked for, and this represents another step in that journey. I am very grateful to the support given by noble Lords and I beg to move.

Motion agreed.

NATO

Motion to Take Note

3.39 pm

Moved by Earl Howe

That this House takes note of the seventieth anniversary of the founding of NATO and its continuing role in the United Kingdom's defence and security.

The Minister of State, Ministry of Defence (Earl Howe) (Con): My Lords, this week marks 70 years since 12 nations put their signatures to the North Atlantic Treaty and agreed that an attack on one was an attack on all. It is a privilege for me to open this debate celebrating the founding of that august institution, and I look forward to hearing the informed contributions of noble Lords who have had direct involvement in NATO, whether militarily, diplomatically or politically.

It is surely apt to use this moment to reflect on the achievements of what is rightly hailed as the most powerful defensive alliance the world has ever seen. During the Cold War, an age of unprecedented risk from atomic weapons and Soviet expansion, NATO provided the nuclear umbrella that is our ultimate deterrent, and a vital conventional shield against aggression. It is worth asking ourselves: but for NATO's deterrence, would the Berlin Wall have fallen some 30 years ago? Would the values of the West have

[EARL HOWE]
triumphed? Would millions in eastern Europe have been given the opportunity to live lives that are freer, more secure and more prosperous?

In signing the treaty seven decades ago, President Harry Truman was moved to express his belief that had NATO,

“existed in 1914 and 1939 ... it would have prevented the acts of aggression which led to two world wars”.

It is of course impossible to test Truman’s hypothesis, but there is little doubt about the role NATO has played over the last seven decades in sparing us the terrible prospect of a third world war. Nor is there any doubt about the significance of the UK’s involvement in alliance successes. We were one of its 12 founder members; we were the providers of both of its first headquarters in London; and our great wartime general, Lord Ismay, was NATO’s first Secretary-General.

Today NATO is much more than the entity it was under Lord Ismay. For one thing, it has grown. Last month we marked the 20th anniversary of the accession of the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland, and the 15th of the accession of Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. Yesterday it was the turn of Albania and Croatia to celebrate their 10th anniversary as part of the alliance.

At the same time, as the threats have developed, so NATO has adapted. I remember some arguing, during my first stint as Defence Minister in the mid-1990s, that NATO was no longer all that relevant in a post-Cold War world. But in the modern era the alliance has repeatedly proven its worth, from ending conflicts in the western Balkans to supporting the United States after the atrocity of 9/11. On that occasion, the allies invoked Article 5 for the very first time, leading to the international response in Afghanistan designed to stop that country becoming a haven for terrorism. Significantly, NATO personnel remain there today, training local forces and creating the conditions for peace.

NATO has always stepped up, and I argue that today it is more relevant than ever. Consider the dangers we face. Russia is once more resurgent. Its pattern of aggression over the past decade—from illegal activity in Ukraine and Crimea to its interference in the sovereign affairs of other states and its deployment of nerve agents on the streets of Salisbury—undermines its claim to be a responsible international partner upholding the rules-based international system. At the same time, we are wrestling with a multitude of threats emanating from NATO’s southern periphery, including terrorism, instability and illegal migration. With Russia’s more challenging activity in the high north and the Atlantic, it can truly be said that NATO now has a 360-degree focus.

We often say that NATO represents the bedrock of European security. Equally, though, the commitment of the United Kingdom to that security remains as steadfast as ever. We have always been at the forefront of the alliance, benefiting as we do from Europe’s largest defence budget. As we mark 50 years of the UK’s continuous at sea deterrent, it is also worth reflecting that we are the only ally to assign all our nuclear forces to NATO’s defence, which we have done since 1962. All member states benefit from our nuclear

capability, which gives the alliance another centre of decision-making to complicate the calculations of our adversaries. Indeed, the Brussels summit declaration last year recognised that critical NATO contribution.

At the same time, we hold the posts of deputy supreme allied commander Europe and chairman of NATO’s Military Committee. We host HQ MARCOM at Northwood; the HQ of the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC) at Imjin Barracks, Innsworth; the NATO Intelligence Fusion Centre at RAF Molesworth; and the Joint Electronic Warfare Core Staff at RNAS Yeovilton.

Besides the nearly 1,000 British personnel serving in NATO’s command structure, we are contributing across alliance operations. As part of the Enhanced Forward Presence, we have forces on the ground commanding a battalion-size battle group in Estonia and a reconnaissance squadron in Poland. Our troops are also strengthening the security infrastructure of nations stretching from Iraq to Afghanistan. In the skies, our air force is policing the airspace above the Baltic and Iceland, and we have recently made a significant contribution to NATO’s Readiness Initiative, adding Apache attack and Wildcat reconnaissance helicopters to our Estonian presence. Significantly, the UK was also the first ally to offer offensive cyber capabilities to the instruments at NATO’s disposal.

The central proposition that I seek to advance today is that NATO’s importance is increasing. The world is becoming more complex and unpredictable. We have entered a new age of constant competition. It is an increasingly grey zone of proxy war, cyberattack and fake news. The boundaries between peace and war are blurring. We do not know what dangers lie down the line.

Since the Wales summit of 2014, the UK, alongside the US, has taken a leading role in making the alliance fit for purpose. Major strides have been made. The alliance is evolving rapidly. It has developed a stronger, larger command structure—influenced by senior British military officers in NATO—and has agreed to augment its current staff with more than 1,200 extra personnel. It has upped its spending. Non-US spending increased by \$87 billion between 2014 and 2018. It has also widened its geographical focus to take a 360-degree approach to security, ensuring that the alliance is able to respond to threats and challenges from all directions. This includes contributing to NATO’s missions in Afghanistan and Iraq to build long-term stability, and anticipating growing competition in the Arctic.

However, given the pace of change and the persistence of our adversaries, the alliance cannot afford to rest on its laurels. Indeed, it must inject greater pace into its transformation. So in December the UK will host NATO heads of state and government. This will be an opportunity to do three things. First, we should remind parliaments and the public across the alliance of the need to show unity and resolve in the face of determined aggressors whose game plan is to divide and rule. In the short term that is about standing up to the Kremlin’s breaches of the INF Treaty and dealing with the threat of new Russian missiles. In the long term it is

about continuing to show that adventurism has its cost. We should never forget that, as Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said:

“NATO is 29 allies ... friends. Russia doesn’t have that, China doesn’t have that”.

Secondly, it will be about demonstrating that our words are matched by action. Central to this is NATO’s Readiness Initiative, which will enhance our deterrence by improving the alliance’s readiness and responsiveness, as well as its ability to reinforce. It will also be about getting to grips with NATO governance, which in the past has suffered from inefficiency and poor project management. It will be about reforming the headquarters function to speed decision-making processes and enable even faster reactions on the ground, and it will be about strengthening NATO-EU co-operation so that effort is complemented and not duplicated. Significantly, work is already under way to bolster a joint approach to hybrid warfare.

Above all, achieving such bold ambitions will require bolstering burden sharing. All allies have committed to spend 2% of GDP on defence and 20% of that on major equipment by 2024. This will be the most significant strengthening of NATO’s collective defence in a decade, but we must maintain our momentum if we are to adjust to new and evolving threats. Despite important progress, the US still accounts for approximately 50% of the allies’ combined GDP and more than 70% of their combined defence expenditure. Expecting US taxpayers to keep picking up the tab is unreasonable, especially when other allies are running up big surpluses.

This brings me to the third item on our December agenda. This is simply to recognise the pivotal role that the US continues to play in transatlantic defence. It is true that the security of Europe and the security of the United States are intimately bound together, united as they are by the common threads of democracy, liberty and the rule of law, and it is true that NATO is the living embodiment of our transatlantic bond—but it is also true that we take these links for granted at our peril. Any weakening of those bonds would make us all less secure.

Back in 1949, 12 allies gathered together and vowed never again to let conflict devastate the continent. As President Truman said in his historic speech:

“If there is anything inevitable, if there is anything unconquerable in the world today, it is the will of the people of all nations for freedom and peace”.

Since those days, NATO has proved the best guarantor of that peace and that freedom. It has been tried and tested; it has never failed. But in some senses, of course, I know that I am preaching to the converted. Most, if not all, Members of your Lordships’ House grew up in the chill of the Cold War. When the Soviet Union was casting its long shadow, we had abundant cause to be thankful for NATO’s defensive shield, yet in today’s very different world of more opaque dangers, a new generation does not have quite the same affinity for our treasured alliance, despite its self-evident importance.

So, in this anniversary year, we must seize the opportunity to remind both parliamentarians and the wider public at large about the value that the alliance brings. Indeed, we are already doing just that, not

simply through debates such as today’s but through other means, for example a NATO 70 campaign run by our Armed Forces, our representation on the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, whose current president represents Bridgend in the other place, and the leaders’ meeting in London in December. For seven decades NATO has safeguarded our people and our prosperity. By renewing our pledge to empower the alliance, we will ensure that it continues to protect us all for 70 years and more into the future. I beg to move.

3.53 pm

Lord Robertson of Port Ellen (Lab): My Lords, we should all be grateful to the Minister for arranging this welcome debate, even if the short notice given has deprived us of a number of wise contributors who might otherwise have wanted to join us.

Those in 1949 who contemplated or even wanted a North Atlantic Treaty that would be time-limited would have been stunned but hugely impressed, 70 years on, at this anniversary today. NATO is simply a remarkable and unique alliance of free nations. Originally forged in response to the European dominoes tumbling to Joseph Stalin, NATO was, without firing a shot in anger, to see off its main adversary, the USSR. We then saw it become the bridge between the post-Soviet world and the West in the Partnership for Peace. Then we saw it using its military and political power to stop the carnage in Bosnia and to end and reverse the ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. After that, we saw it join up with the European Union to prevent a bloody civil war developing in what is now known as North Macedonia—a good new story to cheer us in the 70th year of NATO, with that new country coming into the alliance. After the trauma of the 9/11 terrorist attack on the United States and, as the Minister said, the invoking for the very first time of the treaty’s Article 5, the alliance took over organising the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan. That has been a quite remarkable evolution: from the birth of NATO in Washington in 1949 to the security challenges of today and tomorrow. Those challenges are, in many ways, as difficult and complex as those in NATO’s successful past, but they are challenges that, frankly, only NATO can face. NATO is our most precious and unrivalled asset in our fractious, unstable and highly unpredictable world.

No defence alliance in the history of our planet has survived, or indeed thrived, as long as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and I believe that it has done so for three principal reasons. The first is because NATO has the capacity to evolve and transform to deal with changing security landscapes. The second is because NATO has maintained its military credibility and deterrence capacity. Thirdly, NATO has nurtured and protected that towering strength which is the value set of its constituent nations: the rule of law and an independent judiciary; free speech and a free press; sustainable democratic institutions; separation of church and state; and a tolerance of contrary views. These are the foundations of our free societies and are what give us our moral authority and political advantage in the world. However, as the Minister said, none of these reasons can be taken for granted and NATO will

[LORD ROBERTSON OF PORT ELLEN]

always be a work in progress. So long as the world keeps changing and new threats to our societies emerge and mutate, then NATO, too, has to change.

As the Minister told us, the first Secretary-General of NATO—like me and like Lord Carrington, who came after him, a former British Cabinet Minister—was Lord Ismay, one-time general and chief of staff to Churchill. In his final speech in Bonn before he stood down, he said that,

“a defensive shield has been built up which, though not yet as strong as might be wished, is an essential feature of the deterrent to aggression. Who would have believed that sovereign States would entrust their precious armed forces to the command of nationals other than their own in times of peace? But this is what has come to pass”.

It was indeed extraordinary then and it was true as well, and it is just as remarkable and true today.

What should NATO do now? And what should the United Kingdom—whether in or out of the European Union—do to pay more than lip service to what government Ministers constantly call the cornerstone of Britain’s defence? Priority number 1, in my view, is to maintain the military effectiveness and deterrent strength of the alliance. The bad news is that the 2% of GNP target is met by only five of the 29 members of NATO, with some countries lamentably behind the freely made commitments that they took on. I was in Slovenia the week before last and Prague the previous week making the point about their inadequate responses to the 2% target—doing it in person and in theatre. However, gross figures do not tell the whole story, as 2% spent on the wrong capabilities adds very little to effectiveness. Of course, the good news is that, since the Wales summit, there has been a growth in collective defence expenditure in Europe of \$87 billion, with half the countries now spending over the target of 20% on equipment.

Priority number 2, in my view, is addressing our weaknesses—the soft underbelly of an alliance which, in spite of the burden-sharing debate, is still formidable and outspends any potential adversary. That is why these adversaries, whether in states or as individuals, have turned their tactics to interfering in democratic processes, exploiting splits among us, hijacking public debates, dominating the cyber world and subverting electronic communications. That is why, in NATO and in its nations, we need more investment in intelligence, in cyber professionalism and in information dissemination. That information campaign might start here in this country. Can the Minister tell us why, while the Russian embassy has sent out detailed briefings to MPs and Peers on the Russian position on the INF treaty, and while parliamentarians receive in their post *China Daily* on a daily basis, we get little or nothing on NATO positions from our own Government?

Indeed, I took the opportunity of looking at the section on NATO and the UK on the Foreign Office website today. It has only two items dated 2019, although we are now into April, and both were dated 21 January: one was connected to the statement on Salisbury and the other to the Prime Minister’s statement on Brexit—that was one of very many statements on Brexit but only one is on the website. The only item on the INF treaty, on which a hugely important debate is ongoing in

Europe and the United States at the moment, was dated 4 December and was simply a restatement of the NATO Foreign Ministers’ statement. We are not doing anything like enough to disseminate information about what is happening in NATO.

My priority number three is maintaining the nuclear element of the alliance. The American, British and French nuclear forces, along with the other weapons on European soil, have been the backbone of a posture that has made conventional war unthinkable. They are as important today as they ever were.

My priority number four is Russia. The NATO-Russia Council, of which I was the first chairman, should still be a powerful venue for dialogue. Resuming the formality and depth of the NATO-Russia Council would not in any way be seen as a concession to wholly unacceptable Russian behaviour in Ukraine, Crimea and Salisbury; instead, it would be a recognition that, in a hair-trigger nuclear world, we need to talk about what we agree on as well as why we disagree on other matters. The Russians and plenty of others in the world need to be reminded that NATO is, and always will be, a defence alliance; it does not represent a danger to any country or group that does not attack, threaten or subvert us. That message is as powerful and true today as it was on that April day in Washington in 1949.

My final priority is a plea for a return to American leadership. One of the saddest features of the Trump Administration has been their abdication from a global leadership role. Even America’s critics would concede that you do not really miss American leadership until it has gone. NATO is America’s best security bargain in its history. Let us hope that President Trump will take that point on board when he comes to London in December, and I hope that he will take on board, too, the point made to him today when Secretary-General Stoltenberg meets him in the Oval Office.

NATO is a precious legacy, left to us from a previous generation to be ours today. It is therefore our solemn responsibility to reinvigorate and reinforce this remarkable, irreplaceable alliance for the challenges that will face the next generation. That has to be the enduring message of this 70th anniversary.

4.05 pm

The Lord Bishop of Portsmouth: My Lords, it is as ever a pleasure to speak in your Lordships’ House, but today perhaps I feel the privilege especially. I cannot report that, 70 years ago, a Bishop contributed to this House’s debate on the founding of NATO. Without the personal, military, diplomatic or political experience to which the Minister alluded, I am grateful for the forbearance of your Lordships in listening to my contribution today.

I am sometimes all too aware that bishops—and indeed many members of the clergy—like to hold that their pronouncements are of a prophetic character. At its best, that means telling hard truths to those in power. The importance of holding to account, and of setting out the likely consequences of a course of action, will be familiar to all who value the work of this place. However, I admit that this also means that the voice crying in the wilderness can sound like the voice of one who neither knows nor appreciates the challenges and hard choices that power presents.

It is a particular pleasure, therefore, to congratulate the noble Earl on bringing this Motion before the House. This truly is an anniversary to celebrate. It is an occasion to honour all our NATO partners—from the dozen of 70 years' standing, to Montenegro, the most recent addition—and to honour our own nation's significant, indeed defining, contribution in establishing the alliance, and our continuing commitment to it.

The diocese I serve has its own particular close connection to the Armed Forces, and through them to the alliance itself. Less than a fortnight ago, we saw one example of that commitment as we said a temporary goodbye to one of our own: HMS "Westminster", one of the Type 23 frigates based in Portsmouth, departed for NATO duties in the Baltic. It was a reminder of our commitment, in the form of people and often very expensive kit; a gigantic aircraft carrier conducting asymmetric warfare, or the ability to combat ever more insidious, subtle and damaging cyberattacks. We can be proud that our commitment is translated into cash and that we can count ourselves one of the NATO members to contribute the requisite proportion of our GDP to defence.

Equally, however, I am seized of the importance of that contribution manifesting itself in the capability required to face down, deter and tackle any potential adversary or threat. I confess that, though I accept that the letter of our expenditure commitment is honoured, I remain to be wholly convinced that we obey the spirit quite so properly.

We must not forget that NATO is not just a defensive military enterprise: it is nothing less than a community of values. That was a point made abundantly clear when the treaty was signed in 1949, not least by Dean Acheson, the American Secretary of State. He said that yes, the alliance was to deter bullies—those who used, as he put it, "power to dominate others"—but in it also lay,

"the affirmation of moral and spiritual values which govern the kind of life they propose to lead".

It was and is democracy's shield and guarantor.

I am of course not blind to the nature of organisations. NATO's foundations will have been the fruit of all kinds of motives: often complex, sometimes contradictory, and even ignoble. None the less, those do not detract from its purpose. Moral and spiritual values were at the heart of NATO's foundation; they must also be at its heart now. But perhaps those values represent something more. Perhaps they represent our recognition that we are best served when we act closely in concert with our friends—with those who share our values. Such multilateralism has enormous merits, although, goodness knows, it presents challenges; people and nations bring conflicting motives and aspirations to the table. However, we do the most good, and serve our own interests best, when we act in communion. Even when we disagree, it is always better to continue to jaw-jaw and to differ well. That is nothing more than good, sound, practical politics—and, I might add, sound theology too. It was also the ambition of our forebears in Parliament. Standing alongside Dean Acheson in 1949 was our own Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin. He said that,

"democracy is no longer a series of isolated units. It has become a cohesive organism, determined to fulfil its great purpose".

That purpose would best be achieved through multilateralism.

I need hardly tell this House that we live in interesting times. That is true of the debates, divisions and dissensions in the other place—and sometimes here. It is also true of the interesting environment into which the fine young men and women on board HMS "Westminster" are sailing. It is tempting to imagine these times solely in geopolitical terms: as a broad historical sweep of a big political canvas. I submit that we should—indeed must—think of them another way. I hope the House will forgive me for praying in aid Mr Bevin once again. In 1949, as the great men of affairs signed the treaty, he reminded them of the motive and force behind it:

"The common people (who only want to live in peace) have been unable to follow their peaceful pursuits or to sleep safely in their beds".

Its work meant, and means, that ordinary people are able to follow their peaceful pursuits and sleep safely in their beds. I find it hard to imagine a better ambition for any public institution. These are words that might be engraved on all our hearts, especially at the present time.

4.13 pm

Lord Jopling (Con): My Lords, I begin by declaring an interest in that—except for a four-year break in the years after I came to your Lordships' House from another place—I have served as a member of the United Kingdom delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly for 32 years, if noble Lords can believe that. I was recently vice-president of the assembly and I am currently a rapporteur to one of its committees.

The noble Lord, Lord Robertson, complained about the lack of information from the Government on the web. If he were to look up the website of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, he would find the report which I presented last November on Russian hybrid warfare which, I am glad to say, was adopted unanimously by the assembly.

The Minister referred to the current president, Madeleine Moon, who presides over the assembly with a great deal of distinction and to much admiration. That takes me back to my early days, when the president of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly was Sir Thomas Dugdale, later the 1st Baron Crathorne and father of my noble friend Lord Crathorne, who inspired me, in my early days, to take up a political career. This debate completes the circle in many ways.

I am, and always have been, a great admirer of NATO. As the Minister said, it is perhaps the most successful defensive military alliance in history. Given the reborn posturing, outrages and mischief of Mr Putin's Russia, I most strongly support the deployment of those four battlegroups in the Baltic and Poland, which cannot be seen, by any stretch of the imagination, to be offensive or regressive so far as Russia is concerned, but provide a vital tripwire.

However, I have a number of serious reservations about NATO's forward thinking and housekeeping. The Minister referred to occasions when NATO is not as quick on its feet as it should be, and I very much

[LORD JOPLING]

agree on that. Frankly, the construction of the new headquarters in Brussels has been a joke. The decision to build it was taken in 1999 and plans were approved in 2003, with planned occupation 12 years later, in 2015. In fact, no real positive entry was made until last year, 2018.

Again, I am concerned to be told that the penny has dropped only recently about the major problems of moving heavy, bulky military equipment around Europe. The problems of low and unstable bridges or tunnels have caused all sorts of dilemmas. These are just two examples which do not give the impression of an organisation which is flexible, decisive and quick on its feet.

This afternoon, my principal concerns regard NATO's internal financial management and bookkeeping. This is all audited by the International Board of Auditors for NATO, known as IBAN. It has highlighted a number of serious shortcomings, which have appeared in its reports. I have drawn some of these reservations to the attention of the Secretary-General twice, in public. On both occasions, I was rudely brushed aside and the questions I asked were ignored. I conclude that either he did not know the answer, in which case he should have, or he did not care, in which case I wonder if he ought to have the job at all.

To be fair, I got a letter from the Deputy Secretary-General on questions I put to her in November last year. I am glad to say I got a letter dated 13 March, just over two weeks ago. That followed another letter from her, dated 13 November last year, on questions I put in July.

I spoke in your Lordships' House last June regarding IBAN's published reservations about NATO's accounting procedures. I will not repeat them now—they are on the record—but the problems persist. IBAN reports that there is progress, but no assurance that all NATO's entities will improve their financial management reporting collectively and significantly, and there is a lack of unity and consistency in the systems and applications of financial reporting rules.

With regard to the 2018 audits, 39 opinions were issued by IBAN. Nineteen of those were unqualified, which is good. Twenty-three were qualified—which is not good. In two there was a denial of opinion by IBAN, and in one of those two IBAN had a problem—the impossibility of carrying out an audit due to the unreliability of the documents and figures submitted.

IBAN has repeated difficulty in dealing with the accounting representation of NATO's tangible assets. This was one of the problems last year in terms of properties, plants and equipment. Again, IBAN tells us that there is no clear and consistent series of guidelines applicable by all to detect and deal with cases of fraud and corruption, which of course is so much a part of IBAN's responsibility. Finally, IBAN is evidently concerned that no single responsible person in NATO seems to be charged with co-ordinating all these and other reservations. To sum up, there appears to be an unfortunate reluctance to respond and endorse too many of IBAN's reservations and recommendations. I realise that the Minister may not be able to respond to

all these comments today. I hope that he will write to me in the near future, and put a copy of his reply in the Library.

I will end by putting two questions which the Government might like to answer, and also to raise them with NATO itself. First, does NATO intend, effectively and sufficiently, to establish an internal audit capability in all NATO bodies—including ones concerning international staff? Also, regarding international staff, does NATO agree that an independent, professional internal audit force, compliant with the internal audit international standards, should report both to the Secretary-General directly and to the international staff audit committee?

Secondly, why has IBAN, which is made up of professional, experienced experts in public management and holds a broad understanding of NATO, not given advice in the international staff functional review? Noble Lords may feel that these are rather obscure issues, but a great deal of public money is involved in all NATO's activities. However successful and admirable the alliance has been, it is very important that these sorts of questions do not give rise to the disquiet which they have done. They are worthy of answers.

4.25 pm

Lord West of Spithead (Lab): My Lords, I thank the Minister for tabling this debate. I fear that issues of defence seem to have little traction in this place, in the body politic as a whole or, indeed, in the nation at large. This debate was tabled at very short notice, as my noble friend Lord Robertson has said. That is unfortunate because I think a number of people who would have liked to have spoken have been unable to because of prior commitments.

Sadly, it tends to take a war to change the political and national interest in defence. There is no doubt that insufficient investment, both in intellectual understanding of the world in which we live—its relationship to our national grand strategy—and necessary defence funding, make war more likely. A splendid example of this is that 37 years ago today, the Argentinians invaded the Falkland Islands. The fact that there was tension down there was well above the radar horizon, but we were not focused on it. We withdrew HMS "Endurance" for a saving of £16 million, in what in those days were called the long-term costings. What did that cost our nation in terms of getting defence wrong? It cost us £3.5 billion, and 300 men killed, so debates such as this are crucial.

I have to say that it is rather refreshing to have a debate not directly linked to Brexit, but as is the case with so many things, there are significant issues involving the EU and NATO, and thus the dreaded B word does raise its head. The Minister and my noble friend Lord Robertson have explained that membership of NATO is fundamental to the defence of our nation, and they are right. It is also crucial to the defence of Europe, and be in no doubt—a secure, safe Europe is critical to the safety of our island home. What has been a concern for many years, as stated, is that the continental nations of Europe in NATO have for decades been getting defence on the cheap. Most have not invested sufficiently in their armed forces, and have relied on the USA and

to a lesser extent—until recently—the United Kingdom to foot the bill. Even worse, when spending money, they have spent on lavish headquarters and extra, often undeployable people, rather than fighting equipment and fully deployable forces.

This situation, as has been mentioned, is slowly improving with the NATO commitment for countries to spend 2% of GDP on defence and enhancing the amount spent on new equipment and procurement. Most of them are not there yet, I am afraid, but there are moves in the right direction. Sadly, I feel the pressures for an EU army and the European Defence Union are pulling in another direction. The establishment of more headquarters and command structures, often replicating those that NATO already has in a suboptimal way, is dangerous posturing. One cannot help wondering if the PESCO arrangements are primarily aimed at spending more on EU defence firms and excluding other nations, such as the UK, rather than getting the best and most equipment for the limited funds available.

What is clear is that, whatever the outcome of Brexit, NATO is our nation's most important defence alliance, and although the security of Europe is critical to the security of these islands, the United States is our most important defence ally. Having said that, we must continue to work closely with our European neighbours, as we have done for decades. The military links between us and France, for example—a country that does bear its proper burden of defence spending—are closer than any time since World War II. It is pointless having a grand military alliance if there are no threats. As has been said, 73 years ago this month in Fulton, Missouri, Winston Churchill clearly articulated the geographical division of Europe:

“From Stettin in the Baltic, to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the continent”.

NATO was established on 4 April 1949 to counter the very real possibility of a Soviet invasion of Europe. We know, having seen all its documents following the collapse of the Soviet Union, that there was a very real intention to invade Europe and to take over the whole of that continent. Of course, NATO's Article 5 was the solution that stopped the Iron Curtain moving westwards. We have had quotes from General Hastings Ismay; the one I rather like was when he said that the whole reason for NATO is,

“to keep the Russians out, the Americans in and the Germans down”.

Much has changed since then, I hasten to add.

With the collapse of the Warsaw Pact in February 1991 and the Soviet Union disintegrating in December 1991, what was NATO for? I was made very aware of the problem when at the end of 1991, while serving as head of naval intelligence, I was tasked with going to NATO headquarters and leading the revision of MC 161, which is the NATO intelligence bible. That is extremely difficult when your enemy has suddenly disappeared but the world was full of risks and threats, which have increased over the last quarter of a century. The foundational concepts of the post-World War II belief in democracy and capitalism are challenged as never before, and the geographic dominance of—for want of better words—the West and its underlying precepts of

justice, rule of law and human rights are at risk. Like-minded nations which believed in the world order established after World War II need to hold together. New and returning actors in Russia and the East do not accept the status quo; some wish the system to collapse and are demanding a rearrangement of the participants at the tables of power.

NATO has found itself involved in central Asia. As the Minister mentioned, its involvement in Afghanistan was a direct result of the only time in NATO's history that Article 5 has been enacted. NATO was also involved in the Balkans, the Levant, the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea and the north African littoral. However, now we are confronted by a re-emergent Russia that has expansionist ambitions. Indeed, it seems intent on disregarding the world order and destabilising nations around the world.

I mentioned earlier that for the past 70 years, the continental NATO nations have relied on the USA—and, to a lesser extent, the UK—to foot the bill for their security and defence. I added the proviso “until recently” because since 2010, that has no longer been the case. The UK has reduced its military capability to a level that is insufficient to ensure its own security, let alone that of other nations. Indeed, I doubt that we are any longer capable of meeting fully all of our commitments to NATO.

To take just one fighting environment, that of the maritime, at the end of the Cold War we were seen as the bedrock of NATO's naval power in the eastern Atlantic. Our submarines—some 21 of them—were capable of countering forays by Soviet nuclear submarines trying to penetrate south of the Greenland-Iceland-UK gap. Hence they were able to protect US and UK ballistic missile submarines. They were also capable of penetrating the Soviet ballistic missile submarine bastions up in the Arctic, north of the Kola peninsula. They were supported by Nimrod maritime patrol aircraft—we had over 30 at that stage—that were probably the best in the world at that time. In addition, we had about 50 destroyers and frigates, a number of which were specialist anti-submarine platforms with towed array sonar.

The US striking fleet completely depended on us for anti-submarine warfare support. The UK ASW striking force consisted of an “Invincible” class carrier with ASW dunking sonar and sonar-buoy capable large helicopters, along with a mix of the assets I have talked about. We deployed Royal Marines annually: a full brigade was earmarked for war to north Norway to exercise with our allies and deter the Soviets from invasion. Holding north Norway would enable the US striking fleet to reach launch positions to decimate the Soviet military complexes in the Kola, which so threatened us.

What is the significance of the fact that we had that capability? Surely the Cold War is over. But the broad North Atlantic and Arctic Oceans are no longer safe and secure, and it is the Atlantic that links Europe to its most important ally. Russia has modernised her SSN fleet and is again deploying attack submarines south of the GIUK gap on a scale not seen since the end of the Cold War. Why? She is building a new class of submarine-launched ballistic missiles—not just a

[LORD WEST OF SPITHEAD]

new class of submarines for them. She has used specialist submarines and surface ships to identify and interfere with the undersea cables that are so crucial to the global financial system. Why? Russia is making unsubstantiated claims of ownership to vast areas of the Arctic seabed. Norway feels herself under threat; her gas fields are crucial to our energy supply and economy.

NATO is, to an extent, waking up, seeing the need for a North Atlantic command. The UK has signed a memorandum of understanding with Iceland designed to enhance our capability for looking north. We have rejuvenated winter deployments to north Norway, although we now have only a commando group available for that. We have started looking north again, after focusing on south-west Asia for a very long time.

