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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
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Abbreviation	Party/Group
CB	Cross Bench
Con	Conservative
DUP	Democratic Unionist Party
GP	Green Party
Ind Lab	Independent Labour
Ind SD	Independent Social Democrat
Ind UU	Independent Ulster Unionist
Lab	Labour
Lab Co-op	Labour and Co-operative Party
LD	Liberal Democrat
Non-afl	Non-affiliated
PC	Plaid Cymru
UUP	Ulster Unionist Party

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House of Lords

Thursday 19 January 2023

11 am

Prayers—read by the Lord Bishop of Carlisle.

Retirement of a Member: Lord Soley

Announcement

11.07 am

The Lord Speaker (Lord McFall of Alcluith): My Lords, I should like to notify the House of the retirement, with effect from today, of the noble Lord, Lord Soley, pursuant to Section 1 of the House of Lords Reform Act 2014. On behalf of the House, I thank the noble Lord for his much-valued service to the House.

Schools: Artificial Intelligence Software

Question

11.07 am

Asked by Lord Hampton

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking, if any, in response to the increasing sophistication of artificial intelligence software and its subsequent use by pupils in secondary schools, particularly in creative subjects.

Lord Hampton (CB): My Lords, in begging leave to ask the Question standing in my name on the Order Paper, I declare an interest as a working teacher in a state secondary school in north London.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Education (Baroness Barran) (Con): My Lords, AI has the potential to transform society. We must harness the potential benefits, including reducing workload and improving accessibility, while confronting the risks to trust, privacy and security. We are committed to pupils building knowledge and skills so that they can take advantage of the opportunities that AI creates, including in creative subjects. Since our reforms to GCSEs and A-levels, most assessments are exam based, where pupils are assessed under strict conditions with no internet access.

Lord Hampton (CB): I thank the Minister for her response. There is a lot of anecdotal evidence at the moment which suggests that students are using AI for everything from essays and poetry to university applications and, rather more surprisingly, visual arts subjects. Just before Christmas, one of my product design A-level students came up to me and showed me some designs that he had done. He had taken a cardboard model, photographed it, put it into a free piece of software, put in three different parameters and had received within minutes 20 high-resolution designs, all original, that were not A-level but degree level. The current discussion seems to be very much about—

Noble Lords: Question!

Lord Hampton (CB): Sorry! At the moment this is about plagiarism and fighting the software. When do the Government plan to meet education professionals and the exam boards to design a new curriculum to embrace this new opportunity rather than fight it?

Baroness Barran (Con): I thank the noble Lord for his question and his reflections. The Government are already engaging with the education sector on these issues. I will meet the head of Ofqual next week. Guidance has also recently been produced for universities on this. The spirit of the noble Lord's question, which is that we must seize this opportunity, is absolutely a key part of our focus.

Lord Clement-Jones (LD): My Lords, this Question clearly concerns a very powerful new generative, probabilistic type of artificial intelligence, which we ought to encourage in terms of creativity but not of cheating or deception. Does the Question not demonstrate the limitations of the Government's online digital and media education strategy? Why is there nothing in the Online Safety Bill on this?

Baroness Barran (Con): Elements of the Online Safety Bill will touch on this, but, as the noble Lord understands very well, this is much broader than online safety. I push back hard on his assertion of a lack of ambition in the Government's strategy. This is a central part of the Prime Minister-chaired National Science and Technology Council and is one of the top five priorities within it.

Baroness Stowell of Beeston (Con): My Lords, I refer my noble friend and the whole House to the report published this week by the Communications and Digital Select Committee on the future of creative industries. What plans do the Government have to improve careers advice about the lucrative careers in the creative industries that require a blend of digital and creative skills?

Baroness Barran (Con): I take this opportunity to celebrate our extraordinarily successful and innovative creative industries. The Government are doing a great deal in relation to careers advice, including beginning careers advice in primary school, which I know is dear to the hearts of many noble Lords.