The United Kingdom is the most important maritime power in NATO Europe, but cuts to our Navy since 2010 mean that we can no longer ensure the security of the waters in which we live. Just in numerical terms, in comparison with the end of the Cold War we now have six versus 14 nuclear attack submarines, 19 versus 50 escorts, no MPA at all, 25 versus 77 heavy helicopters, and a commando group versus a commando brigade. Quality is important but numbers also matter.

It is right to celebrate NATO's 70th birthday. It has been an amazing alliance—probably the most successful in history, and it has ensured our safety throughout its existence. We owe it to NATO, to Europe and to ourselves to reinvest in defence.

4.36 pm

Lord Patten (Con): My Lords, there are two main foci to what I will say: the first is the pressure points facing NATO from both within and without; and the second is the need for all members to pull their financial weight and not shelter under the financial umbrella of those that do. Before addressing these matters, I should declare my interests, which—doubtless because of my lack of the martial spirit that shone through everything that the noble Lord, Lord West of Spithead, said in his very telling speech—do not include any service in the Armed Forces. However, I served for a decade and a half as an adviser and non-executive director of Lockheed Martin in the UK. That is, I suppose, an opinion-forming bit of wallpaper to my speech, and explains my continuing shareholding in that corporation, as listed in the register of your Lordships' House.

I begin with the five pressure points within and without NATO. First, as everyone has said, Russia continues to be the threat that it was back in 1949, when it was the USSR. I will not use otiose words to repeat that, but I believe it to be so, and anyone who lives in Ukraine, for example, knows it first hand.

Secondly, the endless incursions over and under the Baltic present a grave threat. It is good that we in the UK, and other NATO countries, have defended the skies above the Baltic and the waters underneath it. We have sent our little battle group to support NATO's enhanced forward presence in Estonia, supported NATO's readiness initiative, and done much more.

Thirdly, NATO needs to keep a very close watch on dogs that have not recently barked in the night. We saw them suddenly barking in Crimea, which seemed

to come out of the blue to most people, including many in NATO itself. I look with great concern at the potential situation in the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad. It is a small place, not much bigger than Wales, and it is a very long way from Russia—about 300 miles—but only 30 miles from the borders of Poland. There is growing pressure within Russia to make that its next target for creating nuisance; perhaps that will come from demands for a better land corridor to Kaliningrad. There are already complaints within Russia that non-Russians are promoting the Germanisation of the place—I promise noble Lords that that is a word; I have looked it up—encouraged by those trying to resuscitate its so-called Prussian past and German heritage. After all, it is where Emmanuel Kant is buried, and it was once very German indeed. I do not know, but watch this space for the next possible nuisance-causing by Russia.

Countries such as Ukraine are desperate to become European, as once was Turkey, just like the countries on its border, such as Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania, which are now full NATO members. Ukraine—or many in it—wants to be the same. Geographers have had many substantial theological debates about where Europe ends—maybe NATO should end wherever it is decided Europe does—but the thought of Ukraine actually joining NATO would make the Russian annexation of Crimea look like a picnic compared to the Putinesque explosion that would surely follow any such suggestion. Set that bit of futurology against the current display of fiction fast becoming fact, with the likely election of Volodymyr Zelenskyy—the comic who played his predecessor on TV for many years actually taking the presidency. That could lead to more instability in Ukraine and to a continuation of a geopolitical tragi-comedy, with a long way to go. If that is what the ballot boxes decide in the final run-off, I doubt that Ukraine's outgoing President Poroshenko will take the decision lying down.

Equally, worrying issues are arising in a country which has been a long-standing and, in the past, most welcome part of NATO: Turkey. This very week we see incipient instability creeping in to a country that is armed to the teeth. Some commentators brand President Erdogan an elective dictator. I do not know whether or not that is the case, but I suspect that, like President Poroshenko in Ukraine, he will not take the results of elections in the three biggest Turkish cities, Ankara, Izmir and Istanbul, politically lying down after 16 years—a very long time—of unfettered power.

There is instability within NATO, as well as threats outside it. I do not know whether we have the mechanisms to reflect those and deal with them within NATO's governance framework, which my noble friend Lord Jopling spoke about in his notable speech. However, a measured response to what might happen in Kaliningrad, what could happen in Ukraine, and what will probably happen in Turkey, will present challenges to NATO.

The second foci of my speech is that NATO will be an eternal part of the geopolitical landscape of Europe, and one which makes not just political and diplomatic demands but huge financial ones as well. Unlike many in your Lordships' House, I do not intend to be diplomatic to a fault in this matter. We all benefit

enormously from the shelter provided by the United States, under its kindly and dollar-decorated umbrella, under presidents of both political colours. It already more than meets NATO's target of 2% of GDP spending, and always has done. As we know, only four of the 28 countries in NATO actually get near that. Two of them, Estonia and Latvia, are pretty small and have been threatened. To our credit, the UK has always done it; we honour our spending commitments on both NATO and foreign aid, which I strongly support. Other countries will soon be there: Poland will soon be pulling its weight, and we have to thank the coming generation of younger politicians in the Civic Platform Government who drove the expenditure to greater levels, such as Radek Sikorski, who was Defence Minister and then Foreign Minister. Happily, this has been carried on by the current PIS Government; Poland is, and will be, substantially pulling its weight.

However, other big countries consistently lag. It is terrible to say it, but the worst offender is one of the richest countries per capita on earth—Germany. We should not beat about the bush on this: shame on Germany for not pulling its weight in the NATO framework. I understand the country looks with concern over its shoulder at the past and is deeply concerned about possible incipient militarism and all the rest, but I only hope that when we get a new Chancellor in Germany, he or she will at long last persuade its people and their attitudes to mature out of these inhibitions based on the past and fully take on their responsibilities in the future. Should Germany spend more, I appreciate that it would take some years of transition before it fully develops its equipment, bought with additional money, but the signal this would send to Russia—and also to terrorists and cyberattackers, whom I have not mentioned—would be very powerful indeed. I very much look forward to the time when Germany takes its proper civilising share of defence spending in NATO, playing in future years, as it should, a much bigger role in Europe in this respect.

4.45 pm

Lord Touhig (Lab): My Lords, 70 years ago the world was emerging afresh from the ashes of the Second World War, a conflict in which Britain and her allies suffered many great losses. Four years after the end of the conflict, it became clear that the free world needed to band together in military unity to fend off future threats. So it was that NATO was founded on 4 April 1949 to create an alliance in support of democracy and humanity—and, especially, to assure mutual protection from the Soviet threat.

At its core, there was no more ardent supporter of NATO than the Labour Government, with Prime Minister Clement Attlee chief among its European champions. He and Foreign Secretary Ernie Bevin took on the task of persuading the United States to back the creation of NATO. When I reflect on the task Bevin undertook to persuade the Americans of the value of creating NATO and think about the challenges that the present incumbent of the White House poses to it, I remember the first American President, George Washington, who, some 160 years before NATO was founded, said in the first State of the Union address:

“To be prepared for war is one of the most effectual means of preserving peace”.

I hope that those words will be remembered at the NATO summit in London in December, because they have rung true: NATO has helped secure peace among the world's great powers and Britain's security for seven decades.

It is not NATO's mere existence that allows peace to prosper, but the training, weaponry and tactics that the alliance provides. Ultimately, the alliance matters not without constant training and nations working closely together, as we are in Estonia, Poland and across the Baltic. A military force is strong in conflict only if it has spent time training during peace. I would like to see NATO do far more training. The unexpected will occur, and a force whose training is just adequate will not be capable of either defensive or offensive action.

More widely, the unexpected has already occurred. NATO has internal problems in its relations with Turkey. Turkey's willingness to purchase the S-400 missile defence system from Russia puts Ankara's commitment to NATO's mission in questionable territory. The summit in December will have to address this.

Here at home, as Britain faces an uncertain future, we must keep our defence spending under constant review. Yes, we spend around 2% of GDP on defence, but £1 billion of that includes pensions for civil servants and others. This may be allowed under NATO rules, but we all recognise that it is wrong to count the payment of pensions as defence spending.

The last NATO summit ended badly, with disagreements on defence spending at the heart of the problem. Britain is hosting the December NATO summit, and we should take the lead and pledge to devote a genuine 2% of our GDP to defence. Moreover, we need a sharp focus on what we spend on. Spending without direction is a waste of both time and resources. My noble friend Lord Robertson of Port Ellen made a remarkable and powerful contribution when we opened this debate. Commenting on the 2% spend on defence some while ago, he stated that,

“the 2% only makes sense if it is spent on the right things—deployable troops, precision weapons, logistics and specialist people”.

My noble friend is so right. He speaks as a former Defence Secretary and Secretary-General of NATO and knows what he is talking about. For my part, I would now add cybersecurity to his list of the right things to spend on. We must make sure that our 2% is spent well, smartly and efficiently to guarantee that NATO maximises its utility.

It is easy to slip into party-political point scoring in debates such as this; I confess that I have done that myself in the past, but today I will resist. These past weeks have shown our country divided enough, without adding more division. I simply say to the Minister that, over 13 years of Labour Government, we recognised the role that NATO played in delivering global stability, helping to safeguard humanity and democracy worldwide. I believe that the Government in which he serves share that view: on that we are united. Labour spent an average of 2.5% of GDP on defence. I do not ask the Minister to commit to that today, but I suspect that he and I would both like to

[LORD TOUHIG]

see that level of defence spending now. It is in the best interests of the United Kingdom to increase our defence budget, thus outwardly reaffirming our commitment to the alliance.

In the same vein, one of our strongest allies—previously our most dependable ally—has expressed doubt about the NATO mission. President Trump has made his view of the world, and his lack of understanding, abundantly clear over the past two years. Under Mr Trump, sadly, America is not as reliable as it once was. Whether in a barrage of tweets, rambling speeches or behind closed doors, the President has made his views known. He uses words that make him sound more like a mobster demanding protection money rather than the leader of the free world, and that is greatly troubling.

Across this House, there is a strong belief that NATO is as essential as ever before. We must reaffirm our commitment to it. Although there is no longer a Soviet threat, that is not to say we are without potential adversaries. The growth of Chinese naval power, as shown in increasing numbers of surface vessels and submarines and its attempt to own the South China Sea, is worrying. The instability produced by North Korea and the terrorist threat posed by ISIL—no matter that the caliphate is defeated—remain real.

Then there is Russia. Russia under Putin acts like a gangster state run by gangsters for the benefit of gangsters. The regime has extended its tendrils far across Europe, whether with the poisoning of Sergei and Yulia Skripal on British soil, the illegal annexation of Crimea or the meddling in foreign elections, as demonstrated in the 2016 US election and the Brexit campaign. Putin is a gambler, determined to reassert Russian power and influence. Edward Lucas, the distinguished writer, commentator and journalist, called Putin “Russia’s best asset” and added:

“Putin is decisive; we are not. He is willing to break the rules; we are not. He is willing to use force; we are not”.

Putin is never to be underestimated.

We must stand united and be decisive in our unwavering support for NATO. We must be decisive about using force if needed and never falter in NATO’s mission to secure peace. NATO is an indispensable part of Europe’s freedom and the world’s security. On the 70th anniversary of its formation, we should unite with one another and once again affirm our commitment to this essential alliance.

4.54 pm

Lord Cormack (Con): My Lords, I am sure we all say amen to that. How refreshing it is to be debating an international subject and an international organisation in unity and in thankfulness at a time when our country is not, perhaps, distinguishing itself in the eyes of the world for its wonderful diplomacy, fine leadership and national unity.

I was brought up to regard the late Lord Attlee, grandfather of my noble friend sitting here today, and Ernest Bevin as two of the greatest Englishmen, and indeed they were. Without them, we might not have had NATO. Without them, the history of our nation and of the world might have been very different. They

recognised danger and—even more important—how essential it was for allies to work together to ensure the safety of their people, individually and collectively, and to ensure that the world, which had within the previous half-century been plunged into the two most devastating wars in history, should not see that again. So of course we have very much to be thankful for. Touching on a point made by the noble Lord, Lord Touhig, a moment or two ago, one of the things we have most to be thankful for is that the importance of NATO has always commanded the support of British Governments of both major political parties—and, indeed, of the coalition Government of a few years ago.

I agree with those who say that we should recognise in 2019 not only that old dangers have passed but that new ones have arisen. I recognise that there is a great deal of truth in what many colleagues in all parts of the House have said about Russia and about Mr Putin, but I regret infinitely that we have not handled Russia with a little more understanding and care over the last two decades. I regret very much indeed that there is not greater dialogue with and contact with Russia at the moment. In his splendid speech the noble Lord, Lord Robertson of Port Ellen, referred to this when he urged more frequent meetings of the NATO-Russia Council. He was right to do so.

The first post of any sort I held in Parliament, way back in 1970 when I came in as a very young man, was as the first chairman of the campaign for the release of Soviet Jewry. We have to remember that in those days it was impossible to practise religious belief with impunity within the boundaries of the Soviet Union and that the only people who had a door marked “exit” were the Jews: they could get an exit visa and could get out of the Soviet Union. I was urged by a friend, a contemporary and colleague in the other place, Greville Janner, to form with him the campaign for the release of Soviet Jewry and we did precisely that. We were declared persona non grata in the Soviet Union. None of our members was allowed to go. We were even forbidden entry to the embassy and merely harangued on the doorstep.

When Mr Gorbachev came to power I was a member of a small international group, based in the Netherlands, that worked to try to bring together parliamentarians within the then Soviet Union and in the West. I was privileged to be present at a number of meetings in Moscow; to hand over a symbolic Bible—a million were being accepted—to Mr Gorbachev’s chef de cabinet; and to take part in Epiphany 1990, I think it was, in a hotel that had always been reserved for leaders of the Soviet bloc, in a Roman Catholic service led by Father Ted Hesburgh, who was Kennedy’s human rights chairman for a time, with Madame Giscard d’Estaing and Rosalynn Carter, wife of the former President of the United States, present. We all took part in this service, and as we looked out of the window we could see the Kremlin. This was an enormous change from the Russia that had forbidden me and fellow colleagues from the other place to enter in the early 1970s. I rejoiced in that; I am sure we all did. I rejoiced as the Berlin Wall was torn down. As someone said earlier, without NATO that probably would not have happened. I rejoiced when Mr Yeltsin

leapt on the tank and denounced those mounting a coup against Gorbachev—mercifully, not a successful one.

When Putin came to power, I was one of those at the banquet in the Guildhall on his state visit and one of those who felt glad we were able to welcome him. Things have gone badly awry since then, and it is not all Putin's fault. We have to remember that he is very popular in Russia and has given back the Russians their self-respect. We have to remember that Russia lives always with the memories of invasion—not just 1812 but 1941. We have to remember that it viewed with real alarm the prospect of Ukraine becoming a member of NATO or the European Union. I understand that; we all do. We also have to understand that we and the Russians have common foes in Islamic terrorism and other subversive forces.

Above all, we have to remember that the second half of this century will be dominated by the mighty power of China, which at the moment is getting closer to Russia. That ought to raise certain fears in our minds. We have to remember that China has already spread its tentacles throughout Africa, and even at the moment there is a wooing going on in Europe, with Italy and Portugal signing up great contracts. I am not suggesting that we should not be on good terms with China, of course, but to be totally suspicious of Russia and not to be suspicious of China is a bit blinkered and one-sided. It is important that we try to get closer cultural and personal relations with Russia. Whatever criticisms of Putin we might have, the Russian people are a great people and we can be very close to them. The world will be a safer place if we are on reasonable terms with Russia, and if we are on good terms with China that is good as well—but China has enormous ambitions. The Secretary of State for Defence, my successor as the Member of Parliament for South Staffordshire, was talking of sending aircraft carriers. I am not sure that is quite the best way of doing things, but I am sure we have to be vigilant and to recognise that a great country with the most ancient surviving civilisation in the world now has world designs—all the more reason for vigilance and for cohesion with our allies.

This 70th anniversary is a notable birthday for what is—as colleagues have said, and I think they are probably right—the most successful alliance in history. Seventy years—one man's lifespan in biblical terms. Yes, it is right to celebrate it, right to build upon it, but also right to recognise that we should commemorate not a fossil but something that serves a continuing need and purpose. That was made very plain in the speeches by the noble Lords, Lord Robertson of Port Ellen and Lord West of Spithead, and others. Let us also realise that simplistic notions of the goodies and the baddies are not always the right notions. I hope that over the next decade we can forge a better relationship with Russia, recognising that Mr Putin, who will not be there for ever, has some characteristics which give understandable cause for alarm, and that this emerging giant in the world should give us cause for sober concern.

5.06 pm

Lord Bilimoria (CB): My Lords, on 4 April we will be celebrating the 70th anniversary of the North Atlantic

Treaty Organization, so let us remember some of its history. President Eisenhower, its first supreme commander, hoped that NATO would not outlast the 1950s:

“If in ten years, all American troops stationed in Europe for national defence purposes have not been returned to the United States, then this whole project will have failed”.

He then said:

“We cannot be a modern Rome, guarding the frontiers with our legions”.

This was further reinforced by Paul Hoffman, the US administrator of the Marshall Plan, who said the aim was,

“to get Europe on its feet and off our backs”—

as the noble Lord, Lord West, I think, mentioned earlier. It all began with a treaty and not an alliance. We forget that it was the Korean War that was the trigger to make it into an alliance; in fact, it was Harriman who said that the Korean crisis put the “O” into NATO, turning it from a pact into a military alliance.

Then you have the whole European perspective, the idea of a European Defence Community. That was, as early as 1954, seen as a step too far. Does this not ring true now, when we have all this talk about an EU army? Of course, Lord Ismay, who has been referred to earlier, the first Secretary-General, again stated NATO's objective as,

“to keep the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down”.

The 1950s debate on European integration was yes to Europe in terms of the European Community but no to a European Defence Community because that would not work, and that is exactly the debate we are having all these decades later. To this day, I do not think the EU has ever developed a seriously credible foreign or security policy.

Then of course we have the nuclear question, which has been at the heart of NATO as well. In February, Harvard University released a report that noted the failure of European allies to spend more on defence or pull their weight. That is, again, at the heart of this debate. The report goes on to reaffirm the value of collective security:

“On its own, the United States is a powerful nation. But America's European and Canadian allies expand and amplify American power in ways that Russia and China—with few allies of their own—can never match ... The United States is substantially stronger in NATO than it would be on its own”.

That is crucial yet—here is the contradiction—for the first time in NATO's history, we have an American President who questions all sorts of international partnerships, including NATO. Then we have President Macron and Angela Merkel talking about a European army as a complement to NATO. This is never going to happen. The biggest challenge looking ahead for NATO in its eighth decade is possibly not about keeping the Russians out but keeping the Americans in, as David Reynolds said in a recent article.

For the 29 member countries, NATO's mission is to,

“safeguard the freedom and security of all its members by political and military means”.

On the minimum spending level, the UK is one of five members—arguably, the latest figures show that it is one of seven members—to increase its spending to 2%. I will come to that later. The Secretary-General,

[LORD BILIMORIA]

Jens Stoltenberg, has said that modern forms of warfare mean that, although the Cold War has finished, for NATO challenges remain. The challenges are Russia, international terrorism and cyberwarfare. Yet Donald Trump has described NATO as obsolete. He has continually criticised members—and rightly so—for not contributing enough to the budget.

I am sure the Minister will confirm that NATO is a cornerstone of our national security. NATO has 20,000 troops deployed in Afghanistan, Kosovo, Iraq and the Mediterranean and in policing the airspace of eastern Europe following Crimea. Since 2017, there has been a NATO enhanced forward presence operation in the Baltic states surrounding Russia.

As has been referred to, the summit of last year was, quite frankly, a disaster. As one description put it,

“NATO’s European leaders were left reeling after one of the most divisive summits in the organisation’s 69-year history”.

There was a declaration about 2% spending and a response to the ever more unpredictable security environment.

This is why I continually say to our Government that, even if we are experiencing a period of peace, the uncertainty is always there. Things come out of the blue—no one predicted 9/11; it happened without any warning. That is why SDSR 2010 was a disaster, which wrecked our Armed Forces. Fortunately, we are now recovering from that. We are no longer a superpower and we do not have an Empire, but we are very much a global power and being at the heart of NATO gives us that strength to be a global power. It is estimated that the UK provided 12% to 14% of NATO’s total capability in 2017. That is not bad for a country that has just 1% of the world’s population. SDSR 2015, which was far better than SDSR 2010, confirmed that NATO is at the heart of our defence policy and our unconditional commitment to collective defence and security. That is the position we are in today.

On the other hand, the Labour Party has criticised this situation. The shadow Defence Secretary Nia Griffith said:

“The UK’s ability to play our role on the international stage has been completely undermined by eight years of Tory defence cuts. The Conservatives have slashed the defence budget by over £9bn in real terms since 2010 and they are cutting Armed Forces numbers year after year. Instead of simply engaging in yet more sabre-rattling, Gavin Williamson should get to grips with the crisis in defence funding that is happening on his watch”.

Will the Minister respond to that criticism?

Does the Minister also agree that SDSR 2010 was all about means before ends and we have suffered ever since? It is now a decade since we have had aircraft carrier capability. Our Nimrods were destroyed. We are now getting back our surveillance capabilities. Numbers were cut in all the services, and now that we have to recruit we are struggling to do so. We have shortages in all our services and we possibly need to recruit from Commonwealth countries. It is all very well spending the 2%, but we need to make sure that our Armed Forces are properly resourced.

An important point is that, of the 29 NATO members, 22 are EU members. NATO has said clearly that the EU is a “unique and essential partner”. The two organisations share strategic common interests and

values. NATO has co-operated with the EU in its common security and defence policy; the EU’s Operation Althea in Bosnia and Herzegovina is commanded by the NATO deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe, and NATO operations in the Mediterranean are conducted in collaboration with the EU’s Mediterranean anti-people smuggling mission Operation Sophia.

Lord Judd (Lab): As usual, the noble Lord is making an interesting and challenging speech, to which I relate in many respects. Perhaps he could underline the point he made about the immediate situation, and how important it is to hear from the Minister in his reply, regarding the current doubt as to whether several of our battalions could fight effectively because of the lack of manpower.

Lord Bilimoria: I thank the noble Lord for his intervention and for reinforcing what I have been saying. I hope that the Minister will respond.

Mark Lancaster, Minister of State for the Armed Forces, has said:

“The Government’s objectives will be to underscore the position of NATO at the cornerstone of UK and Euro-Atlantic defence and security, and to support NATO’s continuing adaptation to meet the complicated and evolving threat environment”.

So there is no question that our commitment is there. London was the first seat for the NATO headquarters and a meeting is taking place here in December because of the worry about holding it in America now because of President Trump’s attitudes.

The Second World War led to NATO. Again, we must remember history. Harry Truman—in his Truman doctrine—was to make US foreign policy more interventionist by providing political, military and economic assistance to countries under threat from authoritarian forces, in particular Russia. That doctrine led to what is now NATO and to the treaty’s most important article, Article 5, which is NATO’s commitment to collective defence among its signatories, whereby,

“an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all”.

It has been invoked only once, and that was after 9/11. What says it all is that the Warsaw Pact did not survive, whereas NATO has not just survived but is expanding—its 29 members will now go up to 30, with Macedonia becoming the 30th member.

The US ambassador to Germany, Richard Grenell, threatened to cut back on intelligence sharing with some NATO allies if they bought equipment from China’s Huawei Technologies for new 5G telecom networks. The US says the equipment could be used by the Government in Beijing to spy on the West. That is another problem; the threat is from not just Russia but China. America is pushing to stiffen fellow members’ resolve in confronting one of their own, Turkey, which has committed to buying a Russian missile defence system. That situation is tricky, and I should be interested to hear the Minister’s response on how to deal with it. We have also heard from others about Germany only now committing to spending 1.5%—nowhere near the 2% target.

The bottom line is: has NATO worked? I would say, without a doubt, NATO has worked. Russia has never attacked a NATO member. The Crimea and Ukraine

attacks have put NATO on guard and we are now there in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania because we feel threatened. Article 5 has never really been put to the test where Russia is concerned.

The NATO Secretary-General is continually trying to play down the differences with America and President Trump. He has said:

“The strength of NATO is that despite these differences we have always been able to unite around our core task ... and defend each other”.

Let us not forget that, at the 50th anniversary, Bill Clinton cited Theodore Roosevelt saying that there was no doubt that the US would continue to play a,

“great part in the world ... The only question is whether we will play it well or ill”.

So the challenge of America’s commitment and the question for the European countries that dominate NATO is the trans-Atlantic distancing and the decline in post-war military spending that has taken place for a while. It is not just Trump; in 2011, Robert Gates, the Secretary of Defense in President Obama’s Administration, issued a warning about those who,

“enjoy the benefits of Nato membership ... but don’t want to share the risks and the costs ... apparently willing and eager for American taxpayers to assume the growing security burden left by reductions in European defense budgets”.

There is an impression that people are not paying their way, and that is absolutely valid.

Finally, looking ahead, there are four challenges for NATO. The first is burden sharing, which I have spoken about; the second is Russia; the third is partnerships; and the fourth is the open door—does NATO keep expanding? It now has 30 members. Are we to continue to have more and more?

The noble Lord, Lord Touhig, asked whether our 2% spending is enough and whether it is spent on the right things. My view is that we should spend 3% of our GDP on defence. The suggestion of a European army was one of the biggest scare tactics during the referendum, and it was one that people fell for. People denied that the peace in Europe has existed not just because of NATO but because of NATO and the existence of the European Union. I would pay the £8 billion a year that we pay to the EU just for the peace alone.

As the noble Lord, Lord Robertson, said in his fabulous speech, NATO must do three things: it must evolve and transform; it must maintain its deterrence; and, most importantly, NATO is about values. As the noble Lord, Lord Ricketts, said, the secret of NATO’s longevity is not just its military pact but the fact that it is an alliance of shared values, of which we should be proud.

5.21 pm

Lord Sterling of Plaistow (Con): My Lords, I have been involved with the Ministry of Defence since the Falklands War. Celebrating the 70th anniversary of NATO is more than justified. It has proved resilient because it has the strength and confidence that, as has just been said, are the embodiment of shared interests and values. NATO has worked because Europe and North America are strongly united by far more than what divides them. The UK is stronger and more confident because of our membership of NATO. As

has already been stated, most military alliances do not last more than 15 years on average, and we should not agonise about or be surprised by pressure points or the occasional twist and turn.

Our Army and the Royal Air Force are key elements in NATO and unquestionably the Royal Navy is the pre-eminent maritime power. Our geography and capability give us a unique advantage to protect Europe’s maritime flank. Our competence at sea is greater than that of any other European nation and our leadership is accepted. The strength of the Royal Navy is not just our strength but NATO’s strength.

We have a responsibility to maintain that pillar of the alliance. That means that our nuclear deterrent is NATO’s nuclear deterrent and that our strike carriers and Royal Marine commandos will always be available, with the ability to strike from sea to land, together with our world-class mine counter capability. Our leadership is welcomed by most European countries. Indeed, I have always believed that, following our withdrawal from the European Union—not Europe, of course—our military capability will be of great importance, particularly for the smaller European countries, as they know that we will always be prepared to protect them in time of need. Sadly, such visionary leadership has been lacking in the withdrawal negotiations over the last three years.

A separate but key point is that we are the prominent trainer of several NATO navies. Because they do not have similar training facilities, this valuable capability leads to enabling interoperability.

As I said earlier, it is an anniversary to be highly celebrated, but now for the future. I am not sure that we would invent NATO today, and I am truly not sure whether at some time in the future it will cease to exist. Crimea was not enough to stir us into action and the French-German overtones suggest a different view of alliances today. You may well ask about the thinking behind the above observations. Relevance in this space is about real deterrence, and that costs. There will be new areas on which to spend money, but ultimate military force is about being the best on all fronts, especially when your adversary only truly respects such capabilities. Of course, we must recognise that we are no longer an empire, but we do have international responsibilities.

I turn now to geography. The clue is in the title “North Atlantic”, so other worldwide activities need other partners such as the USA, Australia and Japan. Most NATO countries have very little global footprint or outlook and so will not necessarily turn up. What then?

Money is key. In this day and age, real leadership requires serious funding. It is time we started to behave like the USA in this regard. For our present and future enlarged role, 2% of GDP is unquestionably too little, and it is essential that we move towards 3%—as has just been suggested—in the very near future. Our future military role is going to be much greater than leading only in the European theatre of NATO. We have a strong moral responsibility to help any Commonwealth country that needs our aid. It is my opinion—shared by many—that at this moment in time we are still heavily hollowed out and certainly

[LORD STERLING OF PLAISTOW]

lack the necessary firepower to carry out our responsibilities. We should be a key framework nation. That means that others should contribute to the costs.

Many comments have been made about Trump—but I do not agree. In my experience of spending a lot of time with Americans and the American military over the last few months or so, they want this country to be their special ally. They trust us. If anybody truly believes that Trump and the Americans, if there ever was a problem in Europe, would not be there faster than anybody else, they need their brains tested. I will go further: it should be remembered that the Americans consider themselves as being on an island. On one side they have the Pacific and on the other side they have the Atlantic. This has dominated the way in which they have planned over the past couple of hundred years.

On the politics side, NATO is not as joined up and sophisticated as it may appear, as national politics over recent years has had an increasing influence on its decision-making capability. In my personal view—which I think is shared by others—the French seem to wish to undermine NATO to enable them to play a leading role, particularly in Europe and alongside America. Germany, apart from its constitution, is not prepared to increase its financial commitment. For the future, all three services—the Royal Navy, the Army and the Royal Air Force—have still not recovered from the dire cuts of 2010. It has to be said that transformation and innovation have not been actively pursued until very recently.

Kodak—I am very interested in international businesses—was the greatest photographic company in the world until the early 2000s. It knew that it had an urgent need to lead in technology—in the development of smart phones—and to strongly accelerate both transformation and innovation. Nothing happened; it no longer exists. In my view, which is shared by forward-looking minds in all three armed services, it is vital that we rapidly embrace change or we will truly risk irrelevance. We want the finest of our young people—men and women—to be dedicated to the splendid ethos of our armed services, highly trained and equipped with the finest equipment money can buy.

Our strongest likely adversaries—I agree with my noble friend Lord Cormack that China is the longer-term danger—are arming themselves in all areas of conventional warfare, including cyber, satellite and the capability of economic hacking. This is of great concern. Can we catch up? With the right leadership and financial firepower, unquestionably yes. I personally believe that the Secretary of State, the Chief of the Defence Staff and the newly appointed chiefs of all of our armed services are demonstrating that transformation and innovation are taking place as we speak, and at a rapid rate of knots.

In this modern world of ours, lethal—I repeat, lethal—military force is the best deterrent to aid political negotiation. We are very fortunate that my noble friend Lord Howe is leading this debate. He is one of the best versed in this subject in the House. I would like to reiterate the comments of my friend the noble Lord, Lord West, and of the noble Lord, Lord Robertson, that holding this debate, in this House, is essential in these dangerous times. When I heard of the timing,

within five working days, I tried my best to get the debate delayed to a more suitable date, but I did not succeed. But I say to my noble friend the Minister that we should have a full-blooded defence debate at an appropriate time—in government time—in the early autumn. So much will have happened by then that a full debate will be justified, and those who could not be here today will be able to attend.

The Minister knows me well. I will never lose an opportunity to say that, given the unquestionable economic strength of this country, the Government must strongly increase their support for the key role of government: the defence of the realm.

5.32 pm

Lord Judd (Lab): My Lords, like my noble friend Lord Touhig, who made a particularly powerful speech today, I reflect it was Attlee and Bevin who, on behalf of Britain, played a crucial part in the creation of NATO. I am glad that, in Britain, there has been for a long time a broadly bipartisan approach to defence. While it was Attlee and Bevin who played a critical part, it was Churchill, in his characteristic way, who woke people up to the Iron Curtain descending across Europe.

I grew up in a politically and internationally active family. I was surrounded all the time by talk about current affairs. My parents were among those who, in the 1930s, had become deeply concerned about the rise of Hitler and Nazism, and were passionately committed to the concept of collective defence. In 1947, after the Second World War, they went to a conference in Prague about the UN. I was 12 at the time, but I remember their return and how deeply concerned and worried they were about what was threatening the future of Europe. My father had known Jan Masaryk a little. When Masaryk fell from that building, it did not really matter to them whether he committed suicide or whether he was pushed. What mattered was the significance, in personal terms and in political terms, of what had happened. There was a funereal and deeply disturbed atmosphere at home.

We must look forward and we must be prepared. That is where I want to take issue with the noble Lord, Lord Cormack; somebody with whom I normally find myself in agreement. Of course we should have deep friendship for the Russian people, and we must never forget what they suffered in the Second World War. However, I urge the noble Lord to balance his remarks, at least a little. We cannot overlook the realities of the newly emergent Russia under Putin.

Consider Ukraine and Crimea. For several years, I was a rapporteur to the Council of Europe on the conflict in Chechnya. I was one of the first politicians from outside the region to visit Grozny after that terrible bombardment at the end of the 1990s. I shall never forget that experience. It was as though the town had been nuked: the whole prospect was of shells of buildings, with just a few people crawling around in the rubble trying to make a future of it. The ruthlessness of the Russians in Chechnya was sickening. It was also politically daft, because it was totally counterproductive. There were different people in Chechnya; there were indeed ideological extremists, but there were very large numbers of people who just wanted their dignity and

independence. The way the Russians handled themselves under Putin's leadership drove people towards the extremists. I always regretted that the Labour Government of the time, and others since, never took seriously enough what the Russians were doing to that part of the world, and the consequences for world security as the radicalised people moved out as fighters across the world.

We also have to think of the assassination of journalists and the repression of opposition. We have to think of the town of Salisbury, here in our midst, and of London. This was not just a ruthless, cruel attempted assassination, but a trail of radioactive substances across our country and capital, putting our own people at risk. We are not dealing with a comfortable third nation when dealing with Russia under Putin. We have to be resolute and strong in facing up to that and to the dangers inherent in the situation. As I grew up in an internationally involved family, I inevitably brought that perspective to all I found myself doing. We must remember Hungary in the 1950s, and Czechoslovakia in the 1960s.

When we still had Service Ministers, I was privileged to be Minister for the Navy. I once had an interesting conversation with the head of naval intelligence; I liked him, and he came regularly to brief me. One day, he came in with a copy of *Pravda*, and said, "Minister, I thought you would like to see this". Its centre pages were devoted to "Cold War Warrior Judd". What had incensed the chief of the Russian Navy was that I was talking about the rate at which the Russians were launching submarines. I hope my noble friend Lord Cormack will remember that, in the new Russia, under its present leadership, we have people who were very much involved in that age.

To go back to the noble Lord, Lord Cormack, we made one big strategic mistake in foreign policy. At the time when Soviet communism was collapsing and Gorbachev was trying to grapple with the situation, we should have thought then about a European security pact. Things might have been very different if we had moved in to support the reasonable people in Russia at that time in how they were going to move from being a totalitarian state to a live, democratic society with human rights. It was not going to happen automatically; it needed a tremendous amount of imagination and thought.

A debate of this kind can turn into a nostalgic experience. What matters is this great organisation NATO, which, when I was in the services and certainly later in life when I was a Defence Minister, was absolutely taken for granted. We were part of it and everything we were doing was in that context. We can turn this into a debate about the past, but what matters, as several noble Lords have said, is the future, and the challenges that lie ahead: how will NATO be relevant and play the part that it should?

One of those challenges is of course global terrorism. That reality plays into our own society and the insecurity within Britain itself. How we handle that without actually destroying a society that is worth protecting is a tremendous challenge to political leadership and vision: how do we get the balance right? Another challenge is Russia—I am glad the noble Lord, Lord Cormack, mentioned it—and China. These are the

challenges, and NATO will prove itself by how it responds. I must say, to have a former Secretary-General of NATO—of whom I have always been an admirer—in our midst and participating in this debate is really rather telling.

I want to finish on this: I do not find myself convinced by the percentage argument. I remember that, when I was a Foreign Office Minister, the then Secretary of State, the noble Lord, Lord Owen, had been participating in a big Cabinet debate about percentages. We had not been fulfilling the percentage that had been targeted, and he and others in Cabinet had won a commitment that we were going to meet those targets. He came to me and said, "Frank, we won". Then he looked at me and said, "Frank, you do not look terribly excited, but you are rather sound on defence. Why?" I said, "Because I can think immediately of all the people who will relax and say, 'Ah, the pressure is off'". I thought of the extravagances that would continue—and there were extravagances in the services—and the absence of the pressure to make sure we were prioritising what we needed to do and getting on with it. We have to spend a sufficient amount, or else we waste all the resources we spend by having an inefficient, ineffective defence structure. The first issue is to establish the challenge, what the task is, and to fire people with why we must commit to it—this is particularly vital in a democracy. Then we have to spend what is necessary to meet that challenge.

5.47 pm

Earl Attlee (Con): My Lords, I am grateful to the Minister for so skilfully introducing today's debate. He has painted a rosy picture, and in many respects, he is entitled to, because there is a good story to be told. As noble Lords have observed, the UK has a record to be proud of, and I am sure we will continue to be a stalwart supporter of NATO. I agree with everything that my noble friend has said—in particular, his assertion that the importance of NATO is increasing. The noble Lord, Lord West of Spithead, touched on the risk of war. He contrasted our naval military situation at the end of the Cold War with our parlous situation now. Being ill prepared for the unexpected—the noble Lord, Lord Patten, referred to dogs that bark in the night—is a sure recipe for being confronted by unexpected conflict. I have said before that at some point, we will get our posterior kicked hard. If the noble Lord, Lord West, cannot succeed in getting the British public to understand that point, I have no chance.

I have some humble, direct experience of NATO. In the halcyon days of winter 1997-98, when the noble Lord, Lord Robertson, was Secretary of State for Defence, I was serving with Sixth Battalion, REME, on Operation Lodestar with SFOR. I can assure the House that my role was very junior indeed—however, it shows that we in this House have experience at all levels. During that operation from time to time, I would travel down from Šipovo to Split. Noble Lords should not underestimate how much pleasure it gave all of us to see yet another house with its roof back on each time we went along the main supply route. It was the security and stability that NATO provided that made this possible.

[EARL ATTLEE]

Not everything in the NATO garden is rosy. In his excellent speech, the noble Lord, Lord Robertson, suggested three or four reasons why NATO has endured. I would suggest another: economics. Each NATO state would have to expend far more on defence than now, only to achieve less in terms of deterrent and security.

I think we all agree that Trump has a valid point about some members not paying their club fees. The most obvious candidate for criticism in this respect is Germany, and I was grateful for the comments made by my noble friend the Minister on that point. Sadly, it is not Germany's only disappointing policy; she has carefully surrounded herself with what many term as Article 5 buffer states, then gaily signs up to the Nord Stream 2 pipeline project, which will leave other vulnerable countries horribly exposed to interruptions in energy supplies.

Like my noble friend Lord Patten, I am bound to say that Turkey is also a cause of concern on a number of fronts. I hope that we can succeed in keeping that country on the course of democracy. In this context, I remind the House of the comments of the noble Lord, Lord Robertson, regarding the need for a free press. The noble Lord, Lord Bilimoria, mentioned the air defence problems.

Some noble Lords have touched on Brexit in the context of NATO and I am sure that they are right to do so. However, while the EU will never have anything like the role of NATO, not least because it does not include the United States, it should not be underestimated how much work NATO does by means of its standardisation agreements—STANAGs. There are about 1,300 STANAGs in existence. When I was running an NGO in Rwanda in 1995, we conducted a joint logistic operation with the Canadian component of UNAMIR. One of my team asked me for a relevant telephone number and without looking up, I replied: "Last page of the operation order, look under the heading 'Command and Signal'". My team was very surprised at my understanding of the Canadian staff work until I explained that this was a standard NATO orders format—in other words, a STANAG.

The point is that you can have a military operation under EU political direction and control, but it will nevertheless be run under NATO technical standards and NATO standard operating procedures. There is nothing else, and it would be pointless to develop anything else when we have the NATO procedures. So I cannot see why, post Brexit, we could not contribute to an EU military operation if it was in the UK's wider interests and if we had a say in developing the policy. I do not see that as much of a change because there never was an absolute obligation on the UK to contribute to any EU operation. It would be very odd if, in the event of a European crisis in which the US did not want to get involved, the EU did not involve or consult the UK. It is also hard to think of a potential EU military operation where the UK would not be able to provide some crucial capability, be it in carrier strike, nuclear submarines, combat air power or strategic airlift—I could go on.

Many noble Lords have touched on how we should handle Russia. I agree that we could have handled Russia better during the post-Cold War era, while we ought to understand that the map of the world in the Kremlin is very different to the map that we look at. Nevertheless, I heartily agree with the comments of the noble Lord, Lord Touhig, about the characteristics of President Putin: he is leading his country to ruin by wasting its meagre economic resources on strategic adventures.

My noble friend the Minister will once again skilfully and convincingly trot out the statistics to show that we are doing very well in terms of defence effort and that a good measure is the percentage of GDP spent on defence. Of course, the weakness there is that it is not adjusted for the lower cost of running defence in a country such as India or China. However, the key point is that the fact that we are doing much better than most of our EU partners does not prove that we are doing anything like enough to meet or deter the threat.

What should we do? I make no apology for banging on about my next point, which builds on a point made by the noble Lord, Lord Touhig. If we cannot increase our defence capability, we should test and demonstrate that the capability we think we have really works. We can do that by means of medium- or even large-scale overseas deployment exercises. Yes, it would be expensive, but we would get a much greater effect than expenditure on a small increase in capability. In a crisis, our friends, allies and opponents would be in no doubt of our capability. On the other hand, if we have limited and untested capability, we surely have much less international clout and are less valuable to NATO.

5.55 pm

Baroness Smith of Newnham (LD): My Lords, I am delighted from these Liberal Democrat Benches to join the bipartisan support for NATO that has been expressed this afternoon. As other noble Lords have pointed out, NATO has enjoyed cross-party support for decades. My noble friend Lord Campbell of Pittenweem sends his apologies. He is a member of the bureau of the parliamentary assembly of NATO, and is therefore currently in Washington DC at the celebrations of the 70th anniversary of NATO. He would have spoken in this debate, and begs your Lordships' understanding of why he is not here.

It is perhaps timely to mention something that I would not normally do. I looked down the list of speakers and noted that not only am I the only Liberal Democrat speaking, I am the only woman Peer. I find it somewhat surprising that, while when NATO was created 70 years ago all the founding fathers were male, there has been so little interest among women Peers in participating today. That is markedly at odds with yesterday's debate about Yemen, when so much of the discussion was led by women Peers, and people commented on the fact that women and children were the most vulnerable people in Yemen.

Although we have talked about NATO in quite abstract terms, a crucial thing to remember is the importance of the peace that has been secured. It matters not only to policymakers and politicians but

to ordinary citizens, who for many generations have not had to think about this country going to war. Certainly, my father and his generation felt the importance of the ending of military service: he did not have to go through it, and peace seemed to have been secured. I suggest that that was secured through the twin tracks of NATO and the European Union.

It is a pleasure to participate in a debate where there is, in many ways, so much agreement. The disagreements have been on points of detail rather than substance, and, as the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Portsmouth pointed out, this is an ideal opportunity to celebrate, because peace on our continent is so important: it should be valued and never taken complacently. I will come back to that point at the end.

As several noble Lords have pointed out, NATO is the most successful alliance in history. The noble Lords, Lord West of Spithead, Lord Judd and Lord Touhig, reminded us of the vital role of the United Kingdom in setting up this alliance—again, in marked contrast to the European project, where the United Kingdom always sat somewhat on the sidelines. With NATO we were at the forefront, urging its creation, very much led by a Labour Government, with Clement Attlee and Ernest Bevin playing key roles. It is hugely important that the Labour Benches, as well as the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats, take the defence of our realm seriously. It is clear that the Labour Benches in this House take defence seriously, as does the shadow Secretary of State. I hope that the Leader of the Official Opposition also takes defence seriously.

The American dimension has always been crucial to NATO, even if it was the United Kingdom that had to persuade the Americans in the first place. During the Cold War, Josef Joffe referred to NATO as “Europe’s American pacifier”. As several noble Lords have said, Lord Ismay’s point about keeping the Americans in Europe was crucial. However, over decades we have heard that the Europeans do not contribute enough; they do not pay enough or pull their weight. It is very easy in 2019 to think that the criticisms are unusual, and that Donald Trump’s insistence that the Europeans need to stand up and be counted and double their expenditure comes from him because he is a bit of a maverick. But this is not the exception; it is what we have heard from American leaders at least since the late 1960s. In many ways there is a sense of *déjà vu*; essentially, the Europeans have been seen to be free-riding on American security.

In his article of 1994, Josef Joffe argued that, in the post-Vietnam world, liberals—an odd word in an American context—and the new right had begun to come together and,

“have unintentionally joined hands in a new-found resentment of Western Europe. Both believe that West European countries long ago acquired the resources to defend themselves. Both resent the West Europeans’ security parasitism”.

So Donald Trump is not entirely new in thinking that the Europeans do not step up to the plate.

During the Cold War, the idea of the United States leaving the continent of Europe was, of course, unthinkable. So every time the Americans said, “Please step up to the plate”, the Europeans said, “We will, as

long as we can endeavour to have our own European security identity and autonomy”. That always drew the reaction of, “No, no, that’s not what we meant. We want you to pay more but we don’t want you to be autonomous”. On each occasion during the Cold War, it was clear that the American pacifier would remain.

With the end of the Cold War, the future of NATO and America’s ongoing presence in Europe looked to change. There was an expectation that there needed to be a fundamental reappraisal of the alliance. Yet that never fundamentally happened, so in 2019 we have a NATO that is still dominated by European member states, most of which do not yet pay their 2% of GDP towards defence expenditure.

Like the noble Lord, Lord Judd, I think we need to be a little bit careful about using percentages when thinking about defence expenditure. The Liberal Democrats, like the other parties, have committed to the NATO commitment of 2%. Yet we need to think about what is being spent. The House has already heard that some of the 2% goes on pensions, not just for military veterans but for retired civil servants as well. Should that really be part of the 2%? There is a question about what the 2% is formally allowed to be spent on, under the NATO rules, but we also need to think about what goes into it and look at procurement. We need to think about whether the 2% should be focused more on current commitments and less on pensions and about what our procurement procedures look like. Are they fit for purpose? Is Her Majesty’s Government getting value for money? I have asked the Minister this on various occasions, but I might just ask him again. Is our 2% well spent? We are delighted that it is being spent, but is it being spent correctly? As the noble Lord, Lord Judd, asked, what are we procuring for; what provisions are we making?

As other noble Lords asked, how far are we looking towards cyber as part of our NATO commitment? We clearly already have offensive cyber, but how far is that in our thinking? If, as the Prime Minister has suggested, the United Kingdom wants to play a leading role in NATO, how far are we going to lead on cyber? Do the Government already have an agenda for the leaders’ meeting that will take place in this country in December? It is all very well to say that the UK wants to play a leading role, but for decades we said the same about the European Union, and that never happened. Our record on NATO is much stronger, but there is nevertheless always the danger that rhetoric will not be met by reality.

NATO has clearly been a success. It is a community of values—democracy, human rights and the rule of law—as the noble Lord, Lord Robertson, made clear. And yet, as the noble Lord, Lord Touhig, pointed out, there are question marks over some of its members. He identified Turkey, but there are also EU member states whose approach to human rights, press freedom, the rule of law and the role of judges might come into question. If we are, as Jens Stoltenberg put it, an “alliance of friends”, are we critical friends? Can we be critical friends? Are we doing enough to make sure that our alliance of 29 is working in the same direction? Can we persuade Turkey to look elsewhere when procuring equipment?

[BARONESS SMITH OF NEWNHAM]

Finally, I fully concur with the Minister's comment that it is vital to educate those who do not even remember the Cold War, far less the Second World War, who do not appreciate that peace cannot be taken for granted and who might be tempted to think that NATO does not matter. It is a source of great regret to me that those of us who are passionate advocates of European integration failed over the years to make people understand the importance of the integration process as a peace project. It would be catastrophic if, as a country, we became complacent about the peace that has been brought about by NATO. It is vital that we keep talking about NATO, that we keep contributing to it and that we make sure that future generations benefit from it as we all have done.

6.06 pm

Lord Tunncliffe (Lab): My Lords, I thank the noble Earl, Lord Howe, for introducing this debate and the many noble Lords who have participated in it. It has been wide-ranging, and it is therefore inevitable I will repeat some points.

I am honoured to take part in today's debate on the 70th anniversary of the founding of NATO. Over the past 500 years, the average lifespan of a collective defence alliance has been 15 years. That is why NATO's anniversary is so impressive, and why it has been described as one of the most successful defence treaties in history. Against the backdrop of the ongoing Brexit chaos, the alliance remains the cornerstone of the UK's defence policy and our collective security, and will become even more important as we leave the European Union and face new threats in the years to come.

For the Labour Party, NATO's 70th anniversary is an extra special celebration. It was the leadership of Clement Attlee, and his Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin, that was so instrumental in setting up the alliance in 1949. When Bevin moved the Motion in the other place to approve the North Atlantic Treaty which established NATO, he called it, "one of the greatest steps for peace".

He went on:

"In co-operation with like-minded peoples, we shall act as custodians of peace and as determined opponents of aggression, and shall combine our great resources and great scientific and organisational ability, and use them to raise the standard of life for the masses of the people all over the world".—[*Official Report*, Commons, 12/5/1949; col. 2022.]

Bevin stressed that the purpose of this pact was to act as a deterrent. It sent a message to potential adversaries that NATO's members were not,

"a number of weak, divided nations",—[*Official Report*, Commons, 12/5/1949; col. 2017.]

but a united front, bound together in the common cause of collective self-defence. To this day, this common cause is sought through peaceful settlement and collective responsibility for action. Article 1 strongly articulates the need for peaceful resolution to disputes, while Article 5 underlines how an armed attack against one, "shall be considered an attack against them all".

Today, the original 12 NATO members have grown to 29. Along with its central role of ensuring the security of the North Atlantic area, NATO also supports

global security by working with partners across the world. In non-combat missions in Afghanistan it provides advice and training to security forces, while Operation Active Endeavour seeks to deter terrorist activity in the Mediterranean. More than 800 members of the UK Armed Forces are also stationed in the Baltic states as part of a NATO mission to reassure allies and deter aggressors.

NATO allies are committed to spending a minimum of 2% of their GDP on defence, and it is right that we encourage all allies to meet the NATO guidelines, as the 2014 Wales summit communiqué made clear. However, the UK is barely scraping over the line when it comes to its own level of defence spending. In recent years, the UK's defence expenditure to NATO has included several items that had not been included previously, such as the addition of pensions to the 2% target; Labour did not include them when we were in government.

We must recognise that years of government cuts have severely affected the UK's military capability. Recruitment across the board is in free fall, with some front-line British Army battalions down by one-third. The 1st Battalion Scots Guards is 34% below its workforce requirement, while the 2nd Battalion The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment is 31% below its target strength. This is unsurprising since the National Audit Office found in December that Capita, which has managed recruitment for the Armed Forces since 2012, has consistently missed Army targets, with a shortfall ranging from 21% to 45% each year. The Government's decision to outsource recruitment to the company has been a total failure. Morale across the Armed Forces has also declined during the past decade, dropping from 66% to 51% for Royal Marines officers, and the Ministry of Defence has said that its equipment plan faces an affordability gap of between £7 billion and £15 billion.

It is impossible to suggest that this lack of investment and care for our forces, as well as uncertainty about spending commitments, does not undermine the UK's role in NATO. How can the UK be a key player in the alliance if questions about the long-term commitment to defence spending remain? If recruitment and morale are failing, and if the Ministry of Defence simply cannot afford the equipment it needs, I urge the Government to address these issues immediately.

As we look forward to the next 70 years for NATO, it is clear that it will need to adapt to new resurgent threats. Despite, at times, the isolationist and unpredictable actions of the US, the relationship between America and Europe remains incredibly important. It constitutes £3 billion a day in trade, and our countries share deep interests and values—especially a fundamental belief in democracy. This relationship provided vital protection for citizens in the face of the actions of the Soviet Union. It will continue to be important in the face of resurgent threats from Russia. In the last few years, Russia's aggressive stance has repeatedly attacked our rule-based international system with abhorrent disregard and self-interest. This was shown through its disgraceful and illegal annexation of Crimea and Donbass in 2014, and in the reckless poisonings in Salisbury last year. These actions have led to a renewed focus on the immediate security of the alliance and the need to secure NATO's eastern border.

In government, Labour would engage with NATO to see how it could maximise security and dialogue inside and outside the alliance area, as well as using membership to promote democracy and human rights. We would also want to examine how NATO and the UN could interact and operate together more effectively on conflict prevention and peace operations.

Technology is also opening up whole new dimensions for warfare. Cyber remains a huge task for the alliance, but it has taken some welcome steps. At the Brussels summit in 2018 the allies agreed to set up a new cyberspace operations centre, and cyberattack can now trigger an Article 5 response. As NATO also strengthens its co-operation with the EU on cyberdefence, it represents a key area where the UK must continue to co-ordinate action with our European partners after Brexit. We must not allow the UK leaving the EU to limit our security and defence co-operation with important allies, especially when it is in our interest.

AI will also be at the heart of most future cutting-edge technologies, in both the military and civilian worlds. Machine learning will enable new modes of warfare, including various forms of autonomous and semi-autonomous weaponry. The country that invests earliest and most aggressively may end up in a position of military supremacy. Camille Grand, NATO's assistant secretary-general for defence investment, said that he viewed artificial intelligence in the broad context of new and disruptive technologies, adding:

"Nobody has fully assessed how much it's going to change the way we do military operations. Is AI going to be a tool to assist in decisions, or is AI going to allow for more autonomous systems to operate?"

To answer these questions we must explore how NATO and the UN can work together to develop an international governance framework to provide oversight of the use of AI by the military, especially the ethical and moral implications of autonomous weapons. The stronger the position we take now, the more likely that AI will be used as a global public good.

On its 70th anniversary, NATO's success is undisputed. Having seen it secure seven decades of peace and stability, Labour will ensure that it remains the cornerstone of the UK's defence policy in the years to come, as it adapts to maximise security, pursue dialogue and promote human rights as warfare changes far beyond Attlee and Bevin's comprehension.

6.17 pm

Earl Howe: My Lords, this has been a fascinating, wide-ranging and constructive debate, and I have been very firmly struck by the support which our great NATO alliance commands in your Lordships' House in its 70th year. I feel sure I will not be alone in finding that enormous and enduring fund of good will both heartening and reassuring. I am grateful to all noble Lords who have spoken for sharing their knowledge and experience of defence and security policy, and of NATO in particular. In expressing support for the alliance, it is perhaps unsurprising that a number of contributors chose to home in on the theme of resources and defence spending among NATO allies. The noble Lords, Lord Robertson and Lord West, spoke of the need for allies to channel those budgets wisely to deliver effective military capability.

Allies have committed to spend 2% of GDP on defence by 2024: that commitment was repeated at last July's NATO summit. The UK has made it clear that the 2% commitment should be seen as a floor, not a ceiling, but equally I do not believe we should fixate on percentages. As the noble Lords, Lord Robertson and Lord Judd, said, it is about looking at what the threats are and then at how we have the capabilities to deal with them, making sure that those capabilities are properly financed and supported. I understand the call from my noble friend Lord Sterling that we in this country should spend more on defence. In the UK, we spend a minimum of 2% of GDP on defence; we also meet the target of spending 20% of our defence budget on new equipment and associated R&D. We are forecast to increase the proportion of our GDP spent on defence in 2018-19 and 2019-20, after the October 2018 Budget announcement. We should appreciate that the resultant figure will remain considerably above the 2% benchmark.

The noble Baroness, Lady Smith, criticised some of the areas of spending we count under the defence heading. I am sure she will know, but will not mind my repeating, that it is NATO that determines the definitions for categorising defence spending, not the UK. Like other NATO allies, the UK regularly updates its approach to ensure it is categorising defence spending fully in accordance with the NATO guidelines. We did this during the SDSR following machinery-of-government changes, as well as to reflect the changing nature of defence spending over time.

The noble Lord, Lord Robertson, the noble Baroness, Lady Smith, and my noble friend Lord Patten, among other speakers, emphasised the importance of fairer burden sharing between allies. We can reasonably argue that this is a case of a glass nearly half full. Allies are making significant progress on burden sharing. The Secretary-General has calculated that non-US allies will spend an additional \$100 billion between 2016 and 2020, increasing to over \$350 billion by 2024, and eight allies will be spending 2% this year. We welcome the growing number of allies that have made commitments to meeting the 2% target by 2024, but there is more to be done. We cannot ignore the fact that some allies are spending less than 1.5% of GDP on defence, and three of these are spending less than 1%. I assure the House that we will continue to work with allies to ensure that defence investment is prioritised and sustained.

This is not, however, spending for the sake of spending. It must be considered with the other aspects of alliance burden sharing. That includes cash; capabilities, or what capabilities allies assign to the alliance; and commitments, in other words the NATO operations and missions that allies contribute to. That is why the pledge also includes agreement that:

"Increased investments should be directed towards meeting", NATO "capability priorities", and that allies should, "display the political will to provide required capabilities and ... forces when they are needed".

The noble Lord, Lord West, referred to the need to maintain complementarity between NATO and the EU in a defence context, a theme echoed by the noble Lord, Lord Bilimoria. The UK's vision is of every European nation stepping up to modern security challenges, taking responsibility, sharing the burden

[EARL HOWE]

and investing in our shared security. We must have a united, modernised and fully resourced NATO, able to fulfil its crucial collective defence role and taking a comprehensive approach to Euro-Atlantic defence and security. We need deep security and defence partnerships between like-minded and capable nations, strengthening co-ordination and interoperability and underpinning our work in multilateral organisations. We also need a globally competitive and outward-facing European defence industrial and technological base, driving innovation and delivering the capabilities that Europe needs for its security.

There is frequent discussion on the theme of EU strategic autonomy. We agree that Europe needs to do more to improve its own security and that the EU can play a valuable supporting role, whether using its political weight and economic levers or supporting member states in countering hybrid tactics, building resilience and developing vital defence capabilities and interoperability.

Lord West of Spithead: Does the Minister not think there are real dangers in the route the EU is going down, with PESCO, the European Defence Fund and the fact that, in our negotiations with it, on a couple of occasions now we have been stonewalled when it comes to UK industry being involved in things—and one can think separately of Galileo? Is it doing the best for the defence of us all in a European or NATO context?

Earl Howe: I very much agree. We find the concept of EU or European strategic autonomy problematic if, as it appears to be, it drives an EU-exclusive or enclosed, institutionalised approach to security and defence that shuts out key strategic partners and could duplicate or undermine NATO. We see that exclusive approach prevailing in EU defence initiatives such as the European Defence Fund and PESCO, which otherwise have the potential to boost, in a coherent way, much-needed investment and support to capability development. That is exactly why we will continue to argue in favour of an open and flexible approach, to ensure that European security benefits from the capabilities and resources that the EU's closest strategic partners can bring to bear.

My noble friend Lord Patten and the noble Lords, Lord Tunnicliffe and Lord Touhig, all spoke powerfully and with authority about Russia, undoubtedly NATO's most significant long-term challenge. I listened with great respect too to the noble Lord, Lord Judd, on this topic. The November incident in the Black Sea has shown vividly how serious the Russia challenge has become and how robust we must be in response. Noble Lords will be well aware that NATO does not seek confrontation and poses no threat to Russia, but recent Russian actions, including the Black Sea incident, have confirmed that NATO's dual-track approach to Russia, of strengthened deterrence and defence backed up by hard-headed dialogue, is justified. We reaffirmed this approach at the Brussels summit last July, and will do so again at the foreign ministerial meeting in Washington this month.

As my noble friend said, Russia will continue to look for different ways to test NATO and its allies and partners. In both words and deeds, we need to be

prepared to respond, and that is why NATO is already adapting its political and military posture. We are committed to driving forward efforts to modernise NATO, as I mentioned in my opening speech, enabling the alliance to respond to the threats it faces more effectively and with more agility. To test that agility and to enhance our contribution, as I am sure my noble friend Lord Attlee will have observed, the UK deployed some 3,300 personnel, as well as ships and planes, to Norway for NATO's biggest exercise in 2018; exercise Trident Juncture had some 50,000 troops from 31 NATO and partner nations. This delivered undoubtedly a strong signal that allies can operate at an impressive scale and move across Europe in the event of a crisis. Again, my noble friend will be interested to know that, in spring and summer this year, we will demonstrate a robust posture in the Baltic region by our participation in the US-led BALTOPS exercise, Baltic Protector and a range of other military activities. We have also deployed 800 Royal Marines to Norway in 2019 to take part in cold-weather training. In March last year, a Royal Navy submarine took part in ICEX with the US Navy for the first time in 10 years, and the Navy will mount regular under-ice deployments in the years to come. There is much else that we are doing to up the tempo of our activity as a proportionate response to an assertive Russian posture.

We are also constantly looking at how we can build other structures that complement NATO as the bedrock of our defence. Last June, the Defence Secretary signed the comprehensive memorandum of understanding establishing the joint expeditionary force with our eight partners in that agreement. This year, the JEF signature activity will be the Baltic protector deployment, a large-scale maritime and amphibious exercise in the Baltic Sea, as I mentioned, between May and July 2019.

My noble friend Lord Cormack spoke with his customary sincerity about the need to ensure that we improve relations with Russia. On dialogue, NATO should continue to engage with Russia when it is appropriate and in our interests to do so, so that we can clearly communicate our positions. Periodic focused and meaningful dialogue through the NATO-Russia Council provides a means to avoid misunderstanding, miscalculation and unintended escalation, and to increase transparency and predictability.

In addition, to the NATO-Russia Council, we continue to use other fora, such as the OSCE and direct mil-mil links, to mitigate the risk of escalation and to voice concerns over Russian behaviour, including its failure to uphold treaty obligations. However, I have to tell my noble friend that, as the noble Lord, Lord Judd, reminded us, there can be no return to business as usual until there is clear, constructive change in Russia's actions that demonstrate compliance with international law and its international obligations.

A number of noble Lords, including my noble friend, Lord Cormack and the noble Lord, Lord Bilimoria, mentioned China. It is instructive to remind ourselves of the words of the NATO Secretary-General in February this year:

“NATO and China have already worked together to combat piracy off the coast of Somalia. And our militaries are in regular contact. But China's rise also presents a challenge. One example is

of course the concern many Allies have expressed about China's increasing investment in critical infrastructure, such as 5G. We have to better understand the size and the scale of China's influence, what it means for our security. And we have to address it together".

I would add that from the UK's perspective China is an important economic partner. We do not expect to agree with the Chinese Government on everything, but we strongly support China's greater integration into more of the world's key institutions and organisations as its global role and responsibilities grow. We are committed to our relationship with China, which enables both countries to benefit and also allows us to be frank with one another on areas where we disagree.

The noble Lords, Lord Touhig and Lord Bilimoria, spoke of the current difficulties in the relationship between the United States and Turkey. We have repeatedly raised our concerns at ministerial and official level about the proposed Turkish purchase of S-400 missiles. Turkey is a valued NATO ally on the front line of some of the UK's and the alliance's most difficult security challenges, and we readily acknowledge that defence equipment procurement decisions are for individual nations. However, all NATO allies have committed to reducing their dependence on Russian-sourced legacy military equipment, and we believe that the proposed purchase would pose real challenges for the interoperability of NATO systems.

The noble Lord, Lord Robertson, spoke of the importance of ensuring that United States leadership in NATO is maintained and encouraged, and the noble Lord, Lord Touhig, expressed similar views. It is true to say that the White House in recent years has sometime proved unpredictable in its pronouncements, but my noble friend Lord Sterling was quite correct: President Trump has been clear about his commitment to NATO and Article 5. At January's US missile defence review launch he confirmed that he was 100% behind the alliance. Those are not just words. We should recall that the United States continues to invest heavily in European security, spending \$6.5 billion on the European defence initiative in 2018-19. The US also provides a huge proportion of NATO collective defence capabilities, including some which are unique to the alliance, such as strategic bombers, full-spectrum naval forces and strategic intelligence. Thanks to the EDI budget, there were in 2018 approximately 6,850 US troops in Eucom, and EDI is only one of a range of different pots available to fund approximately 80,000 US troops in Europe. Since 2015, there has been more than a sixfold increase in funding available through the EDI.

I was prepared to say a little bit about cyberdefence. I will write to the noble Baroness, Lady Smith, about that as I am reminded that time is short.

Lord Robertson of Port Ellen: I know that the noble Earl will come to my somewhat critical comments about the lack of information on NATO from the Government, especially to parliamentarians, but I exempt him from some of that criticism because he is a shining example of what Ministers should be doing, given his early morning briefings of all-party groups of MPs. I should like to put that on the record but it does not exempt the rest of the Government

from a frankly pathetic effort in getting over information about what is happening in terms of British-NATO relations.

Earl Howe: I am grateful to the noble Lord for his comments but am sure that no one listening to his speech will have overlooked a powerful point he made about government messaging in general. I had intended not to comment too much on that theme but rather to go away and report back to him on what we can and should do across government to address his powerful points.

I should like to cover the issues raised by my noble friend Lord Jopling on shortcomings in NATO's internal financial management. NATO bodies have been strengthening the areas of internal control and risk management, as identified by IBAN audits as areas of weakness to address. The Secretary-General has taken the opportunity of the functional review to do the same at the HQ, and the nations agreed the additional resources for him to do so in December 2018. The UK expects an enhanced internal control and risk management team to be established by autumn this year. Unfortunately, there is currently no consensus among allies on the implementation of the IBAN's financial performance audit recommendations, which makes progress slow. However, I understand that NATO is looking to create a resource executive function—more or less a chief financial officer role—and is due to submit a recommendation on this matter to the North Atlantic Council this summer.

In my opening contribution to this debate, I quoted NATO's current Secretary-General, Jens Stoltenberg. I will finish with the words of one of his illustrious predecessors. Dirk Stikker served at a tumultuous time more than half a century ago, with the Cold War at its height and the Cuban missile crisis taking the world to the brink of nuclear confrontation. He was also a great friend to the UK, having previously served many years as Dutch ambassador. Long after he stood down, he reflected in his memoirs on why NATO continues to play so vital a role in world affairs. He concluded:

"However great a nation, it never has all the pieces on the checkerboard. The checkerboard is vast. And the game without end."

NATO's achievements over the past 70 years have been remarkable. It has forged its member nations' individual strengths into an alliance sufficiently formidable to deter all adversaries—those then and now who would impose their own norms of intolerance and authoritarianism on the free world. NATO has made an enormous difference—whether helping to end the Cold War, stopping terror or bringing reassurance to the vulnerable across the globe from Bosnia to Operation Ocean Shield in the Gulf of Aden. Sometimes this has meant conspicuous heroism on the battlefield or in the conflict zone, and sometimes quiet but tenacious work behind the scenes or under the oceans. As the right reverend Prelate so eloquently put it, NATO is not only a military alliance but a community of values—values that endure. Whatever form it has taken, NATO, as my noble friend Lord Attlee witnessed at first hand, has always done its work supremely well. So today we take the opportunity to pay tribute to the alliance and,

[EARL HOWE]
in particular, we say thank you to all those men and women over the past seven decades who have served NATO with fortitude and honour. We owe them much. We owe them our peace.

Motion agreed.

House adjourned at 6.39 pm.

Grand Committee

Tuesday 2 April 2019

Arrangement of Business *Announcement*

3.30 pm

The Deputy Chairman of Committees (Lord Haskel)
(Lab): My Lords, if there is a Division in the House, the Committee will adjourn for 10 minutes.

Aid: Anti-Corruption Measures *Question for Short Debate*

3.30 pm

Asked by Lord McInnes of Kilwinning

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they take to ensure that anti-corruption measures are supported as part of (1) aid to developing countries, and countries recovering from natural disasters, and (2) the reconstruction of former conflict areas.

Baroness Stedman-Scott (Con): My Lords, every minute of the 60 for this debate is allocated, which is great. I therefore respectfully ask that everybody adhere to their time slot, which would be much appreciated.

Lord McInnes of Kilwinning (Con): My Lords, it is a great privilege to open this debate. I thank other noble Lords for participating in such numbers, even though it has an impact on everyone's timing. I also thank the House of Lords Library for the research briefing we all received, which I am sure everyone agrees is excellent. I am especially pleased that today we have the privilege of my noble friend the Minister finding time in his busy schedule to respond to the debate on behalf of the Government.

I begin by making absolutely clear that I am a passionate advocate of the Government's commitment to investing 0.7% of GDP in international development. It is now more important than ever that the UK is seen to be at the forefront of international development, and I echo the ambition of my right honourable friend in the other place, Andrew Mitchell, that the UK must be a development superpower as we find our way forward in a post-European Union environment. Too often, corruption in recipient countries is used by some as a reason for the UK to reduce its aid programmes. It is my view that it is our responsibility to try to eliminate corruption in recipient countries, whether at a governmental level or, as is often the case, at an endemic cultural level, and not to stand aside from it.

I very much welcome the Government's joined-up corruption strategy, especially the focus on joint working resulting from the 2016 anti-corruption conference and the five-year plan from 2017 to 2022. However, while not wishing in any way to underestimate the importance of the Government's international efforts,

I should like to focus this afternoon on the country-by-country strategy that I believe is necessary to deal with corruption in much of the developing world.

My interest is in seeing the UK use its significant development muscle to ensure that the corruption that blights so many of the developing countries we wish to support is reduced. This corruption does much to undermine the social and political contract necessary for developing countries to succeed. There is little point in our investing in the stability of these states if the populace do not have confidence in their state. It is also essential that our international development programmes have the flexibility to react to new types of corruption formed in reaction to natural disasters and post-conflict situations. All too often, this corruption manifests itself around the issues of internally displaced persons, refugees, human trafficking and the abuse of minorities.

I refer to my registered interests and to my visit last year to Baghdad with my noble friend Lady Anelay and the noble Lord, Lord Purvis of Tweed, as guests of the Iraqi Government. Time and time again, when speaking to young people, religious minorities, government Ministers and representatives of civic society, we were told that corruption was the greatest obstacle to reconstruction. From the ability of internally displaced people to return, to the ability of young people to get on and not have to think constantly of emigrating to North America or Europe, it was the insidious low-level corruption that follows war—as night follows day—that was raised with us. The Iraqi Government were trying their best to deal with the problem, but it was clear that there was an expectation that at least some of our development support should be directed towards supporting them in that task.

In Iraq and elsewhere, it is frequently minorities—for example, Christians and Yazidis in Iraq—who find corruption the biggest obstacle to remaining in their own country. Emigration then becomes the only option for many and, as the critical mass of the minority decreases, the corruption faced by the remaining minority increases. Corruption undoubtedly falls more heavily on minorities, and raises significant human rights issues. That is why an important part of the work that DfID should do is to develop a country-by-country strategy, identifying both victims and potential victims of low-level corruption, and how aid and partnership—working with the relevant Governments—can reduce pressure on these minorities. Day-to-day corruption, focused on specific minorities or certain geographical areas, can easily become a human rights issue, and I would be grateful if my noble friend would confirm that there is regular interaction between the various country desks in the FCO, human rights monitoring and DfID on these issues.

The report on overseas corruption by the International Development Committee in the other place clearly identifies that it is only through bespoke country plans that corruption can be dealt with at source. There is no one-size-fits-all strategy for corruption in any individual country; it needs to take into account the culture, customs, history and demographic make-up of any individual state. The department has correctly been praised by, for example, the U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre, for being able to focus a bespoke plan on countries.

[LORD MCINNES OF KILWINNING]

What progress has been made in producing new country-by-country anti-corruption strategies? I am disappointed that the last publication of a large number of country-by-country strategies was in 2013. I recognise and applaud the enormous strides the Government have made in supporting anti-corruption in Afghanistan, Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya and Tanzania. However, unless there are broader strategies beyond these countries, the department may lose reactive flexibility.

Likewise, there clearly needs to be a serious focus on low-level, day-to-day corruption, along with a requirement to reverse what can be a deeply embedded culture, which will take a long-term timescale. We are in danger of always looking at five-year cycles, and of short-termism when dealing with issues that have been embedded for many decades. Even in these unpredictable times, with the support of all major parties, DfID has an enviable position, in contrast to other departments, of being able to develop a long-term plan beyond the usual five-year cycle. Would the Minister reassure me that a longer-term approach can be used on anti-corruption methods in individual countries, beyond the five-year cycle?

We are all rightly proud that, through DfID, we as a country are available to help immediately after a natural disaster, or to help those fleeing conflict zones. As well as day-to-day, low-level corruption, there is a danger of any emergency aid programme being reactive and, in a fast-moving environment, that systems protecting programmes from corruption may not yet be in place. As part of disaster prevention, can bespoke strategies be identified for potential disasters in vulnerable and developing countries, so that on arrival in that country, British aid and emergency help may be prepared for any corruption endemic in that particular country?

I do not share the cynicism of some in this country about the benefit of the work DfID carries out. We have a humanitarian responsibility, and it is fundamentally in our own interests, to support developing countries across the world. It would be helpful, however, in dealing with the naysayers in the United Kingdom, if there was a clear country-by-country strategy on what corruption we are determined to remove from these countries.

I look forward to hearing from other noble Lords this afternoon. We have much to be proud of in all that DfID does, but we must move beyond just a commitment to 0.7%, to ensure that everything we do deals with the corruption that gets in the way of so much development work.

3.39 pm

Lord Anderson of Swansea (Lab): My Lords, I congratulate the noble Lord on his initiative and on his challenges, particularly on long-termism.

My concern is that, with so much evidence of serious corruption and malpractice, those in the field and on the front line will become demotivated, and the public—the taxpayers—will become demoralised and turn against development aid. There are many such stories. Last week, for example, I read of the position in Haiti. Ten years after the earthquake, little has changed and, after 18 years, PetroCaribe has become a vast cash machine: \$2.4 billion has just disappeared, at a time when there is so much need in that sad country.

Yet we in Europe should be hesitant about throwing stones at those in the developing world. For example, the Nordics top the league tables of the least corrupt countries in the world, but there is increasing evidence of their defences against corruption crumbling before the incoming tide of Russian dirty money. If a branch makes a healthy profit, why should the head office worry about it? Take Danske Bank; over €200 billion of questionable Russian money flowed through its Estonian branch. Last week, the biggest bank in the Baltics, Swedbank, was revealed to be the conduit for €135 billion of Russian and other ex-Soviet money.

How well do we do at combating this? How clean are our hands? At the risk of complacency, overall our record is good. We are just eighth in the Transparency International index. The anti-corruption strategy from 2017 to 2022 is impressive, showing a clear awareness of the problem domestically and internationally, and a determination to establish monitoring procedures. The noble Lord mentioned the problem of Iraq; I hope that when we turn to reconstruction in Syria, we will have learned some of the lessons from there. It is absurd that Russia is looking to the West to take a major role in reconstruction in Syria, having wreaked so much damage itself.

Most troubling of all is the claim trumpeted in the strategy document:

“We will put transparency at the heart of our approach to government. This will include continuing to champion the adoption of public registers of company beneficial ownership and working with the UK’s Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies to implement strengthened arrangements. It is our ambition to ensure all countries adopt public registers”.

Since then, an amendment has been moved in Parliament. We note, for example, that only after the Skripal outrage in Salisbury did the Government yield to all-party pressure and bring the overseas territories, such as the British Virgin Islands and others, into the net of a public register—to yelps of pain from the overseas territories. Equally, when faced with a similar all-party coalition in the other place to make the Crown dependencies have public registers, the Government unexpectedly withdrew a whole Bill, to which the all-party coalition had tacked the question of the Crown dependencies. If we believe that sunlight is the best disinfectant, and that we should set a great example ourselves, coming to the table with clean hands when we lecture the developing world, we should clearly look carefully at what we have done on transparency, with regard to the overseas territories and the Crown dependencies—Jersey, Guernsey and the Isle of Man—or we shall rightly be accused of hypocrisy. Dickens defined hypocrisy as a signpost that points the way to go but does not go there itself. We should be well aware of that danger. Our record is good, but there are omissions and problems of which we should be well aware.

3.45 pm

The Lord Bishop of Peterborough: My Lords, I am most grateful to the noble Lord, Lord McInnes, for raising this important Question. I draw attention to my non-financial interest as a vice-president of the Leprosy Mission. I hasten to add that, to the best of my knowledge, that excellent organisation has not been infected by the scourge of corruption.

However, all of us involved in third sector aid must be vigilant and realistic about the temptations even for those whose careers and lives are essentially altruistic. The diocese I serve used to have what the Anglican Communion calls a companion link with a diocese in a very poor area of a very poor African country, where corruption is rife at all levels. We found it extremely difficult to support church work, rural clinics, schools and so on without significant amounts of money going astray—despite our best efforts as required by the Finance Act 2010 and by our own ethical standards.

The Finance Act 2010 requires those giving money for charitable purposes to assure themselves that it is being spent as the donors intended. Although this is absolutely right, it makes it almost impossible for relatively small donors to give to anything other than large, well-managed appeals. The easy way out of this problem is to pull out of offering or providing aid in those contexts where corruption is most rife. On the small scale at which a parish, or even a diocese, operates, this might be the right and only option, unless we can afford to have our own people on the ground, which in any case adds a whole new layer of difficulty and potential for corruption.

Sadly, I suspect that the days of small organisations giving money for small projects in difficult areas may have to end. But on the scale of major NGOs and Governments, that approach will not do and cannot be countenanced. The sad fact is that the very poorest are the main victims of corruption. It is they who suffer and lose most, but they are also the ones who suffer even more if corruption is punished by the withholding of aid.

It is widely recognised, including by our Government and the United Nations, that we must design and deliver aid programmes so that corruption becomes as near to impossible as we can make it. I venture to hope that, as the Government and the larger NGOs address this issue, they will also consider how smaller charities and even individuals can safely offer aid and support to the sort of small-scale projects that can make a real difference to people but come under the radar of much of the policy-making in this area.

I am proud of our national 0.7% commitment to overseas aid, and of the wonderful work done by government, NGOs and faith bodies to serve and support the poorest people in the world. May we not put that noble task and responsibility at risk because of corruption, but instead lead the world, as we should, in finding effective ways to give aid that reaches the most needy people and communities.

3.48 pm

Baroness Anelay of St Johns (Con): My Lords, I congratulate my noble friend on securing this short debate. Of course, the Government have a statutory requirement to spend 0.7% of GNI on official development assistance. They have a duty to be accountable to the taxpayer for the appropriate and effective allocation of those funds to projects worldwide, but in the real world of delivering humanitarian aid, the challenges are to assess the extent and nature of corruption in the host country and how effectively we

can still deliver aid to those in dire need; and to judge if it can ever be in British interests to refuse aid or withdraw it once granted.

In June last year, the International Development Committee in another place highlighted concerns over whether money spent outside DfID is subjected to the same rigorous evaluation as that spent by the department. The chair, Stephen Twigg, said that spreading ODA across government created potential for new partnerships in aid delivery, which can be useful but also risked undermining its quality. What steps have the Government taken to ensure coherence across government in delivering aid overseas which takes account of the need for anti-corruption work in recipient countries and with what success?

Action on this matter is vital because we know that the British public are not quite as committed to the 0.7% pledge as most of us in Parliament are. That was recognised by Matthew Rycroft, Permanent Secretary at DfID on his appointment last year. He said that when you ask people why they do not support the 0.7% pledge,

“they say they don’t think it works ... Or they think the whole thing is corrupt and money never ends up where it should. Those are both ... criticisms and we need to address them”.

What progress does the Minister believe DfID has made in addressing those criticisms over the past year?

The very nature of DfID’s work means that its officials operate in some of the most difficult and dangerous conditions around the world, as in South Sudan or the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example. In South Sudan, civil war has raged for years and its Government seem to have no care for their peoples and treat the national treasury as a personal bank account. The level of corruption and disarray means that DfID cannot do capacity-building before allocating aid, as would be the “normal” way of its doing business. Cash transfers are used to provide health services and girls’ education that give them a minimum ability to function. The education is extremely basic, but it keeps girls at school and less likely to be married off at 11 years old. That is vital in a country with high levels of sexual and gender-based violence and early marriage. I hope the Government will continue to give full support to DfID’s programmes in South Sudan.

I also welcome our humanitarian presence in the DRC in the face of sporadic violence and continuous government corruption. Can my noble friend the Minister outline the anti-corruption work carried out by the UK there and how it co-operates with other international donors?

There is evidence that UK aid work in the DRC can succeed. When at the FCO, I visited La Pépinière in Kinshasa, an excellent DfID-supported project which focused on the economic empowerment of women and girls. Can my noble friend say what gender-specific projects are supported by DfID in the DRC today?

To add to all that, the DRC has now been hit by its worst ever outbreak of Ebola; it is the second-worst ever outbreak globally. Adding to the crisis, rebels in the region have begun attacking the clinics treating

[BARONESS ANELAY OF ST JOHNS]

Ebola sufferers. What is the Government's assessment of the aid they can give to those trying to contain the spread of the virus?

UK humanitarian work in countries such as South Sudan and the DRC demonstrates how important it is that international donors do not “walk away” but stay to deliver aid to those who need it and persist in both anti-corruption measures and capacity-building with host Governments who cannot, or will not, help their own peoples.

3.53 pm

Lord Alton of Liverpool (CB): My Lords, the World Bank identifies corruption as a major obstacle to ending extreme poverty by 2030 and its detrimental effect on the poorest 40% of people in developing countries. It is estimated that, every year, up to £2 trillion is lost globally to corruption.

My brief remarks will centre on the dangers of corruption in the post-conflict, post-ISIS Iraq referred to by the noble Lords, Lord McInnes and Lord Anderson, and on British aid to Pakistan—I should declare that I am co-chair of the Pakistani Minorities All-Party Group and visited Lahore and Islamabad last November.

On 11 October 2017, Ministers confirmed to me funding for 80 projects benefiting Yazidis and 171 benefiting Christian communities targeted by the ISIS genocide; £40 million had been earmarked for urgent humanitarian assistance and more than £25 million for UN stabilisation efforts. On their return to the region, 746,000 Iraqis from minority communities were meant to benefit from these Funding Facility for Stabilization projects managed by the United Nations Development Programme. Over subsequent months, news circulated that the money was not reaching the affected communities. One of the main reasons for this failure was corruption. NGOs drew this to the attention of the Government and I attended a meeting with Ministers at which the details of a phantom project were described.

At the end of 2017, in response to a freedom of information request, the Department for International Development refused to provide information describing how these projects were benefiting those minorities and how they were being implemented. DfID relied on several exceptions, saying that disclosure would or might prejudice relations between the United Kingdom, Iraq and international organisations or courts, and would or might prejudice the prevention or detection of crime. In reality, the information could easily have been disclosed without identifying any details that could jeopardise the various interests cited. As many NGOs assisting survivors in Iraq insist that the money does not reach the intended recipients, such a lack of transparency is extremely disturbing.

Retrospectively, DfID now uses independent monitoring, which should have been in place from inception, rather than coming into play months if not years after the projects began. Perhaps the Minister can tell us what the department's current assessment is of the situation in Iraq. What issues concerning corruption have been detected, how have they been addressed and what steps have been taken to address the issues identified by several NGOs and raised in 2018 in a letter to the

Government from Dr Russell Blacker on behalf of the National Caucus for the Persecuted Church acting on behalf of communities targeted by ISIS? This is public money and taxpayers are entitled to know the answers.

When comparable concerns about corruption in Iraq were raised with the US Administration, they responded with admirable urgency, transparency and openness, initiating internal inspector-general investigations into the final destination of US funds sent to the UNDP Funding Facility for Stabilization. The UNDP has itself initiated several internal investigations into allegations of corruption, and we should do the same.

A comparable challenge applies in Pakistan, which receives a staggering £383,000 of British taxpayers' money every single day—£2.8 billion over 20 years. The World Economic Forum identifies corruption as the third-greatest problem for companies doing business in Pakistan, after government bureaucracy and poor infrastructure. It affects all Pakistanis but it disproportionately affects vulnerable populations—the poor, women, and religious minorities. In its report *Equality in Aid*, the International Dalit Solidarity Network recommended that DfID should prepare vulnerability mapping tools, inclusion monitoring tools and methods for inclusive response programming, issues I have probed with the Minister in Questions for Written Answer. Two weeks ago, I sent him news reports that one of the top three DfID spending programmes in 2018-19, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Education Sector Programme, which secured £41 million, also needs to be carefully scrutinised. I know that the noble Lord, Lord Bates, has asked officials to do that. It is alleged that in several districts, money allocated to establish new educational institutions and refurbish schools was misappropriated and that these are phantom projects—ghost schools. How does the Minister intend to establish the facts? Waiting for NGOs or newspapers to report such cases simply is not good enough.

I therefore hope that today's debate will point us towards the far more rigorous and effective use of British resources. I am grateful to the noble Lord, Lord McInnes, for giving us the opportunity to raise these issues.

3.58 pm

Baroness Stroud (Con): My Lords, I thank my noble friend Lord McInnes for tabling this important debate. It goes without saying that the health of a nation's governance has a material impact on its prosperity. It is also clear from our work at the Legatum Institute—I refer to my interests as set out in the register—that the rule of law and strong institutions contribute significantly to economic growth. It should therefore not be surprising that, when hampered by corruption, a nation is not able to fulfil its true potential. According to the World Bank, the average income in countries with a high level of corruption is about a third of that in countries with a low level.

Corruption can take the form of small amounts of money—for example, a bribe to an official to speed up or approve an application—and we saw evidence of this in 2015 when 32 judges in Ghana were caught accepting money and even livestock in exchange for passing shorter sentences. It can also be the large and

more systemic misuse of public or private funds. Again, we saw this in Honduras when the former director of the Honduran Social Security Institute was accused of awarding \$200 million-worth of contracts to phantom companies.

If we want to see the nations and people we support through our aid budgets thrive, it is essential that anti-corruption measures are embedded and supported as part of our response to disaster relief and post-conflict reconstruction. Corruption hinders this development and rebuilding process, but the converse is also true. Eradicating corruption restabilises society, builds trust and strengthens the very institutions that support citizens. It creates an environment where entrepreneurship can flourish and people can build their own ways out of poverty, disaster zones and conflict. It also builds political trust where fragile nations can begin to build more stable Governments and even see healthy oppositions develop.

What does it take to stamp out corruption? Eradicating a practice that runs deep and, in many places, is cultural does not happen naturally. Reducing corruption takes deliberate action, supported by a combination of strong political will and credible leaders, effective institutions and cultural transformation.

The challenge is not insurmountable. Issues will be, in part, as we have heard from noble Lords, specific to the culture of each nation. However, countries can learn from the example of others where corruption has been successfully reduced. As mentioned, best practice shows us that strong leadership and a consistent message of intolerance towards breaking the law has a significant impact.

In Liberia, while there is a long way still to go, the post-war commitment of President Johnson Sirleaf to reducing corruption saw her suspending her own son, along with 46 other senior government officials, for failing to disclose his assets to Liberia's anti-corruption officials. This is strong messaging. Can the Minister outline what steps we are taking to support those leaders of fragile nations demonstrating the greatest commitment to eradicating corruption? This material was difficult to find and what I did find was evidence of how we are protecting DfID's budget but not of how we are driving out corruption in the nations to which we are giving money.

Just as strong and effective leadership is essential in the fight against corruption, so too is the building of effective institutions. In Hong Kong in the 1960s and 1970s, an exciting new era of growth was marred by significant widespread corruption. It was common for bribes to be required when applying for schools, housing and other public services. Even ambulance crews would ask for a bribe before collecting patients and a corrupt police force was turning a blind eye to, or even protecting, illegal activities. After increasing unrest and protest by the people, the independent commission against corruption was established. By creating an institution responsible for enforcing anti-corruption measures, Hong Kong has seen a remarkable shift and now, according to Transparency International, ranks as one of the least corrupt countries in the world. Can the Minister outline where we are supporting the building of anti-corruption institutions as a crucial part of our post-conflict strategy?

Just as strong leadership and the building of effective institutions are essential in the fight against corruption, so too is a change of culture. To create cultural transformation requires concerted effort. One of the ways in which South Korea, Estonia and Latvia have sought to achieve this is through a commitment to e-government by creating an environment of transparency where bribery is no longer feasible. It has begun to create a shift in cultural norms in public services. Can the Minister outline what steps are being taken to support the development of e-systems that contribute to a change of culture and the eradication of corruption when supporting nations recovering from conflict or natural disasters? I look forward to hearing from him shortly as he outlines how his department's strategy is harvesting these opportunities.

4.04 pm

Lord Robathan (Con): My Lords, I shall perforce be brief speaking in the gap, but I am grateful to my noble friend Lord McInnes for calling this debate. I have limited, and rather outdated, experience of the developing world. I used to be chairman of an organisation called the Halo Trust, which was and may still be the world's largest charity engaged in lifting landmines and clearing the debris of conflict from the developing world. I saw the work it did and was very impressed. I was also a founder member of the International Development Committee in the other place and spent six or seven years on it. I saw dedicated people doing excellent work on our behalf.

I believe we have a Christian duty to help those less well off than ourselves. I suspect that the right reverend Prelate, and perhaps others in the room, would agree with me, because we are extraordinarily well off and we must help other people. However, I shall give a little story. I am older than I would wish, but 50 years and more ago, at school, we had an excellent organisation called Brothers to All Men. I do not know whether it still exists. It was a Christian charity that dug wells in the developing world for those who had no access to clean water. I was so impressed that I put pennies, or perhaps even shillings, in a money box—do noble Lords remember money boxes?—to support that charity. When I was on the DfID committee—this was 15-odd years ago—we saw wells that had been dug with British aid money around the developing world.

I now see advertisements on the television imploring me to give money to charities to dig wells around the developing world. The one point I wish to add to the debate, which I have much enjoyed listening to, which perhaps the Minister will answer is: what has been going on for 50 years? Travelling around the developing world when on the DfID committee, I saw the tanks, the fighter aircraft, the conflict and the Mercedes cars provided for politicians, but I have still seen people who have no access to clean drinking water. That should have been happening through their Governments over the past 50 years.

I know it is a very difficult situation, but—I say to my noble friend Lord McInnes, that this is what the debate is all about—what can the Government do to ensure that the countries we assist with every good intention actually spend that money on helping the

[LORD ROBATHAN]

people they are meant to help? That includes all Governments around the world, including in developing countries.

4.07 pm

Lord Purvis of Tweed (LD): My Lords, I also draw attention to my entry in the register of interests and commend the noble Lord, Lord McInnes, for securing this debate on a very important subject. Like other noble Lords, I shall refer to Iraq. I strongly believe that development assistance is not the Government's money: it is from the British public and therefore should be directed towards its intended purpose and spent properly and, where possible, used to lever in better governance and anti-corruption measures. In some respects, because it is diverted to the most vulnerable in the world, there should be even more transparency and probity over this kind of government expenditure than all others.

I had the privilege of taking through the Lords the 0.7% Act referred to. Some of the criticism levelled against it at the time was that if there was an increase in expenditure over a fixed period, that would increase the likelihood that it would be wasted. The Act's purpose was to enshrine it in law so that government could plan on a much longer basis, as the noble Lord, Lord McInnes, said. It is a fact that now we can plan further ahead, we can take a longer view of some of the deep, systemic issues, and corruption is one of those. It is also a fact, however, that development assistance is now only a very small proportion of all aid transfers, given the depressing need for much greater humanitarian assistance around the world. Therefore, the focus on anti-corruption measures in humanitarian assistance is even more important.

I wanted to make one comment of sensitivity on this issue. On some of my visits to the least developed countries, and those in a post-conflict state, over the last couple of years, I have also heard comments about countries where a President has been elected, and then shown grotesque nepotism by putting a daughter, son-in-law or other family member in office, with other members of the President's cabinet making huge profits out of that situation. I have heard comments about a Government elected on a minority basis, then granting serious cash flows to a minority party representing one sector or group for it to be sustained in government.

We must also be sensitive to the fact that we are not immune from unfair practices in the West. That said, the UK has a strong record on transparency and aid. I am a strong supporter of the International Aid Transparency Initiative to secure development and humanitarian resources, so that their results address poverty and crises. I am also a strong supporter of Publish What You Fund, and the Aid Transparency Index—the only independent measure of aid transparency—shows that the UK ranks the highest of all Governments in the world for transparency in aid and development assistance. When we reach 90.9 out of 100, compared to China with 1.2, it shows that other large and important countries can learn from the UK.

We can also learn from the work of Transparency International. A recent interesting report looking at the DRC, Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, South Sudan—as the noble Baroness, Lady Anelay, mentioned—Yemen, Libya

and Somalia also highlighted that those countries are the lowest performing in the Corruption Perceptions Index. There is a link to instability, poor transparency and corruption. In referring to some of those countries in the post-conflict scenario, a high level of corruption leads to constant instability. The work of the World Bank shows that even in those fragile countries at peace, if there are high levels of corruption, the likelihood of violent conflict increases when Governments do not adequately prevent corruption or ensure justice. In that regard, I have visited Iraq on many occasions over the last two years, one of them with the noble Lord, Lord McInnes, and the noble Baroness, Lady Anelay, and corruption in some parts is, as the noble Lord, Lord Alton, said, an inhibitor to proper social reconciliation, stabilisation and reconstruction.

Last week—this did not receive much reporting in the UK—100 people drowned in a ferry disaster on the Tigris in Mosul. The Iraq Council of Representatives sacked the former governor, with whom I had a number of difficult meetings in Ninawa in the last two years over misuse of funds. I met the anti-corruption commission representative on some of those visits and, yes, the commission has an office, but it is one person with no computer, no ability to bring cases and no ability to properly tackle the challenges.

If we are to show leadership in meeting our target, we can also show leadership in meeting global goal 16 on good governance being a condition of our support, and making sure that our long-term planning drives better standards of governance. There should not be a choice between getting aid through to the people who need it and building up good institutions. Both are necessary if we are to ensure that aid goes to those who need it most.

4.13 pm

Lord Collins of Highbury (Lab): My Lords, I join noble Lords in thanking the noble Lord, Lord McInnes, for initiating this debate. It is positive that in a debate on corruption, we have made a strong case for development support. I thank the noble Lord for that. As he pointed out, corruption does not just steal money from where it is needed most; it leads to weak governance, which in turn can fuel organised criminal networks and promote crimes such as human trafficking and arms and migrant smuggling.

At the end of last year, the G7's Financial Action Task Force gave the UK its highest ever ranking in recognition of the initiatives taken to help tackle corruption at source. The UK has created the first open data register of beneficial ownership, introduced measures of accountability for senior bankers and passed laws requiring individuals to explain unexplained wealth. But are these measures enough? The National Crime Agency describes the scale of the problem as, "a strategic threat to the UK's economy and reputation".

By allowing the criminal and corrupt to launder their money through our financial system, we encourage and enable more organised crime and authoritarian regimes who threaten our national security.

At the time of the Salisbury attack, Global Witness analysed cash flows from Russia, which revealed that £68 billion had been invested in the UK's overseas

territories, with the British Virgin Islands the second most popular destination for money leaving Russia. As my noble friend Lord Anderson highlighted, Parliament forced the Government to require the overseas territories to bring in public registers of company owners by 2020.

I am sure the Minister will refer to the International Anti-Corruption Conference in October, where the Government announced that they were launching a campaign for global beneficial ownership transparency. For that to be credible, however, the UK must ensure that all its jurisdictions play by the same rules. As noble Lords have indicated, fighting corruption and ensuring that aid and development finance improves development outcomes requires greater levels of transparency and new ways to engage citizens to promote accountability. It is about a system of checks and balances.

I recognise the strong measures put in place by DfID to counter fraud and corruption but, as a major donor, we could advocate more. I strongly agree with the noble Lord, Lord McInnes, about making the case for a longer-term and country-by-country strategy; I wholeheartedly support that. I hope the Minister can agree that when we are proactive in publishing comprehensive, detailed and timely information on aid and development finance, we go beyond the basics and do more. I acknowledge just how much we are doing, but if we worked with partner Governments on supporting their efforts, that would also increase transparency.

My final point concerns the importance of civil society in the transparency process. It is not just about focusing on Governments and politicians; it is about ensuring that we promote the idea of checks and balances in the system. That means that when we give support, we should properly engage with civil society and citizens to ensure that they have the information so that they can hold their parliaments and parliamentarians to proper account. That is certainly what I saw when I was in Zambia last year: there were corruption scandals but, when local leaders of communities could challenge their MPs about the information that we brought to them about that corruption, we heard a different tone. I hope the Minister will be able to respond to that point.

4.17 pm

The Minister of State, Department for International Development (Lord Bates) (Con): My Lords, I congratulate my noble friend Lord McInnes on securing this debate. I thank him and all noble Lords for their contributions during this short debate, which has gone impeccably to time, urged on no doubt by the gentle interruption at the outset from my noble friend Lady Stedman-Scott.

It has been a wide-ranging debate. My noble friend Lord McInnes began by talking about how corruption can sometimes be used by those who would seek to undermine the value of overseas development assistance. The noble Lord, Lord Anderson, talked about transparency, particularly in the banking system. The right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Peterborough talked particularly about the pressures on small charities. The noble Baroness, Lady Anelay, spoke about some specific examples of work done in South Sudan and

the DRC, particularly around gender. The noble Lord, Lord Alton, talked about the importance of monitoring and the inclusive approach. My noble friend Lady Stroud powerfully drew a direct link between institutions, governance and economic prosperity. My noble friend Lord Robathan talked about the importance of Governments' responsibility to their own people and ensuring that that is the prime responsibility. The noble Lord, Lord Purvis, highlighted excellent third-party sources of data, such as the International Aid Transparency Initiative and Transparency International's corruption index, and how important it is that they can be used in this area. The noble Lord, Lord Collins, concluded by pointing to the link between corruption and organised crime and the role which civil society can play.

Let me put on record what DfID is doing in this area and then I will turn briefly to the questions that have been addressed to me. The noble Lord, Lord McInnes, rightly began by talking about the importance of tackling corruption, not only as a priority for DfID but as part of our commitment to sustainable development goal 16. Corruption impoverishes developing countries. It diverts public resources from productive use and deters business investment. It hurts the poor the most, a phrase repeated by many of your Lordships.

Tackling corruption and illicit finance is not only essential for development but is firmly in the UK's national interest. Fighting corruption helps keep the UK secure and opens up new business opportunities and trading partners for the UK. DfID operates in a diverse range of difficult and fragile environments such as Iraq, Afghanistan, South Sudan, and in areas recovering from natural disasters and conflict, many of which have been mentioned today.

The UK is a world leader in humanitarian response and the noble Lord, Lord McInnes, urged us, in the words of my right honourable friend Andrew Mitchell, to be a development superpower. That is already there if one looks at the response of the British public and DfID to the events in Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe.

We have robust measures in place to reduce the risk of aid diversion. We conduct regular assessments of our partners' financial capability systems and processes, including those of partners further down the delivery chain. This gives us confidence that our partners are well prepared to deliver aid in emergencies and that the aid will go to those in need.

The UK has led global efforts to tackle corruption. Effective measures against corruption require action at three levels: with our partners in developing countries to tackle corruption in their systems; internationally to stop the flow of corrupt money across borders, as the noble Lord, Lord Anderson, mentioned; and, in rich countries also, to show that we are not a haven for corrupt money, a point to which the noble Lord, Lord Collins, also referred.

We can be proud of our achievements working with partners in developing countries. Due to our work, corrupt officials in Sierra Leone have been sanctioned as a direct result of data produced by the DfID-funded Pay No Bribe digital platform, which maps real-time anonymous reports of bribes. Helping countries to

[LORD BATES]

address corruption after conflict is vital, because if a country has been destabilised, there are new and greater opportunities for corruption to occur. DfID expertise helped in Afghanistan to establish the flagship Anti-Corruption Justice Centre, which brings together law enforcement and justice institutions to investigate, prosecute and adjudicate high-level corruption cases. My noble friend Lady Anelay talked about DfID's work in Sudan. She has been a distinguished Minister in these roles and I pay tribute to the DfID staff who work in that difficult posting. It has been a testing time and we appreciate what they do in respect of the girls' educational challenge and many of the other things happening there.

In addition to supporting change in developing countries, the UK must also ensure that we have our own house in order and that we are not a safe haven for corrupt money. We have a good story to tell here, although we should not be complacent. DfID funding has enabled the National Crime Agency to investigate and prosecute money laundering and bribery overseas where there is a UK link. Since the programme began, 30 people and companies have been convicted of corruption offences and almost £800 million of assets stolen from developing countries have been restrained, confiscated or returned to the developing countries.

I turn briefly to the questions that were raised during the course of the debate. I should say at the outset that if time does not permit for me to give all of the responses, of course I will write to follow up on them. My noble friend Lord McInnes asked whether regular interaction takes place between the FCO and Human Rights Watch. DfID continues to work closely with the FCO on anti-corruption and human rights issues, including with the main human rights organisations such as Human Rights Watch and the anti-corruption organisation, Transparency International. He asked what support we are giving in terms of country strategies. DfID country teams are working closely with HMG colleagues to implement country anti-corruption strategies. They are updating those strategies at the most appropriate time for the country context—for example, after elections—rather than in line with a UK publication timetable.

The UK is seeking to develop more cross-HMG country anti-corruption strategies as set out in the UK anti-corruption strategy published in December 2017. My noble friend asked about the anti-corruption strategy specifically for Iraq, an issue also raised by my noble friend Lord Robathan and the noble Lords, Lord Purvis and Lord Alton. DfID country teams work closely with HMG colleagues on anti-corruption strategies in Iraq and I will write with further information on those.

The noble Lord, Lord Anderson of Swansea, talked about the role of overseas territories and the Crown dependencies as financial centres and asked what is being done in that area. They are committed to global transparency standards such as the provision of information to law enforcement and for the automatic exchange of tax information. We expect the overseas territories to have fully functioning public registers by 2023.

My noble friend Lady Anelay raised the issue of anti-corruption measures in DRC. DfID's public financial management accountability programme supports the use of public resources to enable better service delivery and more accountable government in DRC.

The noble Lord, Lord Alton, asked about Pakistan. He has been in regular contact about this issue and I know of his concerns. We are certainly not complacent and want to look into the situation carefully. DfID Pakistan takes a holistic approach to addressing corruption through various programmes including on education, health, taxation and economic growth. It addresses corruption by delivering programmes to engage citizens to demand better services in order to create more transparent, effective and accountable institutions. However, I am in the process of writing further on that particular issue.

My noble friend Lady Anelay also asked about aid for DRC. A robust planning process involving the relevant partners has been undertaken to determine the activities required to end Ebola. These activities have been worked into a single strategic plan that the UK and other donors are working on.

My noble friend Lord Robathan asked how we can ensure that overseas aid is being spent effectively. He made the point that Governments have prime responsibility for this. I commend the speech of the Secretary of State to the Wellcome Foundation last year. She pointed out that in future, one test we should have is that the UK Government should not step in where the domestic Government can and should be doing things themselves, such as providing clean water.

My noble friend Lady Stroud asked what steps we have taken to build anti-corruption institutions and e-systems in fragile states. Where possible, we work with Governments. DfID has programmes such as the Afghanistan Anti-Corruption Justice Centre, which I have already mentioned. The corruption centre helps to achieve our targets under sustainable development goal 16 on reducing corruption and illicit flows. Helping to reduce threats to our security is firmly in the UK's national interest. The UK is proud of the global momentum we have built up to fight corruption, but we cannot be complacent. We will continue to work with our partners around the world to reduce corruption. This will build a fairer future for people in developing countries and a better future for the people of the UK.

Climate

Question for Short Debate

4.30 pm

Asked by Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they intend to declare a climate emergency.

Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb (GP): My Lords, I do not intend to rehearse the threats, challenges and opportunities presented by climate change, as these have been well covered in previous debates, but we know that climate change is real, it is here, it is now and we have to confront it. It cannot be dealt with

tomorrow or the day after; it must be done today, every day of the year, and every year of every decade. It is the number one issue—not Brexit, not economic growth, not any of the other issues that we might feel passionate about.

My question today is whether the Government intend to treat the climate crisis with the urgency that it demands by declaring a climate emergency. We know from the world's scientific community that fewer than 12 years are left to prevent 1.5 degrees of warming, which will cause huge problems for humanity—it is a massive threat. The Government's policies and plans do not come close to meeting this deadline. An urgent and rapid global response is necessary, as has been recognised by 44 local authorities in the UK which have declared a climate emergency—that is since Carla Denyer's motion in Bristol, with all those other councils following suit. Some 17,000 people have signed a petition on this issue, and thousands of young people across the country have been taking part in climate protests and school strikes to protect their future. And, of course, the campaign, Extinction Rebellion, and many other planet protectors are putting their bodies on the line to stop the disaster.

If we are to tackle the climate emergency, we must first call it a climate emergency—we have to acknowledge it. That would send out an essential signal to business, to industry and to the financial markets that our policies will be more ambitious and more stringent with time. Sending signals to the financial markets is crucial; fossil fuel companies and their reserves are heavily overvalued at the moment. There is a strong likelihood that we will see a fossil fuel crisis similar to the 2008 credit crisis once financial investors finally realise just how much of those fossil fuels have to stay in the ground.

That is why many people are calling for pension regulators to assess exposure to high carbon risk, for the Bank of England to factor in the carbon exposure of banks in its reserve requirements and for the London Stock Exchange to require all companies to make disclosure on fossil fuel risk. Pension funds, banks and other institutional investors have to be weaned off fossil fuels as a matter of urgency or their investments could go up in smoke.

There is no economic growth without the complex web of biodiversity that supports life on planet Earth. Climate breakdown will impact adversely on our ability to supply ourselves with water, food and safe shelter. It goes to the very heart of humanity's safety.

The cumulative effect of CO₂ means that it is not just a matter of hitting a target by 2030 or 2050. If we fail to act today, we have to do more tomorrow. If we fail to reduce CO₂ now, the target for reductions in 2030 has to reduce even further to take into account our failures. Every failure of today's generation imposes a new cost on the next generation. Today's excesses are a cost that they have to pay.

It is a worldwide problem and we in the UK have to hit the brakes hard because of our historical legacy of the industrial revolution and the vast amount of CO₂ that we import from other countries—we take that for granted and tend to ignore it. Everything has a cost somewhere to somebody. It does not matter whether it

is toys for Christmas, circuit boards for our computers, or exotic fruits—everything we import has a CO₂ burden.

No doubt the Minister will direct us to the Government's *Clean Growth Strategy* as proof of how seriously they are taking climate change, but it is a very poor effort and extremely overoptimistic about the potential for change. Optimism is not enough. Optimism is often based in ignorance. We have only to compare the Government's strategy to the scale of the government response to the investment in the project of delivering Brexit. The *Clean Growth Strategy* justifies inaction by looking at “a long term trajectory”, exploring “voluntary” standards and having aspirations, “where practical, cost-effective and affordable”.

That is all absolute rubbish.

Meanwhile, Brexit is seeing billions of pounds ploughed into contingency planning, two-thirds of civil servants in some government departments are being told to drop everything to focus on this one issue, soldiers are ready to take over essential services, and several Bills have been rushed through Parliament alongside some 800 statutory instruments—all to fulfil a self-imposed deadline of two years, which has now been extended by a mere two weeks. If the Government can pull out all the stops to deliver on the so-called will of the people, I absolutely do not see why they cannot do the same for a climate emergency, which is the largest threat facing humanity.

Declaring the climate emergency is just the first step to treating the situation with the urgency it needs. The real policies come next. We need a green new deal which will create hundreds of thousands of jobs and a low-carbon economy, to enhance the Committee on Climate Change and to carbon-proof all new laws and policies—and we need billions of pounds invested by the Government to do this. The Treasury must not be afraid to increase the public debt substantially to head off this emergency.

Local authorities that have declared climate emergencies should be given a fund of money to go carbon-neutral by 2030. They deserve recognition by the Government for doing the right thing. The Government should set high standards that are enforceable and enforced, such as all new homes being carbon-neutral, and all existing homes being retrofitted to modern standards.

We have the Queen's Speech coming up in May and the comprehensive spending review this summer. Now is the time for the Government to announce several new Bills alongside billions of pounds of funding to cope with the climate emergency. I see people taking a lot of notes, which I am very happy about; I hope it translates into action.

I assure your Lordships that Brexit planning is a drop in the ocean compared to the effort that we must put in to tackling the climate emergency; our great-grandchildren probably will not care whether or not we left the EU, but their lives will be permanently altered by whether or not we handled the climate emergency.

My conclusion is simple: when we fail to act today, we have to work twice as hard tomorrow. The Government must declare a climate emergency, taking climate change seriously in a way they simply have not envisaged so far. I therefore urge the Government to act now—today.

4.38 pm

Lord Lilley (Con): I congratulate the noble Baroness on securing this debate and on her introduction to it.

Since the Industrial Revolution, the average temperature of the Earth has warmed by an average of nearly one degree centigrade, and it is all the better for that. From the physics I studied at Cambridge, I am convinced that a part of that at least is attributable to carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases being emitted into the atmosphere, and that if we continue to burn fossil fuels, the temperature of the world—other things being equal—will continue to rise. We have to decide at what point the benefits of warming are exceeded by the costs, and whether those costs constitute an emergency.

According to the BBC website—we know we can trust the BBC, because it is so unconfident of its position that it will not allow anyone else to broadcast it—the principal danger threatening us as a result of rising temperatures is a rise in the sea levels as a result of melting ice caps. Certainly, if the ice caps melt it would raise sea levels by over 30 metres, which would, as the BBC adds, submerge many low-lying cities. However, the report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change says that it will take millennia for the ice caps to melt even if we continue using fossil fuels at a high and unabated rate. I cannot help feeling that, at least in the next centuries, we may harness fusion and have limitless energy, enabling us to cope with these problems or find other ways of solving them. They certainly do not constitute an emergency.

The BBC goes on to list other disasters which could be more imminent, such as flooding, droughts, storms and declining crop yields. All these things happen already. They may or may not be becoming more frequent but what is undoubtedly true is that fatalities from any of these events have been declining rapidly decade by decade. In developed countries such as ours, the risk of dying from any such natural event has declined dramatically and is extremely unlikely. It is most unlikely that any of us will suffer loss of life or even major damage to our property as a result of these things.

If we lived in developing countries it would be different; they are at far greater risk. People in poor countries are vulnerable to climate disasters because they are poor—and they are poor because they have not yet harnessed energy in the same way as we have to improve their living standards, their infrastructure and their environment. If we prevent them using cheap fossil fuels to develop, they will remain poor longer and exposed to these emergencies, these threats, these risks. That is what we threaten to do.

What we do in this country is negligible. If we stopped using fossil fuels and stopped eating meat tomorrow, that would reduce the total emissions in the world by 2%, less than one year's growth in China. If we are to treat this as an emergency, we are talking about keeping poor people poor by stopping them using cheap energy. That is not worthwhile because it exposes them to emergencies. The real emergency, the real crisis, would be in developing countries if we were to follow the logic of the noble Baroness's position and keep them in the undeveloped state in which not using fossil fuels and not making emissions would leave them.

4.42 pm

Lord Greaves (LD): My Lords, I thank the noble Baroness, Lady Jones of Moulseccomb, for introducing this short debate. I was thinking of talking about melting ice and the serious problems facing us and, after the speech of the noble Lord, Lord Lilley, which I do not agree with—I agree with the noble Baroness, Lady Jones of Moulseccomb—I wish I had decided to do so. However, given the three-minute speech limit, I have decided to talk about something different: why the battle for public opinion on this matter has not yet been won. We have just heard an example of how it has not been won.

People have been conditioned to think of the natural environment, including climate, as a relatively benign thing which can be solved by technical fixes but this is not right. There are two reasons for this. One is that the climate of this planet has been relatively stable for some 6,000 or 8,000 years—perhaps a bit more. This has been absolutely crucial for the development of human existence as we know it. Farming settlements in the fertile crescent, the establishment of towns, trade—particularly in coastal towns and ports—learning, recreation and complex systems of government have led to relatively stable and complex societies, economics, geographies, networks and cultures. There is a general assumption that the environment is there and that it will be okay.

I also think that some people in academic circles and those who did A-levels and so on have an understanding of the natural world which is not quite as alarmist as it might be. Based on academic concepts from the 19th century onwards, natural change is an evolutionary and gradual, incremental thing. In biology, there was Darwinism and theories of evolution; there are geological concepts dating from pioneers such as Hutton, Playfair and Lyell, who were right at the time; there were geomorphological models based on the cycle of erosion developed by William Morris Davis; there were similar theories on climate and oceans and the structure of the continents; there are theories based on uniformitarianism—“The present is the key to the past”—associated with gradualism: that small incremental changes in climate and ecosystems, and all these other things, are the basis of change.

In the longer term, there is much truth in this, and it was a rational scientific alternative to ideas such as creationism, the great flood and other catastrophic ideas, but we all know of catastrophic changes. After all, the dinosaurs no longer rule the earth. At every physical scale—and scale is vital here—what pans out over time as gradual change often consists in practice of a vast number of catastrophic events, some small and some large, like landslides and the melting of ice. These can be global, continental and oceanic, regional, local and small. As human beings, we are at the bottom of the pyramid. Our civilisation and societies exist at small, local scales, and we are ourselves short-term people because we have not been here very long. Frankly, catastrophic events, if we are not careful, will wipe us out.

4.46 pm

Baroness Lane-Fox of Soho (CB): My Lords, yesterday on social media, there was a small, viral video of two deer battling in the foreground, while far in the distance

—as you could determine after watching it for a few seconds—a lion slowly emerged that, in one efficient movement, jumped on these fighting deer, killing them both. I draw a parallel: I feel as though the debate of the noble Baroness, Lady Jones, today is that lion, while many other debates in this building are the deer in the foreground.

I was determined to speak this afternoon, because I have been through—to use a word from my own sector, technology—a pivot over the last six months, partly on the back of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's report, and partly because of my partner's establishment of a marine conservation charity, which has meant relentless tussles at home. I now feel it is not only the responsibility but the only moral thing that somebody with any small voice can do to constantly challenge and question why the climate emergency/climate crisis is not debated in public opinion in the way it should be, in the sectors I see, on the boards I sit on—certainly within technology, and with the inventors and innovators of the future. To give an example, I use Twitter, and after watching deer being devoured by a lion yesterday, I used it to ask what percentage of venture capital around the world was given to climate-related businesses. It would be bad if it was under 50% right now, because venture capitalists look to the future, imagining the solutions for the things we should be most concerned about. Imagine my horror at discovering that the percentage of venture capital investment in climate-based innovations has just decreased year on year. In Europe, it has gone from 3% to 2%, and in the US—get this—it has gone from 2.5% to 1%. This is a complicated number—there are investments across healthcare that you might determine are a climate issue, or possibly in fintech and so on—but even if it is 10 times that, it is half as much as it should be.

This is just one example of where it feels that we are wrestling deer in the corner, when the lion is approaching us from behind. As a technology innovator, I feel that we must demand more of the people that think they are inventing the future, because they are not inventing the future that I want to be a part of. We have to make sure that social media companies manage disinformation about the climate on their platforms; I declare an interest as a board member of Twitter. We have to demand that venture capital companies invest in solutions for everybody. This is fundamental, and these will not be challenges we can solve if we do not deploy all the weapons at our disposal. These are people who have proven in the past that they can solve complex problems, but the debate is not happening at the level that it needs to. That is why I could not support more wholeheartedly the notion of a climate crisis and emergency declared by the Government, because Governments lead and people follow, and that is what we need to encourage this Government to do.

4.49 pm

The Earl of Caithness (Con): My Lords, I congratulate the noble Baroness, Lady Jones of Moulsecoomb, on introducing this debate. Her enthusiasm for the subject is in inverse proportion to that of my noble friend Lord Henley on the Front Bench. I must remind him that he still has not replied to the questions I posed to

him in the debate in the name of the noble Lord, Lord Teverson, on 24 January, despite having reminded him three times to do so.

The noble Baroness has raised an important matter and asks us to look at whether this is a climate emergency. The subject is hugely important but I will not follow her down the line of an emergency for two reasons. First, it is a climate choice. If you have a climate emergency, you may actually forget about the rest of the environment that is equally important: plastics, water, soil and all the things that she and I have been debating for the past couple of years. To make one factor within the overall environment an emergency rather demeans the others.

However, the noble Baroness is absolutely right to say that the International Energy Agency reported that last year emissions of CO₂ rose by 1.7%, which is the fastest rate of growth since 2013. The United States, having seen its emissions declining for some years, has experienced an increase. However, the main problem is in the Far East—China and India. What I am pleased about is that Europe's emissions have fallen. Luckily, the UK is doing well in this area. We are a world leader and we have seen a fall of 42% in our production emissions from 1990s levels while still growing the economy by 70%. As my noble friend Lord Lilley said, growing the economy is important as the background to all this.

We must have more energy from renewable sources. I am glad that the Government have announced huge spending over the next decade on 30 gigawatts of offshore wind. That will produce a third of our electricity in 2030. The message must be sent out that we have to stop burning fossil fuels. When I was the Environment Minister, we were considered to be the dirty man of Europe. It is interesting to note that of the top 10 European emitters of carbon at the moment, not one is British. Seven firms are in Germany, which is supposed to be the clean man of Europe; now it is the dirty man. This is an important subject but it is not quite an emergency yet.

4.52 pm

Baroness Boycott (CB): My Lords, I thank the noble Baroness, Lady Jones of Moulsecoomb, for introducing this important debate. I agree with her completely that we do indeed have a climate emergency. It is not just a question of moving away from fossil fuels, or of empty slogans. I am thrilled that 44 local authorities have declared this issue to be an emergency. While I was at the Greater London Authority I ran the London Food Board. We declared London to be a hunger-free city and everyone signed up to that with great excitement. However, that was in 2008 and actually there are even more hungry people today, so these must not be empty words.

For any policy in local authorities or indeed in central government to be at all effective, it must not be put in a box. It has to stretch right across, whether it is a question of energy, plastics, the marine environment or whatever it might be. Perhaps I may give an example from the work we did in London. When we think about working an environment strategy into transport, we would probably just consider getting people off the roads, on to bikes and into public transport. However, we

[BARONESS BOYCOTT]

have to think a little more: put up living walls by busy road junctions; plant edible green walkways between estates and schools so that children can walk; grow food in parks and plant trees on busy roads; and fund schools, which takes us into the area of education and building. Schools should be given funding to plant gardens. We ran a scheme called Capital Growth through which we created 2,500 new community gardens in the four years leading up to 2012. That cost as little as £250 per garden but in the end we had 180,000 volunteers, and 200 acres of otherwise derelict land in this city became green spaces full of bees and other insects as well as people gardening. It was easy to do, but it is about will and leadership.

The scheme had all sorts of other good benefits, as is the case for a lot of environmental schemes. For instance, the police reported less need for policing in the area. There was a reduction in the rate of depression along with a reduction in the rate of crime. However, to do this, fantastic leadership is needed. Even though I went to work for his predecessor, I am the first to step forward to applaud London Mayor Sadiq Khan for the ULEZ initiative. You need to be tough and you need to be bold. In Singapore—not a state that I am necessarily going to say is a great place to live—when it was realised what was the matter with diesel cars, they were banned from one day to the next. We need that kind of bravery and visionary leadership.

I am thrilled that our metro mayors, just this afternoon, are being afforded greater responsibility over their own transport policies, because then they can start to make a difference. If we can all feel engaged from the ground up, we may be able to make a difference. If we show our politicians that we care about this and that it is indeed an emergency, then maybe it will move out of the box and into the middle of government debate where it affects every single law that we make.

4.55 pm

Lord Strasburger (LD): My Lords, I thank the noble Baroness, Lady Jones, for making this important debate possible. I draw attention to my interests in the register.

The natural world is our life support system. It provides our food, air and water, and cleans up our waste. However, it faces a complex and dynamic ecological crisis resulting from human activities, and climate change is but one symptom. Sir David Attenborough told the UN in December that,

“the collapse of our civilisations and extinction of much of the natural world is on the horizon”,

while scientists tell us that we have only a short and closing window in which to act to limit this unfolding catastrophe. Despite the current attention-grabbing, high-octane constitutional drama of Brexit, this climate emergency is an infinitely greater threat and is the real crisis that we face. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reported last October on the enormous increase in harm that 2 degrees of warming would do to the climate, including risks to health, livelihoods, food security, water supply, human security and economic growth.

The global poor are feeling, and will feel, the impacts of climate change most acutely. However, the implications will also be felt here in the UK, whether through forced migration from other regions or through disruption

to our food supplies. Global temperatures are currently around 1 degree above pre-industrial levels. Within a handful of years we may face tipping points—such as an ice-free Arctic, which I have personally seen for myself is approaching—beyond which climate change may accelerate and impacts multiply, bringing unimaginable dangers. The IPCC report told us that we have just 11 years to complete, not begin, an unprecedented transformation to our infrastructure and lifestyles to decarbonise the economy and avoid climate breakdown. The good news is that halting climate change will bring us many other benefits, including warm homes, energy independence, a boom in green jobs, pleasant and healthy urban environments, affordable public transport, clean water and air, and the restoration of natural habitats.

Since the report’s publication, momentum has been building behind grass-roots movements such as Extinction Rebellion and the 1.4 million young people who last month joined school climate strikes worldwide, including several hundred in my home city of Bath, whom I warmly congratulate on their activism. They seek immediate environmental action proportionate to the enormous risks that we face. Last month my local council, Bath and North East Somerset, joined a rapidly growing group of UK local authorities—around 44 at the last count—to declare a climate emergency. With overwhelming cross-party support, my council also became one of a smaller group to set an ambitious target date of 2030 for its carbon neutrality. Councils demonstrating real leadership on this existential problem now require the full support of Parliament. The Government must acknowledge the scale and immediacy of this crisis and put forward a transformational plan for the future. They must also provide those authorities willing to step up to the challenge with powers and funds commensurate to the task.

Business as usual simply will not cut it. This truly is a climate emergency.

4.59 pm

The Earl of Sandwich (CB): My Lords, it is true that the UK Government have been on the front foot on climate change and have commendably taken a lead internationally on the issue since the Paris agreement, but they still need reminding that the least developed countries are still suffering the worst effects and some—not just island states—face imminent threats from floods, drought and other disasters.

In 2018, we had some of the worst emergencies ever. We had some experience of it: the UK had unusual extremes of weather last year, and California’s autumn fires were catastrophic. But in the southern hemisphere, Kerala had its worst floods for more than 80 years last August, with more than 2.5 times the normal rainfall from the monsoon. More than 500 died and more than 1 million were forced from their homes, with 10,000 houses destroyed and roads damaged at a cost estimated at \$3.5 billion. The warming of the atmosphere from greenhouse gas emissions is an obvious cause of such dramatic turns in the weather, and India is one of the countries that will suffer most.

South Africa, on the other hand, experienced three consecutive years of low rainfall, and Cape Town faced its worst drought ever a year ago. Taps ran dry in

the city and residents were severely restricted. Again, scientists found that climate change made the drought three times more likely.

Argentina also ended its worst drought in 50 years last April, but the economic consequences for farmers were considerable. The soybean and corn harvests were down by 31% and 21%, and lost production cost Argentina \$6 billion, plunging the country into recession. I am grateful to Christian Aid for providing those figures.

Very few people in Parliament or among the general public doubt that these major emergencies were linked to climate change, as has been reaffirmed at successive conferences. The Katowice conference in Poland made good progress last December towards implementing the Paris rulebook. In recent Westminster debates, the Government have sounded upbeat. One Minister has since even admitted that the UK will need to legislate for a net zero emissions target “at an appropriate point in the future”.

But the situation is urgent. According to Christian Aid, overall global emissions must reach zero—meaning that human activities absorb as much greenhouse gas as they release—by the middle of the century if the world is to limit warming to 1.5 degrees centigrade, the target set in the 2015 Paris agreement. Next year, there will be an interim meeting in Chile, but the real decisions will have to be made very soon in Europe.

5.02 pm

Baroness Meacher (CB): My Lords, I too thank the noble Baroness, Lady Jones, for securing this incredibly important debate. Anyone looking at our newspapers might think that the single most important issue facing the whole world was Brexit, but of course, far more urgent, with far greater risks to humanity, most particularly to developing countries, is climate change. Measures to cut carbon emissions are growing but at nothing like the rate needed if we are to tackle the problem in due time.

I first mention solar energy, because the sun has almost infinite energy, if only we could trap it. Yes, solar panels are cropping up all over the place, but two major obstacles stand in the way of significant use of solar energy: the problems of storage and distribution, as I am sure most noble Lords know. Research programmes in a number of countries are working on those two problems, but they are too small and not co-ordinated to achieve the speed of progress so desperately needed. Can the Minister explain what the Government are doing to enhance research in this vital field? It is far too important to leave to the private sector, but too many Governments are just leaving it to private companies. It must be government-led and co-ordinated.

The second area of potential breakthrough after solar, which I see as the absolute number one, is the use of hydrogen. I have received a helpful note from the Hydrogen APPG and wanted to convey a few of its main points. More than 30% of all UK carbon emissions come from domestic heating and cooking. Can we get that down to zero? We really need to. The H21 North of England report 2018 examined the potential for a large-scale conversion of homes and

businesses from natural gas to hydrogen and found that such a conversion could, by 2050, achieve 17% of the Government’s carbon reduction target, set in the Climate Change Act 2008. No doubt we need to go faster than that, but it would be one hell of a step.

There is growing support from the Government for a large-scale hydrogen conversion project. For example, the Chancellor’s Spring Statement announced that the Government would explore options for decarbonising the gas grid. Can the Minister explain to the Committee what options the Government plan to explore, and over what timeframe? That sentence from the Chancellor reads as though he may not be doing very much at all, but it would be very interesting to know precisely what he has in mind and how fast he plans to do it.

There are also significant benefits to a large-scale hydrogen conversion for the transport industry. What steps have the Government taken to convert cars, buses, lorries, trains, ferries or even aeroplanes to hydrogen use, and do they have a planned timeframe for such reforms?

It is of interest that the trade unions are supportive of the potential of hydrogen to create highly skilled jobs, especially in the north of England. That would be pretty helpful in the years ahead. The UK could become a world leader in hydrogen technology and a leading exporter of skills and technology. We can achieve such heights only if we get on with the changes so urgently needed. I look forward to the Minister’s response to this important, if short, debate.

5.06 pm

Lord Teverson (LD): My Lords, the noble Baroness, Lady Jones, has rightly asked us whether we see this as an emergency, and I put my hand up and say, “It absolutely is”. With this particular emergency, as with many national emergencies, there are lots of down sides in that there are all sorts of negative consequences to war, threats or security. Today, however, I want to go through all the positive things that come out of genuinely calling this an emergency.

First, even in conventional terms, we have economic growth. As we saw during the 2008 recession, the green sector was one that grew in 2017—those are the most recent figures. GDP growth rose by some 1.8%, but economic growth in the green sector was something like 7%. There are more or less 250,000 jobs just in the green growth and energy efficiency sector.

Clean air is one of the consequences of decarbonisation; King’s College London estimates that in recent years there have been some 36,000 premature deaths per annum because of dirty air. There are 2.5 million households still in fuel poverty, yet through proper efficiency programmes and the housing stock, we could eventually reduce that to zero. That would also help winter deaths, of which there are some 50,000 per annum. Indeed, with heatwaves these days, it is estimated that in the last couple of years there have been some 600 to 900 deaths due to excess heat. Obviously, figures have been far higher on the continent, which may show what is still to come.

We can reduce fuel bills, not just by increasing the energy efficiency of the housing stock, but by renewable energy now being cheaper than fossil fuels. Because of all this increased welfare, I hope we can increase

[LORD TEVERSON]

national welfare but also reduce costs on the National Health Service. By doing all this, we are making a major move towards a circular economy, which means that the planet can start to exist within its own finite resources.

To come back to climate finance, the noble Baroness, Lady Lane-Fox, rightly mentioned the decline of venture capital and the restriction on it in this sector. I was interested to hear those figures. Having said that, a huge amount of money wishes to invest, and it is about finding those opportunities; maybe government, through the public sector, can help that to happen. France has produced sovereign bonds, which have been at coupon rates that are less than standard ones. All this would also provide the UK with climate leadership again, which we are starting to miss.

I will ask the Minister only the following question. On 2 May, the climate change committee will produce its report on what we should do to achieve only a 1.5 degree centigrade increase—reckless though even that is. Will the Government accept the committee's recommendations, whatever they are?

5.10 pm

Lord Grantchester (Lab): My Lords, I thank the noble Baroness, Lady Jones of Moulsecocomb, for initiating today's debate and challenging us to consider the climate emergency movement. It is more usual to apply the term "emergency" to specific events that everyone can recognise, to signal that an exceptional response is required. To apply it to the process of climate change underlines the urgency of the situation, to recognise that more extreme weather patterns are occurring across the world more frequently, and that emergency action is required to avert more catastrophic consequences, both numerically and in intensity.

While it is true that much progress has been achieved, that must not be a reason for self-congratulatory complacency. The climate emergency movement has highlighted the importance of setting a new policy framework across public institutions that recognises the urgency, sets specific tough but fair targets and relevant timeframes to prioritise policy responses and embed them in overarching governance arrangements, and to communicate this both nationally and internationally.

Each organisational level of government must fulfil its responsibilities through relevant ranges of actions to reduce emissions and increase resilience. With more easily achievable low-hanging fruit having been plucked already, it is now imperative to redouble the UK's national efforts to tackle the most intransigent areas of heating, gas decarbonisation and transport, including shipping. The Government's official target is still to reduce carbon emissions by 80% below 1990 levels. With the IPCC's recent report that recognises the tipping point of 1.5 degrees warming above pre-industrial levels, that target is likely to be breached between 2030 and 2050. Labour has recognised that this will require a net-zero emissions target, not a new cost-benefit analysis.

The pace of change must increase as the urgency is not being adequately addressed by this Government. Being science-led, Labour will tackle the structural

change by resourcing a national transformational fund that will also address the behavioural change needed across society, encompassing waste, energy efficiency, transport and the environmental security of a circular economy. The scale of the response needed must be addressed at all levels of government, including internationally through international trade deals.

The estimated 1.5% fall in emissions seen in 2018 was the smallest drop recorded over the past six years. What now is the Government's response to the Committee on Climate Change's challenge that the Government are no longer on course even to meet the fourth and fifth carbon budgets? Will the Government now bring forward ambitious and credible proposals for reducing emissions for the lagging sector areas of transport and heat, and could they inform us of that today?

The Environmental Audit Committee recently stated that the Government are "coasting on climate change". Does the Minister recognise that the pace of change must increase across all government departments to eliminate policy contradictions and mixed messages across government, such as those on fracking?

The UK needs a new green industrial revolution. Greta Thunberg and our schoolchildren are right to demand it, and the Government and the investment community need to resource it through environmental governance.

5.13 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Lord Henley) (Con): My Lords, I first thank the noble Baroness, Lady Jones, for securing this debate, which has been of high quality, even if all speakers have been limited to a mere three minutes each. In fact, perhaps that made the quality even higher, I do not know; it has certain advantages.

I will make the point, in response to the noble Baroness, Lady Lane-Fox, and to others who are worried that the debate is not happening, that the debate is very much happening. This might just be one very tiny, minuscule part of it, but we know—mention was made earlier of demonstrations by schoolchildren and others—that the debate is happening up and down the country. As other noble Lords put it when they talked about local authorities, it is happening at local authority level.

A number of questions were raised, and I will not be able to respond to all of them this afternoon. I have been criticised by my noble friend Lord Caithness, quite rightly, for failing to respond in a previous debate to his questions about the effect of the shifting of magnetic north and cosmic rays on global warming. I will write to him in due course, but he will recognise it is quite a difficult thing to respond to because there is not much evidence.

I also give an assurance to all those who spoke that the Government are aware of the threats posed by climate change, and that we respect the sense of urgency. We understand it, agree that there is an urgent need to do things, and accept that impacts are already being felt. The Government are responding, and we continue to demonstrate strong leadership worldwide—I will get on to that later on—to tackle it at home and abroad.

I will start with the IPCC report on climate change, and what our response will be. We are already seeing the impacts of climate change—the hottest days of the year are getting hotter, and minimum temperatures are getting milder. There is a clear trend, and I remind the noble Lord, Lord Greaves, that we have not always had the stable temperature he seems to think we have. I refer him to the late Middle Ages, when there were vineyards in the south of England. The same was true in Roman times, with a colder spell in between. After the Middle Ages warm period, we had the mini-ice age of the 17th and early 18th centuries—so the climate has always changed, but something is happening at the moment. We agree that there is a trend and that something needs to be done; and we know that, without action, rising temperatures will result in even more serious effects.

For those who think we have been slow off the mark, following the IPCC's report last October, within a week we had requested advice from the Committee on Climate Change on the implications of the Paris agreement for the UK's long-term emissions target. I can assure the noble Lord, Lord Teverson, that when it comes out in May—I was not sure of the precise date but he said 2 May, which I think is right—we will respond as appropriate. He would not expect me to say at this point that we will accept everything the committee says. It would be a rash Government, possibly a Liberal Government, who would take that line. As an aside, I do welcome his genuinely positive approach to what the Government are doing—and I think one can take a positive approach.

The IPCC report offered a stark warning that our current rate of warming could see us reaching 1.5 degrees, possibly as soon as 2030. That would have devastating effects—it could do a great deal to our infrastructure, food, water supplies and so on. It went on to point out that up to 90% of coral reefs could be lost, with irreversible effects such as melting ice sheets that would continue to have impacts for centuries to come. The report is a rallying cry for Governments around the world to do something—to innovate, to invest and to raise ambition. It is therefore right that we should follow the scientists. As all noble Lords have made clear, we are now witnessing a groundswell of public concern. There is an increased sense of urgency from people all around the country—I mentioned the recent demonstration by schoolchildren—and more vocal demands for action.

The Government absolutely share their mission to solve this global challenge. To do so, we are taking action both domestically and internationally, as the noble Baroness, Lady Jones, asked us—because there is no point in us just doing things domestically if we do not try to provide the international lead that I believe we can and will. I shall touch on both of those.

On domestic action, our carbon targets are among the most stringent in the world and have provided a blueprint for climate action internationally, with elements of our framework emulated by many other leading nations. We should be proud of our record, which was cited by the noble Lord, Lord Grantchester when he stressed that we have reduced emissions since 1990 by 42% while—this is the important thing—growing the economy by 72%.

But there is more to do. In 2017, we published our *Clean Growth Strategy*. The noble Baroness, Lady Jones, called it “a very poor effort”. I have to say that I do not agree. The important thing to remember about the strategy is that “growth” appears in its name. As I have said, we have seen a cut in our emissions by 42% while continuing to grow our economy by 72%. The strategy set out our policies and proposals for meeting future carbon budgets and the illustrative pathways for the 2050 target. It explains just how the Government are investing more than £2.5 billion to support low-carbon innovation from 2015 to 2021, building on the UK's world-leading expertise in areas such as offshore wind—where we have seen the price of offshore power come right down—and electric vehicles.

The noble Baroness, Lady Meacher, asked about research that we are doing in that area. It is important to emphasise what has been achieved. For example, the noble Baroness will see what a success story solar has been over the years as a result of government intervention, with deployment and cost reductions exceeding expectations to the point where two large-scale projects have already deployed without subsidy from the Government, and the planned construction of two more large-scale, subsidy-free solar projects has recently been announced. That is as a result of the investment that government have made and the encouragement and support that we have given—again, we have seen the price drop. I cite these just as examples; there is much more research in other areas.

The noble Baroness asked about storage, which I agree is the vital thing to address if we are to make renewables such as solar and wind, which are necessarily variable, of great use. Yes, research on hydrogen has been going on. I have seen some serious work being done by Heriot-Watt University in Orkney, where they are beginning to power ships using hydrogen. I also went to the Clyde to see some new CalMac ferries being built that will be powered by hydrogen. There is a future for hydrogen there; there is possibly a future for hydrogen in cars. Electricity might take over—I do not know—but all avenues need to be explored, and the Government will play their part in that. We are certainly exploring hydrogen's potential to deliver against our own clean growth aims.

I see that I am running out of time so, rather than going on with examples of the sort of research that the noble Baroness asked about, I will quickly move on to say a little about the international position. I am very grateful for what the noble Earl, Lord Sandwich, said about welcoming our international role and the role that we can play. As I said, what we do in the UK on our own is not going to make much difference. We believe that the United Kingdom has played a key role internationally in demonstrating leadership through its domestic action, through climate diplomacy and through financial support, and that our world-leading economic, scientific and technical skills are shaping the global debate. I am proud to say that United Kingdom negotiators played a central role in securing the Paris agreement in 2015, while the UK scientific community was at the heart of the international effort behind the IPCC's special report.

[LORD HENLEY]

Our world-leading climate science programmes are helping developing countries to mitigate and adapt. We are fully aware of the concerns that the noble Earl and others raised about the problems that other countries are having. We are providing at least £5.8 billion between 2016 and 2020, helping over 47 million people to cope with the effects of climate change. This September the United Kingdom will lead the resilience stream at the UN Secretary-General's climate action summit. Our ambition is to drive transformational change in the way that we think and take decisions on resilience, enabling people and the planet to adapt and cope with shocks and stresses.

I conclude by reiterating the determined action that the United Kingdom Government are taking to tackle climate change both domestically and abroad. Our sense of urgency is real and the challenge that we face is great. The IPCC report made that clear, and it is necessary for us to build on that momentum, acting now to build a brighter future for ourselves and for our children.

5.27 pm

Sitting suspended.

Historic Rights of Way

Question for Short Debate

5.30 pm

Asked by Lord Greaves

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the progress that has been made in the registration of historic rights of way and of the benefits of extending the cut-off date for their registration.

Lord Greaves (LD): My Lords, this debate is about historic rights of way: those that have never been registered but existed before 1949. I want to talk about the procedural and technical problems involved in historic rights of way, so I will not talk about their value and so on. I assume for the purposes of this debate that that is a given and people do not need an explanation of why they are such a good thing. I thank in particular the British Horse Society, the Ramblers, the Open Spaces Society and the Trails Trust for the wonderful briefings they have sent. I declare an interest as vice-president of the Open Spaces Society. I also thank everybody who has put their name down to speak in this debate.

It all started with the CRoW Act in 2000, so I decided to look up what I said in the debate on the Bill as it went through the Lords. On 26 June 2000, which seems a remarkably long time ago, I was talking about resolving conflict over local rights of way et cetera. This, I said,

“must, essentially, take place at local level. As it stands, the Bill relies too much on national quangos sorting things out when what is really required is for local people on the ground to negotiate with each other in a sensible way”.—[*Official Report*, 26/6/00; col. 671.]

I do not believe we thought at the time that nearly 20 years later we would still be talking about the problems.

Sections 53 to 56 of the CRoW Act set out the process for claiming old, unclaimed historic rights of way—crucially, with a cut-off date of 1 January 2026. Any that have not been claimed by then will cease to exist for ever, although with the possibility under Section 56 of an extension by regulations to 2036.

The passage I have just quoted was, in retrospect, a bit naive. Things are not quite as simple as I thought at the time—but we have seen in the system for claiming historic rights of way the worst of all worlds: national inaction and delays, half-hearted efforts to get things going, followed by more inaction and delays. Local authorities have sometimes tried and sometimes been unwilling; they are increasingly unable to cope because of financial cuts. There is an increasing reliance on local groups, charities and volunteers to sort this out. They are wholly underresourced, frustrated and dismayed by the hopelessness of the task.

According to a freedom of information request from the Ramblers, 4,400 or more applications are stuck in the system. What happened? First, the Countryside Agency set up the Discovering Lost Ways project in 2004. That was closed down three years later, with four new rights of way registered. In 2008, Natural England set up the Stakeholder Working Group on Unrecorded Public Rights of Way, a body which consisted of local authorities, user groups, landowners and management interests, and really did get people together to thrash things out. It produced the *Stepping Forward* report in 2010 with 32 recommendations. Five more years went by before the Deregulation Act 2015 legislated for many of the recommendations in *Stepping Forward*. Another five years have now gone by and nothing has happened. We are still waiting for that part of the Deregulation Act to be brought into play through regulations.

I was going to quote what the Minister in the Commons said about the Act in 2000 but the noble Baroness, Lady Taylor, is here and she can give evidence.

Baroness Taylor of Bolton (Lab): I shall intervene only briefly. I was Chief Whip in the Commons when the legislation went through, and I assure everyone here that it was not anticipated that there would be a difficulty within that timeframe. It is the problems that arose later, particularly the pressures on local government, that have got us into the position today where it is vital that we look at the timescale again.

Lord Greaves: I am very grateful for that intervention in person, as it were. In evidence that it has sent to us, the Trails Trust says that the Countryside Agency said in 2010 that there were 16,100 kilometres of unrecorded rights of way and that another 36,000 kilometres of historic route existed and needed investigating. That was just in England; there were more in Wales. So there is a huge problem.

There is a huge backlog involving competing local authorities with diversion and other public footpath orders, enforcements, disputes, commons claims and disputes and so on. In addition, the original definitive maps from 1949 vary hugely in quality and accuracy.

Some are hopeless and some are good. Even when they record a route, as I know well from examples in my own area in the Pennines, a bridleway can simply stop at the parish boundary and turn suddenly into a footpath where bridleway rights are not allowed. Sometimes they simply stop where the person who was doing the surveying back in the early 1950s changed over to someone else.

The situation is hopeless. I am grateful for the large number of letters that I have had from people on the ground all over the country—from Yorkshire, Burnley, Rochdale, Northumberland, Bromley, Rossendale, Cambridgeshire and Wales—explaining how hopeless it is. I shall quote from one or two of them to show what the position is. Cosima Towneley, chairman of the Burnley Bridleways Association and chairman of the National Federation of the Bridleway Associations, says:

“The Government—of which ever hue—gallops towards the Cut Off but has failed to undertake a single action promised ... Where is the 2015 report which should have given an indication as to the viability of projects such as Discovering Lost Ways ... Where is the support at Local Authority level to carry the huge backlog of claims and the enquiries they generate through to implementation on the ground?”.

From Northumberland, Susan Rogers writes:

“Even when a decision has been made for an order to add or to upgrade a path, there can be a long delay before the legal department of the council makes the order ... At the moment if there is an objection, even an irrelevant one, the order has to be sent to the Secretary of State for confirmation”.

And so on. There is a huge amount of frustration and dismay from people who are doing tremendous work at their own expense and in their own time.

At the request of the Minister, I sent her some questions that I would like the Government to answer. I shall finish by reading them out, if there is time. Do the Government stand by the commitment given in 2000 at the time of CRoW to make every effort to register all historic rights of way before the cut-off date? Do the Government agree that Discovering Lost Ways resulted in the loss of almost a decade in the registration of historic rights of way that has not been made up since? Do they agree that the stakeholder working group set up in 2008 saw a welcome coming together of different interests and that its *Stepping Forward* report in 2010 represented a practical means of achieving the intentions of CRoW, but the fact that the 32 recommendations have still not been enacted makes the 2026 target date impossible to achieve? When do the Government intend to bring into effect the 2015 Deregulation Act containing these recommendations?

In view of the evidence of the failure to achieve the intentions of CRoW and the provision in Section 56 to allow an extension to 2031, will the Government now make the necessary regulations for the extension? Do they understand that there are thousands of volunteers who are struggling thanks to the time and costs involved, the complexity of the system and the inadequate and seriously reducing resources of local highways authorities to cope? If so, what further assistance will they provide for that process?

I have an additional question: what resources do the Government think are needed to achieve the CRoW aims by 2036 or 2031, and how will they provide them?

In view of everything that has happened and of their own failure, will the Government now stand by the historic position of “once a highway, always a highway”, and seek to repeal Section 53 and related sections of the CRoW Act?

I have reached my cut-off date. I look forward to the answers to my questions.

5.40 pm

The Earl of Caithness (Con): My Lords, I am a great supporter of footpaths. I owe them a great debt of gratitude because they played an important part in my rehabilitation since my accident. I would say only that I am saddened by the condition of some footpaths and even more saddened by the amount of rubbish left on them by people who ought to follow the country code slightly better.

If you think it is taking a long time to get a definitive answer on Brexit, let us talk about rights of way. I congratulate the noble Lord, Lord Greaves, on raising this. It is the 70th anniversary of the legislation to introduce a definitive map of rights of way and we are still arguing and debating about it. That is a nonsense. How right the Government were to bring forward a cut-off date when they did.

I will go off on a slight tangent. People must not get the impression that we are short of footpaths in this country. There are over 94,000 miles of footpaths here and that is being added to regularly. In particular, at the end of February, another 16 miles of new path was added to the English coastal path. I congratulate Natural England on the work it is doing and I look forward to seeing that path completed next year.

The noble Lord, Lord Greaves, raises an important point. As I said, we must not lose sight of the fact that we have been battling on this for 70 years. I remember dealing with it as a land agent in the 1970s and it is a hugely complex, expensive and time-consuming task. The noble Lord was absolutely right to point out some of the difficulties. Councils are spending thousands of pounds and committing a lot of resources to try to solve the problem. On the other side of the coin, where there might be historical rights of way, landowners and involved parties have to defend situations that are not terribly relevant. When they end up in judicial review or in court, they are proved not to be rights of way. That is a waste of time and money.

As a footpath walker, I do not want to walk through somebody's farmyard. It is bad for disease and bad for the farm. There can be hazards. If I am taking my grandchildren on a walk, I certainly do not want a tractor coming round the corner. We must be able to divert footpaths quicker. There is no doubt that some landowners have been harassed about this in the past.

Getting footpaths diverted is part of what the Government want to do under the new proposals. I ask my noble friend: when will these new proposals come in? When will the Deregulation Act 2015 be fully implemented? The whole system needs to be sped up; the noble Lord, Lord Greaves, is absolutely right. I want to ask another question. Will my noble friend confirm that she will not accept bicycles being used on footpaths? There is a push by Cycling UK to open all

[THE EARL OF CAITHNESS]

footpaths to bicycles. Footpaths are footpaths; they are sometimes used by disabled or slightly disabled people such as me, and I do not want bicyclists running me over on a footpath. It is bad enough on a pavement. I hope she will be very firm on that.

5.44 pm

Lord Thurlow (CB): My Lords, I thank the noble Lord, Lord Greaves, for sponsoring this discussion. I declare conflicts: I am a farmer in Scotland with rights of way involved. I fail to understand why public access to footpaths, rights of way, bridle-paths and so on should ever be restricted, if they are legitimate. They are sometimes restricted by barbed wire and by having to register by a specific date.

This is about an extension. We let the pathways that we had historically be covered with Tarmac as the horse became redundant. Many of the networks involved in those pathways have subsequently been lost. The 1949 maps, as we have heard, are frequently inadequate and unhelpful. Recording these rights of way is vital. Ramblers and riders do not want Tarmac. The routes are often contested, as we have heard. The public should be able to access up-to-date digital maps, and constantly be involved in improving them.

Public access to these routes is anyway enshrined in government policy. We have heard just now from the noble Earl, Lord Caithness, about the farm stewardship schemes that are coming along and, I too, would like to know the detail. It does not seem to me contentious that these are an important national resource. Fundamentally, therefore, why have a cut-off date at all?

Where is the information? Why should it be so difficult? We know that the resource made available around 19 years ago was consumed by consultants to a large degree, rather than actually helping establish and identify rights of way. Much of this information is buried. It lies in estate maps, on estate office walls, and will never be revealed. It is in libraries, family archives, parish council records, local authority records, old diaries and books. This should not be time-limited. This information is going to emerge as time goes by, and as we have discovered in the past 10 years, increasingly it has been the job of volunteers rather than any organised resource. We know the funding problems of local authorities; that has made matters worse. We have heard that some 4,400 applications are currently awaiting registration. Some of those will be contentious. I cannot see how this will all be done within the timetable without the extension—and even with the extension I question the wisdom. We should remove the deadline.

I want to say something on behalf of the horses before I finish; they cannot speak for themselves. They are the ones who have lost their access. I have heard from the British Horse Society that some 3,000 horses were injured in accidents on roads in the last few years. Of those horses, 340 died, with 40 riders or handlers also killed. These were traffic accidents, and I am sure that many of them could have been avoided if the bridle paths were a joined-up network, which once upon a time they were.

I conclude with a request to remove the deadline—or a question to the Government on why there should be a deadline. I fail to understand the wisdom of that when the information will continue to surface as the years go by, to the great benefit of the public.

5.48 pm

Baroness Scott of Needham Market (LD): I would like to thank my noble friend Lord Greaves for securing today's debate, for setting out the issues so clearly, and for his tireless advocacy of public access and rights of way.

Between 1993 and 2005, I was a county councillor in Suffolk and, for most of that time, I chaired the public rights of way committee, so I have got quite some form in this area. I remember reading a summing up by Lord Denning in which he said that nothing excites an Englishman so much as a footpath—I have always thought that said a lot about English men.

The cut-off date for claiming these historic rights of way might have seemed a good way off at the time the legislation went through, but it is now coming into the near horizon. There are two points I wish to make. The first concerns the reliance on the voluntary sector to make sure that the claims are made before the cut-off date. Groups such as the Ramblers do, and always have done, an amazing job, but they are volunteers, with all the limitations of time, money and expertise that that entails. There is a very strong reliance on local groups. Admittedly, they all know their own areas very well but, like all voluntary groups, their capacity will ebb and flow over time, with more or fewer members and so on. I just do not think it is right that the capacity of the volunteers should determine whether an ancient right of way is extinguished—that just does not feel right to me.

My second concern is around the capacity of local government to deliver within this timeframe. It is well known that council finances are now at breaking point. The legal teams that have to deal with public rights of way claims are now often part of more generalist teams, and they have to compete with areas such as child protection, which—absolutely naturally—take priority. As we have heard, the current caseload is around 4,500. I suspect that, by 2026, the backlog will be so enormous that it will pretty much negate the whole idea of providing certainty for landowners—this will just drag on for decades. Therefore, there should be common cause rather than pitting one side against the other.

I have a final point to make on local authority budgets. The evidence base for historic rights of way is often found within documents such as tithe maps, enclosure awards and so on, many of which are held in local archives. Local archives themselves are coming under enormous pressure as council budgets are squeezed. I am a board member of the National Archives and we have oversight of all this. In some councils, the situation is very serious. One contingency that many are looking at is a significant reduction in the opening hours of local archives, which would make it even more difficult for local voluntary groups to gather the evidence that they need.

Under the existing legislation, the Secretary of State can extend the cut-off date by five years, and that leeway was put into statute with a purpose. I believe that, with the points that have been made, and to which I have added—the situation in local government, the absence of the secondary legislation and the collapse of the Discovering Lost Ways project—a very good case has been made for delay and, preferably, an entire review.

5.51 pm

Lord Carrington (CB): My Lords, I too thank the noble Lord, Lord Greaves, for introducing this debate. I declare my interests as set forth in the register as both a farmer and a landowner. I am a member of the Country Land and Business Association and the National Farmers' Union, and I am an avid walker. I am also happy to state that, as far as my own property is concerned, I do not have and never have had any contentious issues or arguments relating to rights of way, of which we have many being located in the Chilterns. We welcome responsible walkers and riders, who often help us by reporting incidents of sheep worrying and other anti-social behaviour.

Like Brexit, public access creates a vast amount of heat, depending on which side of the fence you sit, and often very little light, which is evidenced by the weighty House of Lords Library briefing and all its references. In my view, the best way forward in these circumstances is to realise that no one has a monopoly of right and that only in a spirit of compromise can these contentious issues be resolved.

As noble Lords know, all the interested parties endorsed the coalition Government's proposal that all unrecorded footpaths and bridleways created before 1949 cannot be recorded after 1 January 2026. Not unexpectedly, since then, with cuts to local authority budgets and with the demands of Brexit, the resources available for this process have diminished, causing much frustration.

However, we are where we are and, bearing in mind that there is no such thing as a perfect world, we need to reflect hard on the likely benefits of extending this interminable and expensive process, as well as the harm that is being caused to innocent owners faced with unexpected and at times vexatious legal challenges over their previously unencumbered registered land. I would like to make five short points in favour of maintaining the existing timetable.

First, agreeing that the current cut-off date stays in place leaves unaffected routes already used by the public and in no way limits access granted by rights of way provision.

Secondly, we can then move on to better understand what rights of way look like across the country and ensure that they are properly preserved and maintained.

Thirdly, the cut-off process allows for reform to the administrative process of rights of way claims. Where currently decisions can take years, if not decades, the new system should take a matter of only weeks.

Fourthly, this provides much-needed clarity to property owners and protects them from the appalling situation where a claim is suddenly made for an historic unused right of way to be made on their land.

Finally, the new system after the cut-off date will also take into account present-day uses. The current archaic system will not easily allow footpaths to be diverted to avoid such unattractive and dangerous features as slurry lagoons. Walkers and farmers will be the winners from a more flexible system. We have all heard of the unintended horror cases, such as a livestock farmer in East Anglia who has owned his farm for more than 50 years and carefully maintains existing rights of way on his land, who suddenly faces the prospect of a byway in the middle of his farm buildings. Within living memory, there has been no public path on this route and no public use of it. This claim would ruin his business, as there can be no gates or other barriers on a byway.

Let us bring this whole contentious issue to an end in 2026 by creating certainty and properly maintained public paths in the interests of both the general public and property owners. Can the Minister give us that assurance?

5.56 pm

Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbotts (Con): My Lords, I add my thanks to the noble Lord, Lord Greaves, for giving us the chance to debate this important topic—an eternal topic, as several noble Lords have said. I declare an interest as a member of the Ramblers; I undertake long-distance walks each year—not like my noble friend Lord Bates, who does serious long-distance walking, but I expect to clock up 100 to 150 miles this year. As the Ramblers point out in their briefing, along the way we will stay in pubs, use restaurants, and, occasionally, if we are too exhausted, get a taxi to take at least our luggage if not us. The supplementary income walkers give to the countryside community is very important, and I look forward to seeing more of the countryside on my way from Land's End to John O'Groats. I also declare an interest by proxy: my wife, my noble friend Lady Hodgson of Abinger, is a committed horsewoman and a member of the British Horse Society.

This is an important but narrow topic, and I do not want to repeat what other noble Lords have said. It seems to me that the argument for extending the cut-off date is, as they say in the trade, a slam-dunk proposition. We have heard from noble Lords about the delays along the way in the handover from the Countryside Agency to Natural England and in the implementation of the Deregulation Act. That seems a very good reason why those years should be added to the period before it comes to an end. It must surely be public policy to encourage our fellow citizens to exercise more, and how better to do this than walking on the footpaths, seeing the countryside and its flora and fauna at first hand rather than through the window of a motor car?

With respect to the noble Lord, Lord Carrington, he is wrong to suggest that we should stick to the cut-off date. As I have already said, the delays in implementing the legislation should give us additional time at the end, and, as the Ramblers point out, more than 4,000 applications are already in process. No matter how strict a view one takes, these need to be taken into account when we look at any end date for the legislation.

[LORD HODGSON OF ASTLEY ABBOTTS]

In the few minutes I have, I want to look at the position from the other end of the telescope—in fact, from the point of view of the noble Lord, Lord Carrington: the position of the owner of the land which the footpath or bridleway will cross. I undertook for the Government an investigation into what was holding up the development and growth of small charities. I produced a report called *Unshackling Good Neighbours*. One of the most important issues stopping the growth of charitable activity was the lack of, improper use of, or inability to get, insurance. There is an application here when we come to look at the opening up of bridleways and footpaths. In that report, we had examples of people who had had a fete in their garden, at which somebody fell over a guy rope and they got sued.

When farmers open up bridleways, it starts with a few horses and a few walkers; then you get more walkers and a few cyclists; then you get a lot of cyclists and then motor-bicyclists; and then, finally, you get off-the-road vehicles. I therefore much associate myself with the question put by my noble friend Lord Caithness about ensuring that footpaths are used appropriately. I look forward to hearing what my noble friend the Minister has to say about that. What happens when you get that mixed use of traffic is that a horse shies and runs into a group of walkers, and then the landowner suddenly finds himself in the firing line.

There are issues here of usage and priority, and of consideration and courtesy. It may be that somewhere along the way we should think about a new code of behaviour to deal with and reconcile these interests. Many of your Lordships have experienced the satisfaction, thrill or sense of achievement when, having sweated up some hill to reach the top, one can see the beauty of Britain laid out before one. We should not allow these opportunities to be denied to our fellow citizens.

6.01 pm

The Earl of Lytton (CB): My Lords, I add my congratulations to the noble Lord, Lord Greaves, on securing this debate, and declare my interests as a landowner, a Local Government Association vice-president, a property professional and chairman of a body known as the Rights of Way Review Committee. I pay tribute to those who attend that committee's meetings to seek consensus, despite some opposed standpoints, but I have to say that our work is on hold. At a risk of covering things that have been raised already, here I will express my personal views.

My starting point is to affirm the importance of our rights-of-way system to users and, perhaps not so obviously, to the businesses—mine included—that provide services along the way. It is a critical social and national tourist asset, with no better recommendation of its importance than that contained in the report *Stepping Forward* and the simplification proposals that followed in 2012.

It is self-evident that not all of the network is useful or convenient. Despite significant advances, it suffers from underfunding, poor conditions, bad signage, discontinuity, inadequacy for the range of current users and a sclerotic legal structure. The equally obvious

need for policy consensus is still hampered by polarised views, conflict and lengthy arguments, the tragic and avoidable ruination of some rights, and the deprivation of rights for others—this is all sucking resources from other important work. Local authorities are still forced into costly technical battles based not on current or future needs but often on claimed usage from long ago, when people walked to work or church and drove their livestock to market. Yet that remains the basis of the lost ways and many such definitive map modifications that follow: hence the need for some sort of cut-off.

Caseloads grow, partly, as we have heard, because some post-1949 work incorporated errors and omissions. It was also not flexible enough to meet modern requirements, never mind the local government spending constraints. Seemingly only in the national parks do rights of way have adequate priority or anywhere near appropriate management or funding. This does not translate into modern green commuting, safe routes to school, or facilities for urban fringe dwellers; nor does it cater for—or segregate, for that matter—the wide range of recreational users of our linear routes and open access areas, let alone for people with infants in buggies or mobility scooters.

My insights do not reveal an easy way forward. Genuinely held viewpoints are too often based on narrow, inflexible principles that stand in the way of compromise, often to the point where conceding anything becomes an existential threat to its proponents. This drains the lifeblood from reasoned dialogue on the future and stagnates progress. The huge costs of implementing the CROW Act 2000 and the disproportionately small results on the ground are another case in point. Yet there is space enough in this realm to satisfy reasonable aspirations if we could bypass dirigiste principles and obduracy, with their huge costs and delays, and replace the concept of rights with one of consensual facility.

The object must surely be to protect and enhance the best of our rights-of-way system, rationalise and improve coherence, avoid conflicts, and allow routes to be amended or created, with redundant ones being closed. Even after the cut-off, the lodged claims to date will still need to be dealt with, and it is arguable that the definitive modification arrangements are no longer fit for purpose. Failing movement on the Deregulation Act 2015 proposals, might it not be better if it was all taken out of its legalistic arena and put in the sole control of some other non-partisan statutory body with a remit based on need, network coherence, fair balance, conflict reduction and cost benefit? Much of the private and taxpayers' money spent on historical research and public inquiries might then be directed to infrastructure improvements, eliminating the more severe landowner risks and doing a power of good for the general public, tourism and the economy.

6.05 pm

Baroness Bakewell of Hardington Mandeville (LD): My Lords, I thank my noble friend Lord Greaves for securing this important debate and for setting out the case so well. Rights of way are very dear to the public's heart, if not necessarily to the landowners. I declare an interest in that there is a footpath running along the

edge of our garden and within our boundary. Currently, it is used by children playing hide-and-seek, and by ramblers once a year.

Towards the end of my time on Somerset County Council, I was a member of the environment committee, which met once a month. Not every meeting contained an application to put a right of way on the definitive map. If there was one, often a site visit would have taken place earlier in the month. We also had written evidence, in addition to the views we may have gleaned when we were out on site. All of this was six to 12 years ago, when the rights-of-way department was small and the offices were overworked. At that time, there was a five-year backlog on rights-of-way applications. As one of those contacting me eloquently said: “By the time the application comes forward, many of those who would have given evidence will have died”.

Given the Government’s drive to make us all healthier and most of the public’s wish to embrace this ethos, it would seem extremely short-sighted not to put some investment into ensuring that rights of way are fully investigated and not lost forever. Relying on volunteers is unsustainable, as the noble Lord, Lord Thurlow, and my noble friend Lady Scott of Needham Market have indicated. I have received interesting briefs from a range of organisations, all saying that the deadline of 2026 will cause a huge loss of potential access for the public to the countryside. Many give examples of how difficult it is to provide the necessary proof that a bridleway or footpath ever existed over a disputed route, as has been demonstrated by the noble Lord, Lord Thurlow.

If the 2026 deadline is adhered to, I cannot see how the promises in the Government’s 25-year environment plan to create new green infrastructure will be delivered. Would the Minister care to comment on this? As my noble friend Lord Greaves said, in 2010, the Countryside Agency estimated that there were 16,000 kilometres of unrecorded rights of way in England, with 1,500 in Wales, and a potential 36,000 kilometres of historic routes that existed and needed investigating. The lack of local authority funding impacts on route maintenance and definitive map work. This means that the grass routes which the horse industry uses is severely threatened. This is an activity which attracts a high proportion of women, girls, children, disabled people and older people, and because of its rural nature, it is a big contributor to the rural economy.

If the cut-off date of 2026 remains, it should be only with the agreement that all existing recorded rural footpaths be made equally accessible to the non-motorised user groups—equestrians, cyclists and walkers—and I cannot agree with the noble Earl, Lord Caithness, on this. Many children wish to ride their bicycles to school, but the roads are not safe to do so. If byways and bridleways could be made available over green lanes, they could enjoy exercise safely. It is not necessary to design rights of way as though they were super-highways costing thousands of pounds.

This has been a fascinating debate. It is obvious from everything that has been said that there are differing opinions about whether there should be a cut-off date or not. As my noble friend Lord Greaves said, in 2007, the Discovering Lost Ways project recorded

only four lost ways in one county and had to be abandoned at a cost of £8 million; what a chronic waste of money.

There are areas of the country such as Cornwall with a vast number of paths to investigate. Walkers spend more than £6 billion a year supporting 24,000 full-time jobs, while the economic value of the equestrian sector stands at £4.3 billion. The Government would be unwise to ignore this economic impact. Surely the Minister will accept that it would be better to abandon the 2026 deadline and think again.

6.10 pm

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch (Lab): My Lords, I am very grateful to the noble Lord, Lord Greaves, for tabling this debate and for reminding us of this looming deadline. As other noble Lords have done, I should declare an interest as the president of Friends of the South Downs, which does fantastic work campaigning to protect and preserve the landscape of the South Downs National Park and providing a huge range of guided walks on its footpaths and bridleways.

As the noble Lord pointed out, the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 introduced the cut-off date of 2026 to register historic rights of way. At the time it was a ground-breaking piece of legislation which created the right to roam on common land and opened up access to 3 million acres of mountains and moorland. I am very proud of my party’s record in championing the right to roam. It built on the foundations of Labour’s National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, which took the bold step of creating 10 national parks with extended public access to the countryside. This month, we will be participating in a commemoration on Kinder Scout of the mass trespass that led to the legislation being passed 70 years ago. We have made a great deal of progress and have much to celebrate.

However, as my noble friend Lady Taylor of Bolton made clear, when we included the cut-off clause in the 2000 Act, I do not think that we anticipated the consequences today. As noble Lords have said, we are now in danger of hitting the 2026 deadline with the job half done. First, we should recognise that walkers are already faced with huge challenges in exercising their rights. It is estimated that 9% of the existing network is impassable, blocked off or unstable. Rather than extending their rights over historic footpaths, for many walkers there is a battle to retain what they already have. Secondly, the task of identifying the missing historic routes has proved to be much more complicated than was first imagined. Records are incomplete or contradictory and subject to local folklore which is often difficult to prove. They have also proved on occasion to be hugely controversial, with planning applications, disputes and legal challenges all too often causing delay.

Thirdly, for historic rights of way to be rescued and re-established, local authorities are required to step up to the mark by investigating claims and dealing with objections before a footpath can be officially recognised. As the deadline grows near and receives more publicity, the number of claims has been increasing at the very time when local authority resources are being cut to the bone. Moreover, if it is difficult

[BARONESS JONES OF WHITCHURCH]

and costly for local authorities, it is even more problematic for individuals wishing to make a claim. You have to gather evidence for the continued use of a path over 20 years and find sufficient witnesses to verify its use. The challenge for individuals and groups is enormous.

In these circumstances, it seems only right that we should revisit the 2026 deadline. As noble Lords have said, historic rights of way come to light for many different reasons and at many different times as land use changes and more historic records are unearthed. You cannot put a time limit on that. It would be a real setback to our heritage if Defra does not take this opportunity to revisit the deadline. I hope that the Minister will confirm that this is indeed her intention.

6.14 pm

Baroness Vere of Norbiton (Con): My Lords, our unique rights of way network is precious. The benefits go far beyond the simple necessity of getting from A to B. Access to the natural environment improves our mental and physical health and provides opportunities for recreation and tourism, as noted by my very energetic noble friend Lord Hodgson. It can even combat loneliness and bind communities together.

My noble friend Lord Caithness said that he feels that there are 94,000 miles of recorded rights of way. My notes say that in England there are around 117,000 miles, so he is right that we are not short of rights of way. They are part of our heritage and must be safeguarded so that future generations can enjoy them too. In order for them to persist, we must have a record of rights of way as they exist now. The rights of way reform project is a key part of providing certainty on where rights of way exist and of providing a streamlined and better process for recording rights of way.

The legal record of rights of way is currently incomplete. This causes uncertainty for users and for landowners on whose land the right sits. Furthermore, the process for amending the legal record is complex. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 made provision to complete the legal record of rights of way by setting a cut-off date in 2026—seven years from now. At that date, historic rights of way, meaning those which existed before 1949, will be extinguished, but only if they are not recorded on the definitive maps. A Natural England project known as “Discovering Lost Ways” was set up in 2001 to record historic routes before this cut-off date.

In light of the complexities of recording rights of way, a review of the “Discovering Lost Ways” project in 2008 concluded that a fresh look at the system was needed to enable the definitive maps to be updated before the cut-off date. A stakeholder working group was convened, formed of a balance of local authorities, user groups, landowners, the NFU, the British Horse Society, the LGA and many others. In its 2012 report *Stepping Forward* the group put forward a number of proposals on which Defra consulted. Defra officials then began to work with the group on a package of secondary legislation to implement its proposals, taking into account both the broad consensus and the range of views held by different people within the group.

The group works well and in a spirit of compromise. That is so necessary, as noted by the noble Lord, Lord Carrington.

The proposed legislation will bring into effect provisions from the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and the Deregulation Act 2015. It will improve and streamline the process of recording rights of way in order to put as many as possible on to the definitive map, and then it will finalise the definitive maps at the cut-off date. In addition, it will provide a process through which landowners can apply for rights of way on their land to be diverted or extinguished. As noted by my noble friend Lord Caithness, sometimes this is essential where, for example, walking across a farmyard is dangerous or it could be bad for the livestock. This will be considered on a case-by-case basis and guidance will encourage local authorities to take action where a path crosses a dangerous place, for example.

My noble friend Lord Caithness asked about bicycles on footpaths. The reforms will not affect the use of registered footpaths where bicycles are not permitted. Bicycles are permitted on bridleways. The reforms will enable existing bridleways to be recorded, so protecting them and providing certainty about where they exist. Access provisions as part of environmental land management will consider all types of users, including cyclists.

As noble Lords will be aware, Defra has been required temporarily to divert resources to planning for our exit from the EU. Rights of way reform has been impacted, and work has been on a temporary hold since October 2018. However, the stakeholder working group is aware of this, believes it is necessary and understands the reason for it. We are not yet in a position to say just how soon work will resume, but I can assure noble Lords that it will be an early priority for the department.

I turn briefly to local authorities, which play an important role in this complex issue. They are responsible for recording rights of way and they do not routinely report to Defra on their progress. However, as the noble Lord, Lord Greaves, noted, I understand that many local authorities currently have a backlog of cases. On resumption of the project, officials will work with local authorities to assess the size of the backlog and consider how progress can be made. I reassure the noble Lord, Lord Thurlow, and the noble Baroness, Lady Scott of Needham Market, that where applications are outstanding, the intention is that the right of way will not be extinguished.

Baroness Scott of Needham Market: I did not suggest for a moment that it would be: it is very clear that the backlog is the backlog. The point I was making, which perhaps I did not make sufficiently clear, is just that the backlog will be so big that the legal certainty that landowners want simply will not exist, because it will take local authorities decades to get through the backlog.

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: I take the comment of the noble Baroness, but I will come on to what will happen to the process when the reforms come through.

The cost and complexity was noted by many noble Lords. We agree that the process is too costly and complex: the rights of way reform project is intended

to address these issues and implement a more streamlined process to record rights of way before the cut-off date. The issue at the heart of today's debate is whether the cut-off date will be delayed—this was mentioned by many noble Lords—and whether the Government will consider delaying the cut-off date from 2026. I appreciate that delaying the cut-off date until 2031 at the latest is a possibility, and some organisations wish to see that. Indeed, we must and we should weigh that against those who are craving certainty, which would be provided by finalising definitive maps. However, on resumption of the project officials will take the issue of the cut-off date forward with the stakeholder working group.

The noble Lord, Lord Greaves, and the noble Baroness, Lady Jones, asked whether we will go further than reviewing the cut-off date. I cannot commit to that. Certainly, we will go back and look at the cut-off date with the stakeholder working group, but we will not repeal the relevant sections of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act. There are arguments on both sides of this issue and at the moment we feel that there are significant numbers of stakeholders, as well as users, who need certainty as to what they are entitled to do and what they are not.

The noble Baroness, Lady Scott, asked whether there will be a review of the reforms after implementation. I am pleased to be able to tell her that there will: officials will consider the best way to monitor the impact of the reforms once they have been implemented. Like many noble Lords, I have seen briefings from the Ramblers, the British Horse Society and the Open Spaces Society, and I am grateful for them. They specifically refer to the work done by the voluntary sector to uncover historic rights of way and to a commitment by a previous Government to support this work. We absolutely recognise that the voluntary sector does very valuable work—this is probably citizenship at its best. They research and record rights of way and we believe that, based on the recommendations of the stakeholder working group, the reforms we propose will assist this work by simplifying the process involved.

Some noble Lords noted the availability of local authority resources, but the Government already provide funding for the revenue support grant to LAs, in which is included funding for rights of way improvement plans. At this time there will be no additional funding available; however, it is important to remember that the system must be as streamlined and efficient as possible, and we believe that the rights of way reforms we are proposing, which have been worked up with the stakeholder working group, will go some way to improve and speed up the process of registering rights of way.

Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbotts: My Lords, before my noble friend comes to her peroration, the availability of insurance reassures all parties as to their position, particularly landowners. Will she undertake to make sure that the stakeholder group takes that into consideration when it meets again?

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: I thank my noble friend for that intervention. I will certainly feed that back in to the stakeholder group, because I do not have any further information for him on that.

Before I reach the final bit, I turn to the Agriculture Bill. It is worth touching on this because the role that some of its provisions could play in the support of access to the countryside is very important. The Bill will make provision for public funding for access as part of the environmental land management schemes. As noble Lords will know, the Bill marks a significant shift in the Government's support for farmers. It will make sure that they are rewarded properly for the work they do to enhance the environment around us and indeed for people's access to it. Previously, subsidies have been paid based on the size of an individual's landholding, not on the contribution that farmers make to society. The scheme will be focused on ensuring that public money is being allocated only where public goods are being delivered. The noble Earl, Lord Lytton, mentioned bad signage, lack of continuity and no consideration of the future needs of the network. All these issues will be able to be wrapped up in projects that will fall under the ELM schemes when they come into effect, once noble Lords have had the chance to consider the Agriculture Bill.

Our aim is for more people to engage with and spend time in the natural environment, and the Government are absolutely committed to enabling that. I reiterate that rights of way are a valuable part of our heritage and an important part of achieving this aim. Some noble Lords may have raised some issues to which I have not been able to respond. I will certainly write with further information where I can and ensure that all noble Lords are copied in. Finally, I thank the noble Lord, Lord Greaves, for securing this debate today, which has been fascinating, if short. I also thank all noble Lords who took part.

Sexual Violence

Question for Short Debate

6.30 pm

Asked by Baroness Hodgson of Abinger

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the adequacy of international mechanisms to hold perpetrators of sexual violence to account; and what steps they are taking to ensure justice for survivors.

Baroness Hodgson of Abinger (Con): My Lords, I am pleased to have secured this important debate and I thank your Lordships in advance for taking the time to join the discussion on this pressing issue. Before I start I wish to declare my interests. I have been a member of the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative from the outset and I served as a member of the Sexual Violence in Conflict Select Committee. I also co-chair the APPG on Women, Peace and Security.

As the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative sets out, sexual violence is frequently used for political ends both as a means of ethnic cleansing and to terrorise local populations. Horrifically, rape and sexual violence have been used throughout history as weapons of war in conflicts across the world. However, this has reached epidemic proportions today, and we hear horrendous stories coming out of Syria, Yemen, Iraq,

[BARONESS HODGSON OF ABINGER]

South Sudan, DRC and among the Rohingya people to name but a few contemporary conflicts. Sexual violence destroys lives, tears families and communities apart, fuels conflict, creates refugees and will haunt those who suffer it for the rest of their days. As Margot Wallström, who was the special representative of the UN Secretary-General on sexual violence in conflict, said,

“it is unfortunately a very effective, cheap and silent weapon with a long-lasting effect on every society”.

Sexual violence is indiscriminate, affecting men and boys as well as women and girls, children and babies. Victims may contract HIV, women—although horribly damaged—may have to deliver babies born of rape, and one should never forget that gang rape can kill. All too often the perpetrators go free while the victims face a lifetime of shame and stigma.

The first time I came across this personally was when I visited Rwanda and went to talk to a church full of widows. The young woman who greeted me had lost her husband and one of her three children in the genocide, and she had contracted HIV as a result of being raped. She was gaunt and worried that she would leave her remaining children orphans. On another day in Rwanda I was taken to see a young man. He had been raped and had contracted HIV. He lived on the edge of a village, shunned by everyone because they knew about his condition.

I pay tribute to my noble friend Lord Hague, who in 2012 during his time as Foreign Secretary, launched the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative, or PSVI, alongside the Special Envoy of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Angelina Jolie. Although Security Council Resolution 1820, which was passed in 2008, recognises sexual violence as a tool of war, this initiative shone a spotlight on the issue, bringing it to global attention. It helped to promote international co-operation and increased the political will and capacity of states to do more. Some 155 countries endorsed the *Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict*, launched during the 68th session of the UN General Assembly in September 2013. These countries agreed that no peace agreements should give amnesty to people who have ordered or carried out rape, and an international protocol was established to set standards for the documentation and investigation of sexual violence in conflict.

In addition, the creation of the role of the Prime Minister’s representative for sexual violence in conflict was key, highlighting the importance of this work and driving it forward. I recognise the dedication of those who have held the office: my noble friend Lady Anelay and now my noble friend Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, who will be responding to the debate. It is important that we have both female and male champions because it is not just a woman’s issue and we need male champions to support and help us. I also pay tribute to the work of my noble friend Lady Helic and others at the FCO, DfID and the MoD who have worked so hard on this initiative.

One of the major thrusts of the PSVI is to end the culture of impunity, shifting the shame from the victims to the perpetrators by bringing them to justice. Member

states in the UN make increasingly strong statements calling for an end to impunity for conflict-related sexual violence. In April 2018, in the Security Council open debate on conflict-related sexual violence, SRSR Pramilla Patten flagged the impunity of perpetrators as a key issue, yet in spite of all the declarations and good intent, disappointingly few people have so far been brought to trial and prosecuted. The work of the Dr Denis Mukwege Foundation argues that:

“Despite an expanding legal framework against sexual violence in conflict, there have been relatively few cases at the international courts and tribunals”.

For example, the ICC’s first conviction for sexual violence crimes against former Congolese vice-president Jean-Pierre Bemba was made in March 2016, but it was overturned last June, so no reparations were awarded to victims and no justice was done. There are numerous other perpetrators in the DRC, which is often referred to as the rape capital of the world, but have any of them been held to account?

Today we are told that the Caliphate of Daesh in Iraq and Syria has been defeated. We have all heard about the fate of the Yazidis: so many women dragged away, sold to become sex slaves and multiply raped. I ask the Minister how many of these perpetrators have been charged with sexual violence. I understand that many ISIL fighters are being held in Iraqi prisons charged with terrorism but not sexual violence. If this horrendous weapon is not acknowledged in terms of the law, how will that deter others from committing sexual violence in the future and how will Yazidi women ever feel that the terrible crimes against them have been properly recognised and the perpetrators punished?

When Raqqa fell, fighters, many whom had committed war crimes, including sexual violence, were allowed to walk away. Was that agreed by the 79 partners of the global coalition against Daesh? We know that many of the Rohingya women escaping from the northern Rakhine State to Bangladesh have been raped. What is happening to hold people to account there? How can the UN and the UK put pressure on the Governments of Myanmar and Bangladesh to enable justice to prevail?

It is a sad situation that today it still appears that those who order or carry out rape and sexual violence in war can expect to get away with it. It would appear that the current global political and legal climates are not conducive to the goal of ensuring that survivors and the families of victims can seek justice and access to legal systems is shrinking. States in many conflict-affected areas have shown themselves to be either unwilling or unable to receive complaints, investigate or prosecute cases. Too often regional tribunals are slow to respond and few survivors have access to them. There is often little political will to establish international or hybrid courts for a variety of reasons, including cost and the time to deliver judgments. Access to international legal mechanisms such as the International Criminal Court is shrinking as member states do not ratify the ICC treaty—countries including China and the US—justified in a speech by Secretary of State Pompeo last month because he does not want American military or civil personnel to be prosecuted. Many countries affected by conflict, including Somalia, Iraq, South Sudan, Syria and Yemen, have not ratified

the treaty. Referrals from the Security Council to the ICC are diminishing due to the veto. Meanwhile, member states are often restricting the national legislation which could allow investigations and prosecutions of grave and serious international crimes outside the jurisdiction in which they occurred.

Sadly, sexual violence is not only committed by non-state actors. During our Select Committee inquiry we received a considerable volume of evidence on the issue of sexual violence perpetrated by peacekeepers. The crimes were often exploitative and transactional in their nature, making them somewhat different from what I have been describing so far, but they are an abuse of trust and position. While I naturally commend the steps the UN have taken to date, the current system for holding peacekeepers accountable is still not working and lacks transparency. Can the Minister update us on what more can be done?

The PSVI initiative was always going to be a marathon rather than a sprint and it needs sustained effort. Will the Minister update us on the decisions and outcomes of the Wilton Park conference at the end of February on PSVI? Last year's PSVI film festival was uplifting, poignant and challenging. I look forward to the PSVI international conference which the UK will host later this year, five years on from the 2014 global summit. This will be an opportunity to bring global attention to this important issue again.

I am grateful for being able to raise this issue today and to other noble Lords who will speak. With all the progress being made and attention on this issue, will the Minister say why justice for survivors of sexual violence in conflict-affected areas is so elusive? How can we best use the UK's soft power and influence to ensure that adequate national and international mechanisms are put in place to ensure that the perpetrators of sexual violence are brought to justice and that the shame and stigma is shifted once and for all from the victims to the perpetrators? I end with the words of Iranian Nobel Peace Prize laureate Shirin Ebadi:

"We have to be a loud and clear voice for those whose voices cannot be heard. Under international law, rape is a crime against humanity—and it is our duty to work to bring impunity for such crimes to an end".

6.41 pm

Baroness Featherstone (LD): I congratulate the noble Baroness, Lady Hodgson of Abinger, on bringing this important debate to the Committee. As she will know, I was the Government's ministerial champion for tackling violence against women and girls overseas for all five years of the coalition Government, and violence against women was also in my portfolio for the two years I was a DfID Minister, as was responsibility for Africa, a continent riven by sexual violence against women and girls in war—and out of war, frankly. This was an era of real progress, of moving forward on this agenda, particularly the PSVI. The then Foreign Secretary, the noble Lord, Lord Hague of Richmond, and the noble Baroness, Lady Helic, did a massive amount of amazing work on sexual violence in conflict, as did the noble Baroness, Lady Hodgson. It was as if the world's attention was on us, and the global summit to which the noble Baroness referred was a turning point.

The world was looking at us. That was obviously helped by Angelina Jolie and various rumours that were circulating at the time.

DfID was focused on women's lives. The experiences I had and the lives I witnessed taught me that right across the world women are oppressed and suppressed and are the victims of sexual violence regardless. Justine Greening, then my Secretary of State, together with Nike, coined the expression, vis-à-vis DfID's work with women, "Giving women choice, voice and control" because across the world we have virtually none, and I include this country in that to a degree, but not to the degree that I saw in Africa or Asia.

I remember the desperation of girl students at a university in Ethiopia who were often the victims of sexual violence on campus, but if they reported it to the police they were as likely to be raped by the police as they were to be listened to. I remember visiting a Marie Stopes outreach clinic for victims of sexual and domestic violence in Uganda and sitting in a circle with women who had all escaped from sexual violence to the refuge and hearing their tales. A woman holding a baby had only stumps for arms. One arm ended above the elbow and the other ended below it. Her husband had cut her arms off because she was not available when he needed her. That was literally no voice, no choice and no control, and she had no one to go to. There was no justice, no one to run to and no one to help. I met girls—children, really—who had been raped, often by family members. In a refuge in DRC, I met girls who had been thrown out of their homes and villages as witches and who were living on the streets, being raped nightly until they finally got to the refuge, which I think was run by War Child. Most of them were pregnant.

The main subject of this debate is rape as a weapon of war. Despite all the fantastic work that charities do, the money and the effort that donor countries have put in, and the bravery of the fighters for human rights, equality, justice and change, it is a long, challenging and seemingly impossible task, but we must make it possible. How we bring perpetrators to justice is key, for, without consequences—and, sadly, with the complicity of authorities, organisations, communities and Governments—change will not come.

It is hard enough in this country to get convictions and justice for the two women per week who are killed by their partners or ex-partners. In countries where rule of law is at best tentative, in war, it is virtually impossible. But progress has been made. The first challenge is always persuading countries and the international community to have laws. The bigger challenge is getting them to enforce them, to ensure that international law is instituted and is working.

As has been said, in South Sudan, DRC, Myanmar, CAR, Northern Rakhine, Yemen and the list goes on and on, violation of human rights is common and its defence ever more dangerous for those activists who try to bring perpetrators to justice. Women get raped if they report violations; witnesses are intimidated if they testify. We are dealing with so many reasons for this: clans, religion, politics, poverty, ethnicity. Sometimes, as was said, it is an expression of ethnic cleansing, as in cases of the Rohingya and the Yazidis. Sometimes it

[BARONESS FEATHERSTONE]

is a weapon of war employed by the armed forces themselves. The consequent displacement and dispossession of land exacerbates the danger, leaving women even more exposed to sexual violence than before.

During my time at DfID, I tried to get the big charities—Oxfam, Save the Children and others—to take positive action in refugee camps, which are dangerous places for women and girls. Of course, the first order is shelter, water, food and sanitation, but we have a duty of care for those raped in refugee camps—something that will stay with them for the rest of their lives. Women and girls fleeing violence and conflict are so vulnerable to traffickers and border forces and, once in camps, to other refugees or, indeed—sadly—occasionally to humanitarian workers. In wretched circumstances, rape and sexual violence are commonplace.

We need to ensure that the resolutions, promises and declarations about tackling these issues are acted upon and perpetrators brought to justice. Since the initiative of the noble Lord, Lord Hague, there have been a great many more initiatives, committees, papers, resolutions and actions, including the setting up in 2015 of the House of Lords Sexual Violence in Conflict Committee. It is timely that this debate should look at the international mechanisms to hold perpetrators of sexual violence to account and see whether all these summits and good intentions have led to anything that actually works. I was not completely up to speed on that but, listening to the noble Baroness, Lady Hodgson of Abinger, it is clear that they have not worked, or are not working to anything like the degree needed to change the future.

I will be very interested to hear an up-to-date response from the Minister on the efficacy of the measures in place. Is the information that has been documented adequate, usable and being used successfully? If not, what change is needed? Are those receiving the information acting on it? If not, what are the deficiencies and excuses—the “why”s? What is the record of cases brought? What is the level of success or failure? Why are more cases not brought? What is the political, legal and security context in which the documentation is taking place? What restrictions does context put on the mechanism? Is the information gathered for litigating individual cases for individual redress, or is it being used to advocate for and illustrate the volume and type of sexual violence being perpetrated in specific areas or countries? What support is there for victims or witnesses during or after a legal process? Are measures to protect victim identity, confidentiality and anonymity in place and working? I fear not.

How is the international protocol functioning? Is it overcoming the challenges faced by those trying to document sexual violence as a violation under international law? Are countries supporting the documentation of sexual violence crimes? Are conflict-affected states developing national action plans using that protocol? If so, are they working? Have the recommendations from the Lords committee been implemented? On this debate, importantly, what are the British Government doing to monitor effectiveness on a regular basis? Are the Government asking the questions?

This is a massive challenge, and we must be constantly alert as to whether the mechanisms resulting from all the focus, and all the organisations, are actually delivering. Lastly, what priority do the Minister, the Government and the current Foreign Secretary give to sexual violence in conflict? It was undoubtedly the importance and effort invested by the noble Lord, Lord Hague, in this issue—and Angelina Jolie—that catapulted it into the spotlight. Despite much good work, not least by the noble Baroness, that spotlight appears to be fading—is it delivering?

6.50 pm

Lord Alton of Liverpool (CB): My Lords, the noble Lady, Baroness Hodgson, has consistently and tenaciously championed the cause of those who have been subjected to unspeakable violence. In her moving and powerful speech this evening, she rightly demanded more effective ways of holding perpetrators to account and ensuring justice. I think we should all express our gratitude to her for that.

I should declare that I am joint chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Groups on North Korea and Pakistani Minorities, vice-chair of the APPGs on Burma and the DRC and an officer of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Sudan and South Sudan. All of these are countries I have visited and all are disfigured by the use of rape as a weapon of war. I am also a trustee of Arise, a charity that works with women who have been trafficked or enslaved.

Last year, Denis Mukwege—who was referred to by the noble Baroness—with Nadia Murad, a Yazidi woman I have had the privilege to meet, jointly received the Nobel Peace Prize, given,

“for their efforts to end the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and armed conflict”,

as it says in the citation. In the DRC, where more than 5 million people are estimated to have died in the long-running conflicts—a greater number than in any other conflict since World War II—Dr Mukwege has treated thousands of women who were raped, performing up to 10 operations every day. Since Panzi Hospital, in Bukavu, was founded by Dr Mukwege in 1999, it has treated more than 82,000 patients with complex gynaecological damage and trauma. An estimated 60% of these injuries were caused by sexual violence. Dr Mukwege describes how his patients arrive at the hospital sometimes naked, usually in horrific conditions, victims of different armed groups.

Throughout this discussion of international mechanisms to hold perpetrators of sexual violence to account, we should keep Dr Mukwege and Nadia Murad—tortured and raped by Islamic State militants during their genocide—at the heart of our deliberations. It is crucial to begin with one important fact: that there are not many adequate mechanisms in place to end the current culture of impunity. Indeed, the only permanent international criminal tribunal, the International Criminal Court, despite being able to deal with cases of sexual violence, genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes or crimes of aggression, often lacks the jurisdiction to be able to investigate the crimes and to prosecute the perpetrators. The ICC is a treaty-bound court and its competence is limited by

that fact alone. This is graphically illustrated by the genocidal campaign unleashed by ISIS against religious and other minorities in Syria and Iraq—people like Nadia Murad.

As the House knows, in 2014, ISIS, driven by its hatred of difference, instigated mass murder, torture, abuse, rape, sexual violence, and forced displacement. To this day, more than 3,000 Yazidi women and girls are still missing after they were abducted from Sinjar in September 2014 and are suspected to be in Syria. For more than four years, these women and girls have been subjected to most atrocious abuse imaginable. In her testimony, Nadia says:

“One moment I was a farm girl, going to school in my village in northern Iraq and the next I was an ISIS sex slave, ‘owned’ by militants. My peaceful existence was shattered simply because my religious beliefs were deemed sub-human by a group of men who believed they were superior. ISIS murdered my family and took me captive, exposing me to horrors which would be impossible to imagine had I not endured every moment and felt each brutal blow”.

She says she chose to speak because:

“I believed the world needed to know the truth and I wanted justice. I wanted ISIS held accountable. If we cannot achieve this, with all the evidence and our justice systems, then we are giving a green light to these groups”.

Yet, despite the level and nature of these atrocities, the ICC cannot get involved. The ICC does not have territorial jurisdiction in Syria or Iraq, and, currently, there is no other international or regional criminal court that could deal with prosecutions. Another option would be for the Security Council to establish an ad hoc tribunal to prosecute the ISIS fighters, modelled on the precedent set by the international criminal tribunal for the former Yugoslavia or the international criminal tribunal for Rwanda. The Minister knows that I have been in touch with him and the Foreign Office on a number of occasions to put forward that proposal.

Under Security Council Resolution 2379, an investigative team is already mandated to collect, preserve and prepare for future prosecutions the evidence of the crimes perpetrated by ISIS in Iraq. As the next step, the Security Council could establish the international criminal tribunal for ISIS, modelled on the ICTY or the ICTR, with a tailored mandate.

In June 2018, work in this direction was initiated by Pieter Omtzigt, a Dutch MP, who convened a meeting between the Iraqi Government’s representatives and experts to explore the need to assist Iraq in prosecuting ISIS fighters and looking into the available options. The Iraqi representatives agreed that as the issue of ISIS is not only a problem of Iraq but of international concern and an international responsibility, Iraq would need assistance with the prosecutions. More than 850 people from the UK travelled to Syria and Iraq to join ISIS and were directly involved there in every aspect of the genocide, including systematic rape and enslavement. The UK clearly needs to be involved in prosecuting the fighters. Stripping them of citizenship is not the way to bring about justice, a point I raised during Question Time recently. It merely makes it harder.

For months, I have been urging the Government to explore the initiation of international or regional prosecutions, especially as the investigative team has just begun the excavations of the first mass grave in

Sinjar. The international option is crucial if there is to be justice. Survivors of rape and sexual violence are not involved in the proceedings of Iraqi domestic courts, giving little hope that justice will be served. How can we ensure justice if the very people affected by the atrocities are not even asked to testify, to tell the stories of what happened to them, and do not have the opportunity to see justice being done or to hear an apology?

Considering the territorial limitations of the ICC, it may be crucial to reconsider whether we need a new mechanism that would be better suited to address the growing impunity. If the Minister would be willing, I would be most grateful for a meeting to discuss this troubling situation and possible ways forward.

Let me also briefly mention Pakistan, which I visited in November, and where the Minister also was recently. At least 1,000 women belonging to religious minorities, some of them minors, have been abducted, forcibly converted and often married to those very abductors. They come from the very poorest sectors of society and are easy targets for the perpetrators of sexual violence. The law-enforcement agencies often show little or no interest in helping aggrieved parents to register a police case against the kidnappers. Even if the parents persist and somehow reach the courts and the abductors are forced to bring victims to the court, the abducted are threatened and told that if they tell the court about their kidnappings, their parents and siblings will be killed. Thus they have no option but to admit in the court that their conversion was voluntary.

In the past few weeks, there have been at least six such cases, which I have drawn to the Minister’s attention. These include a 13 year-old Christian girl, Sadaf Masih, who was kidnapped, forcibly converted and married on 6 February, in Punjab. On 20 March, two teenaged Hindu girls, Reena, aged 15, and Raveena, aged 13, were similarly kidnapped, forcibly converted and married within a matter of hours, in Sindh. The kidnappers were married already, with children, but that that did not prevent them from forcibly marrying those girls. In the worst-case scenarios, the kidnappers after sexual and physical abuse, sell them into slavery and they are sent to brothels.

We give Pakistan £383,000 in aid each and every day—£2.8 billion over 20 years. Surely we can use our aid programmes with leverage to ensure justice for the victims and to save many broken lives and families. The noble Baroness, Lady Hodgson, is to be thanked for encouraging us to address this important issue this evening, and I reiterate my gratitude to her.

6.58 pm

Baroness Tonge (Non-Aff): My Lords, I too thank the noble Baroness, Lady Hodgson, for securing this debate on a very difficult area. I must say that I put my name down hoping that I would learn an awful lot more than I would contribute to the debate. From the speeches so far I have done so, particularly that of the noble Baroness, Lady Hodgson, which was excellent and instructive, and for which I thank her.

Rape in conflict, of women and men, is one of the most sickening crimes human beings can commit. I think we all agree with that. It is not just an act of

[BARONESS TONGE]

sexual intercourse, as I have said many times. It is a series of disgusting, painful, humiliating, life-threatening actions, perpetrated on helpless victims by triumphant soldiers. It is a weapon of war and, in some cases, a weapon of genocide.

I know, however, that there is huge disagreement internationally and nationally on what to do about this. My first researcher, when I entered the House of Commons in 1997, had also acted as my organiser during the general election. She won the seat of Richmond Park for me. She is Dr Louise Arimatsu, now a distinguished policy fellow at the Centre for Women, Peace and Security at the London School of Economics. I must confess that she has tried to explain to me the complicated international law around this subject. Law is never simple, and I always say to her that I am very glad I did medicine, and not law.

As a doctor, however, I know how difficult it is to get women and men to testify on oath about what happened to them for fear of being disgraced in their communities. It is a terrible, terrible disgrace for them. Therefore, in these cases we need to completely change the accent on how these cases are dealt with. It is the commanding officers of the soldiers who perpetrate these crimes who should be held responsible for those crimes. It must be very difficult, I know, to control men fired up to kill or be killed—I have never had to do it—but a few more prosecutions of commanding officers, holding them responsible for the actions of their soldiers, might just concentrate minds. No ifs, no buts, no excuses—they are responsible.

We are trying to adopt a similar philosophy in cases of FGM, in which it is often impossible to get a child to give evidence against a parent or anyone who has done this terrible thing to them, so parents are held entirely responsible for the safety of that child. It is they who should be prosecuted. Dr Arimatsu, interestingly, mentioned the military trial 70 years ago of General Yamashita, who was responsible for tens of thousands of people being tortured and killed in the Second World War. In the Yamashita case, it was stated—and this is very good to listen to:

“Where murder and rape and vicious revengeful actions are widespread offences, and there is no effective attempt by a commander to discover and control the criminal acts, such a commander may be held responsible, even criminally liable, for the lawless acts of his troops”.

That was said in court 70 years ago. We have not come very far since then.

As already mentioned, it was encouraging when, in 2016, Jean-Pierre Bemba was convicted at the ICC of being responsible for the acts of sexual violence committed by his soldiers in the Central African Republic in 2003-04. This has, however, as has been mentioned, been overturned by a majority in the ICC Appeals Chamber. The judges there disputed whether Bemba had taken sufficient measures to prevent these actions taking place. This judgment and the appeal are causing great concern amongst international lawyers. I wonder if the Minister can shed some light on what our Government are thinking.

Perhaps he could also comment on recent suggestions by a prosecutor that the victim may have consented to being raped. This must be clarified before a conviction

can take place. “Consented”—I ask you. I ask, in all honesty, whether a woman—or a man, for that matter—would give consent for rape by a soldier at gunpoint, perhaps with a rifle butt or a broken bottle, both examples I heard about from victims in a hospital in Tirana, Albania, who had escaped from Kosovo during the Balkan wars. Consent? Where are these people coming from? Access to justice is a human right and an obligation for us under CEDAW. It is not just about prosecutions and the ICC. Individual states, not just the International Criminal Court, should be prosecuting violations, and we should be assisting those states to do this, perhaps through our DfID budget or one of those ghostly, curious, cross-departmental, peace-promoting budgets that we have heard about. Perhaps one could be used for the purpose of helping those Governments to prosecute soldiers.

Noble Lords would not expect me, as chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Population, Development and Reproductive Health, to finish without dealing with medical justice for the victims—women victims in particular—of rape. Our Government have taken a lead and implemented the delivery of sexual and reproductive health services to women who have been raped so that, above all, they can have an abortion if they become pregnant as a result of their ordeal. That is of course subject to the laws of the country, but it is their entitlement under international law. I honestly cannot think of a worse fate for a woman than to be badly injured and raped, recover a bit and then discover that she is pregnant as a consequence of that rape, but not have any access to abortion to deal with that. If we put ourselves in that position—I know the men cannot but the women certainly can—we know that it is just unthinkable. Our Government have been very strong on this issue and I congratulate them. As they know, I am not a great supporter of the Conservative Government, but they are very good on this issue.

At this point, I must refer to President Trump’s latest personal assault on women by expanding the global gag rule—the Mexico City policy—which will further jeopardise women’s and girls’ chances of dignified recovery and survival as sexual and reproductive health services are reduced all over the world as a result of the ramifications of the gag rule. I am having a lot of trouble getting the absolute detail from the NGOs about how the gag rule will affect them, because it has been expanded and extended, but I believe that there is some sort of exception for abortion after rape in conflict. I would be very pleased if the Minister could enlighten me today or perhaps write after the debate.

Once again I applaud the UK Government for their continuing support for sexual and reproductive health and abortion services globally; for defending the rights of women who have suffered violence in conflict; and, as we have heard, for the great conference that was held at the ExCel Centre—I never know what that place is called—with William Hague and Angelina Jolie. The conference was an inspiration to a lot of people, and we should carry on its impetus.

Our Government may not be doing too well on our relationship with Europe, but there are women all over the developing world who are grateful for this country’s

advocacy of women's sexual and reproductive health and rights, in particular the NGOs—the International Planned Parenthood Federation and Marie Stopes International—that stand firm against President Trump's attack on women's reproductive rights.

7.08 pm

Lord Collins of Highbury (Lab): My Lords, I thank the noble Baroness, Lady Hodgson, for initiating this debate and for being very consistent on this issue; we had a debate in January on this subject as well. I am extremely grateful to her for continuing the battle.

The noble Baroness, Lady Featherstone, mentioned Angelina Jolie, the UNHCR special envoy, who, in searching for solutions to violence against women, has focused her work on three clear themes that I think have come out in this debate: justice, accountability and international leadership. We need to ensure that we have the tools, sufficient resources and political will. There is no doubt that since the PSVI launch in 2012, the UK has led the world in efforts to end the horror of sexual violence in conflict.

It is a long-haul campaign, and the further international conference to be hosted by the UK in November can be a catalyst for change and further progress. That is what we need to ensure in building up to the November conference. The noble Baroness referred to the Wilton Park event, which was hosted by the Minister—noble Lords have referred to the fact that he is the Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict. I hope what comes out of Wilton—I am sure the noble Lord will tell us—will be some concrete recommendations for Governments, international agencies and NGOs on how to strengthen justice at the national and international levels for survivors of conflict. How we build up ongoing support for that November event is the key to this debate, and I hope the noble Lord will be able to tell us what other events are being planned before November to ensure that we have full engagement, not just with NGOs. I would like to see events that broaden this out, so that we get other civil society groups, particularly—I do bang on about this—trade unions and international organisations that can ensure sustainability for the changes we want to see.

What are the remaining challenges we face? The Minister has done excellent work on this, and we heard about the film festival. We have to strongly address action on tackling survivor stigma, when the victims feel they are to blame, and children born of sexual violence. We must also ensure the provision of services for male victims, including LGBT and disabled survivors, and work with military and faith groups—they are the other voices we need to hear strongly at the November conference.

As we have heard in this debate, justice and accountability are vital parts of the strategy. As the noble Baroness, Lady Hodgson, has said today and on previous occasions, an important element of fighting sexual violence is holding people to account so that they cannot act with impunity. In the January debate, the Minister, whom I congratulate on his ongoing work, called on countries to sign up to the new Murad code on sexual violence, which sets out the expected

standards of behaviour. What progress has been made to ensure an international consensus on implementation of that code? How many countries are involved, and what more can we do to ensure that we end up with a strong consensus in November?

Women endure discrimination, violence and the denial of their rights simply because they are women. We must tackle the underlying problem of a lack of empowerment, education and inclusion. We need explicitly feminist foreign and development policies, based on the principles of gender justice, rights, intersectionality and solidarity, so that we tackle the structural causes of gender inequality, transform gender norms and challenge patriarchy in everything that the FCO and DfID do. The way to do that is to expand the support which I know is being given to grass-roots women's organisations, stepping up assistance to support partner Governments committed to reducing gender inequality: for example, through gender audits, gender impact assessments and gender budgeting. We can lead the way and support other Governments.

We need stronger political leadership globally, where women's rights are under attack. I agree wholeheartedly with the noble Baroness, Lady Tonge, on the attack launched by President Trump. We need to champion women's sexual and reproductive health rights and certainly mitigate the impact of those US-led funding cuts. We also need to more to protect women human rights defenders by promoting the right to freedom of association, assembly and expression.

I have another point on which I would like to hear more from the Minister. Exactly how are the strategies we have been adopting in the FCO being dealt with on a cross-departmental basis? How do we build capacity to respond rapidly to sexual and gender-based violence in emergencies? Obviously the MoD, the FCO and DfID all have an important role to play in this and I would certainly like to hear how those cross-departmental strategies are working.

I apologise for not writing down the name of the noble Lord who spoke of this, but the plight of the Rohingya people must be in all our minds. Horrendous sexual crimes have been committed. It is apparent that thousands of women refugees in Bangladesh have still not received support or counselling following their experiences of sexual violence, and they have not been able to make witness statements. Can the Minister tell us how many of the UK's 70 sexual violence experts have been deployed to those camps? Are we making progress?

This is one of those areas for which I think there is complete cross-party support and I hope that the noble Baroness will continue with her hard work to ensure that we build up to a successful conference in November. In that way we will ensure that there is a proper catalyst for change.

7.17 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon) (Con): My Lords, I join all noble Lords in thanking my noble friend Lady Hodgson for securing this debate and I acknowledge her long-standing commitment to and unrelenting passion for ensuring that the victims and survivors of

[LORD AHMAD OF WIMBLEDON]

sexual violence in conflict are at the heart of our policy-making. I applaud her work in this respect, in particular as part of the PSVI external steering board on which she sits. She advises me directly as the Prime Minister's special representative. I also thank her for her work on the APPG. Perhaps I may start with a personal reflection. My noble friend Lady Hodgson and I have worked together on this issue. Indeed, one of our first visits from this House was to Bosnia helping to build support mechanisms and a shelter for the victims and survivors of that conflict.

Let me assure all noble Lords, and in particular my noble friend, that the commitment of the UK Government to this issue is unrelenting. We continue to commit resources, time, effort and leadership to prioritising PSVI across the piece internationally. The noble Lord, Lord Collins, asked about cross-government working. Our focus on PSVI reflects the agenda we have set out in our national action plan on women, peace and security, and I am pleased to report that its fourth iteration brings together the expertise of the Ministry of Defence, the Department for International Development and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The international progress which has been made under our leadership over the past seven years has been sustained.

Given that, perhaps I should start by expressing a certain disagreement with the noble Baroness, Lady Featherstone—I greatly respect her and I acknowledge her contribution. I do not believe that the spotlight has diminished. On the contrary, not through our efforts alone but in recognising the work of Nadia Murad and Dr Mukwege, we can reflect the priority that the international community continues to give. I can assure the noble Baroness that we are working hand in glove with both those individuals and their organisations not just in the delivery of our event later this year but by directly supporting their initiatives as well. The noble Lord, Lord Alton, referred to these Nobel prize winners—and rightly so—and we all acknowledge their work and put that formally on record.

Intensive work and sustained effort are required in ensuring that this agenda remains at the top of international priorities, not only in the UK but in other countries as well. Work began in November last year when, as several noble Lords have noted, we hosted the world's first film festival focused on eliminating the stigma of sexual violence in conflict and, yes, we involved directly Angelina Jolie. We brought film-makers from those conflict regions to depict through film their experiences and to ensure that priority is given in their countries. We used the BFI as the backdrop for that event, which brought together increased focus and attention.

I am extremely grateful to Her Royal Highness the Countess of Wessex, who we have briefed over the past few months. Indeed, my noble friend Lady Hodgson was with me at our first meeting at Buckingham Palace. She recently declared at a reception specifically for women peacekeepers at Buckingham Palace her commitment to the agenda for women, peace and security and, importantly, her engagement directly with the PSVI agenda.

The UK has also participated directly in survivor-focused events in other countries. Recently, Luxembourg hosted a successful Stand Speak Rise Up! event; the UK brought together international legal experts at Wilton Park; and other events will take place during the course of this year, primarily through institutions of the UN. Germany will be focused on this agenda during its presidency of the Security Council. We will again work hand in glove with like-minded partners to ensure that the focus and international attention are not diverted but sustained and strengthened during 2019.

I said last year that 2019 should be the year of PSVI. I am sure the noble Baroness, Lady Featherstone, or anyone who has worked in any form within government, will recognise that sometimes it is slightly easier to start an initiative—no doubt, getting it off the ground is difficult—but my experience over the past 12 months has been that to sustain and strengthen an initiative needs equal commitment.

I am therefore grateful to noble Lords who are here today and others who have worked together. As the noble Lord, Lord Collins, rightly pointed out, I have welcomed the direct input and will continue to do so. I invite all noble Lords here today to help us to plan effectively so that we put victims and survivors at the heart of our conference in November.

In line with the rest of our PSVI work, the outcomes of the international conference will be built on the three essential foundations to which the noble Lord alluded: addressing the root causes of conflict-related violence; tackling the stigma associated with it; and, most relevant for today's debate, achieving justice and accountability for survivors.

The noble Lord, Lord Alton, mentioned situations elsewhere in the world—in Pakistan and so on—and I am cognisant of the role of faith leaders, a voice which, as the noble Lord, Lord Collins, said, needs to be heard more clearly and loudly. As part of tackling the issue of stigma against the victims, survivors and children born of rape, we are working closely with international faith leaders from all communities and leaders of belief organisations to ensure that there is a declaration of humanity tackling these specific issues at the November conference. Much work is being done directly with faith leaders in this respect.

A key element of our work is focused on enhancing international standards for the collection of evidence in support of prosecution and accountability. My noble friend Lady Hodgson and the noble Baroness, Lady Tonge, touched on these important issues among others. One of the specific outcomes of the PSVI conference will be the strengthening of the Murad code, which is named after Nadia Murad, who I have had the great honour to work with directly. She won a Nobel prize—and rightly so—but dedicated her prize money to a hospital and support for victims and survivors in the country where she suffered.

I have been to Iraq and I have met with the victims of sexual violence from the Yazidi communities. When you look into their eyes, there is a poignancy and a reflection of the experience they have been through. There are no words but their bravery and courage inspires me. I am humbled by the fact that I am leading the Government's charge on this issue and

honoured that I carry the Prime Minister's title in this respect. This shows that this is not only a commitment for me, the Foreign Office and the Foreign Secretary but one to which the Head of Government, the Prime Minister, is also committed. Alongside that work, as noble Lords have said, there are recommendations from Wilton Park. Together with our international partners, we are examining how to strengthen accountability through the criminal justice mechanism and other methods such as restorative justice to ensure a survivor-centred approach.

The noble Baroness, Lady Featherstone, talked about her experiences, as did my noble friend. I know that we have been looking at how we can impact some of those survivors in places such as the DRC. I confirm that we are supporting a pilot project with the Mukwege Foundation to assess the feasibility of a national assistance fund for the survivors of sexual violence.

Many noble Lords talked about international mechanisms. It was rightly acknowledged in the contributions from the noble Baronesses, Lady Featherstone and Lady Tonge, that first and foremost the primary responsibility for investigating crimes rests with states. We are building capacity in places such as Iraq in that respect. Tragically, though, in certain circumstances there are states that are genuinely unable or, unfortunately, unwilling to act. International mechanisms therefore have to be strengthened and we are working on that priority.

Jurisprudence on the issue has been advanced through the ad hoc international tribunals and hybrid courts of the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda and Sierra Leone, some of which were acknowledged and mentioned by the noble Lord, Lord Alton. I would be pleased to meet him as we build up towards the conference in November to see what more can be done in that respect. Several noble Lords talked about the International Criminal Court. Regrettably, as has been acknowledged, we have seen that decisions do not always go in favour of the survivors. We need not to abandon the ICC but to strengthen the institution, and I assure noble Lords of the UK's commitment in that regard. That is why we are supporting reform.

I join in the tributes to my noble friend Lord Hague and UN special envoy Angelina Jolie for their continuing commitment, and indeed to my predecessor, my noble friend Lady Anelay. We have worked together on this issue over a period of years along with others in this Room and beyond—my noble friend Lady Helic is another notable contributor—on how to take the issue forward and strengthen accountability in that regard.

I am cognisant of the time. There may be specific questions on which I will need to write to noble Lords but I shall address some of the issues that have been raised. We have so far given £1 million to the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism for Syria, and we are collecting evidence for possible future prosecutions in that regard.

Several noble Lords raised the issue of Burma, including my noble friend Lady Hodgson. We are working directly on the appalling human rights violations and abuses, including sexual violence, perpetrated against the Rohingya community in Rakhine State. We also hope that the new investigative mechanism in Myanmar will ensure that justice is done.

We are at the forefront of ensuring accountability for the well-documented crimes by Daesh. Many noble Lords will know that it was the UK that championed the resolution at the UN Security Council, and I am pleased that a UK QC, Karim Khan, is leading the investigative team in Iraq. We are working with the Iraqi Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government on this issue to develop accountability and justice mechanisms that can be applied locally through strengthening justice mechanisms within Iraq. The team will support efforts by the Government of Iraq to hold Daesh accountable, and I think we need to learn from those experiences to see how the mechanisms can be strengthened elsewhere.

I am conscious of the great expertise that has been shown during the course of this debate, but I should stress that the UK approach to PSVI goes much further than just supporting justice mechanisms. We will work to foster inclusive and equal societies and help all survivors of sexual violence, girls and women but also the young men who are often affected, a point well made by the noble Lord, Lord Collins.

My noble friend asked about sexual exploitation and abuse carried out by UN peacekeepers. The Government agree, which is why we fully support the UN Secretary-General's zero tolerance approach to this issue and have given a further \$3 million directly to the UN over the past three years towards tackling this crime. As I have said, the UK took the lead on UN Security Council Resolution 2272 which mandates the full and transparent reporting of incidents and demands the repatriation of entire contingents guilty of persistent crimes in this respect. The noble Baroness, Lady Tonge, asked about the US gag rule. If I may, I will write specifically in response.

In conclusion, I thank all noble Lords, particularly my noble friend Lady Hodgson. She and I have worked on this issue over a number of years now. I say to all noble Lords that we will continue to work directly with them on this important issue. As the noble Lord, Lord Collins, said, people might get a bit concerned because so often we use the phrase that we are "together on this and aligned in our commitment", but irrespective of which party you represent or what perspective you may hold, I am confident that across this House, the other place and beyond, the United Kingdom is wholly committed. Yes, we will include civil society in our international conference later this year. Crucially, we are working with civil society in other states but, most importantly, with the survivors of sexual violence to put them at the heart of the conference and of our work.

I started with a personal reflection and now end with one. As I said earlier, I have been to Iraq, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Kosovo. I have had the honour of meeting survivors of sexual violence such as Nadia Murad but, more importantly, of listening to and working with them. Their fight for justice is our fight. I can assure noble Lords that the UK, and I as the PM's special representative, will be relentless in our pursuit of justice to ensure that we end impunity and bring justice to the victims and courageous survivors.

Committee adjourned at 7.30 pm.

Volume 797
No. 283

Tuesday
2 April 2019

CONTENTS

Tuesday 2 April 2019