Lord Reid of Cardowan (Lab): My Lords, when the Government are encouraging discussion about artificial intelligence in schools, will they make sure that they balance the undoubted advantages of AI with a warning about the most serious disadvantage of artificial intelligence? It does not lack creativity, it does not lack imagination, it does not lack knowledge, but it lacks empathy. A powerful tool that has knowledge, creativity, imagination and, potentially, instruction but lacks empathy is a hugely dangerous tool in the wrong hands.

Baroness Barran (Con): The noble Lord makes a good point. AI lacks empathy and emotion. I think the human brain will always be more creative. It changes the skills that we need to equip all of us—our young people, in particular—with in terms of the ability to distinguish fact from fiction and how to apply knowledge and critical thinking.

The Earl of Clancarty (CB): My Lords, the positive opportunities of AI are to be welcomed, but there is a huge concern, dealt with in detail in the excellent report on the creative industries that was referred to by the noble Baroness, Lady Stowell, about the effect of potential text and data-mining exemptions to IP law on creative workers, including writers and musicians. Will the Government rethink this proposal and properly consult creative workers about this?

Baroness Barran (Con): This whole area throws up enormous issues in terms of copyright and intellectual property, of which this is one example. I know that colleagues in the Office for Artificial Intelligence are considering these issues in detail.

Lord Addington (LD): Will the Minister take the time to make sure that people understand the difference between the various types of technology and particularly assistive technology? Assistive technology may be something that some people need for life, not just through their education, and they should probably start using it earlier than we do. Will the Government make sure that teachers and educationalists know the difference?

Baroness Barran (Con): I suggest that teachers and educationalists do know the difference. The big change that we are seeing is the development of these LLMs—large language models—and other types of AI. However, I think that particularly for people with special educational needs, whether children or adults, this could really unlock their education in a way we have not seen previously.

Baroness Morgan of Cotes (Con): I thank my noble friend for her answer because she has set out opportunities for pupils, particularly for those with special needs. She mentioned the Prime Minister's National Science and Technology Council. Does she agree that the responsible use of AI in schools would set up our young people for the workplaces of the future because AI is with us, whether we like it or not?

Baroness Barran (Con): My noble friend is absolutely right. The AI genie is out of the bottle, and it is how we manage the risk and capitalise on the opportunity. We are aiming to do that in our schools and universities. We already have a programme for creating 1,000 new AI PhDs through centres for doctoral training as well as opportunities for addressing the lack of diversity in the UK AI market.

Baroness Chapman of Darlington (Lab): My Lords, we are encouraged to hear the Minister speak in such positive terms about AI, but returning to the original Question asked by the noble Lord, Lord Hampton, is she concerned about fairness of access to technology that may be affecting the way young people are assessed? Not all young people will have the same access to these technologies, and it may be that not all schools are applying advice on this issue consistently.

Baroness Barran (Con): The noble Baroness raises two different points. On fairness of access to technology, obviously the Government are working very hard and are committed to making sure that those building blocks, in terms of really high-quality wi-fi access, et cetera, are available across all our schools.

Lord Foulkes of Cumnock (Lab Co-op): My Lords, the noble Lord, Lord Hampton, made a declaration of interest that he is a working teacher in a state school in north London. Is the Minister aware that if I were a working teacher in a state school in north Ayrshire it would not be very easy for me to attend the House of Lords? Is that not one of the reasons why more than half the Members of this House are from London? Is that not wrong for a legislative assembly which is meant to represent the whole United Kingdom?

Baroness Barran (Con): I am not sure of the link to the Question unless the noble Lord is suggesting that at some point a chatbot might replace our Scottish colleagues.

Lord Addington (LD): My Lords, I take advantage of this moment to remind the House of my interests, which I should have declared.

Respiratory Syncytial Virus *Question*

11.18 am

Asked by Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick

To ask His Majesty's Government whether they have plans to introduce PCR testing and an annual vaccination programme for young infants, children and older adults in relation to seasonal Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV).

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care (Lord Markham) (Con): PCRs test are already in use to diagnose RSV and monitor its prevalence. Current RSV immunisation is targeted at infants at high risk of severe complications. New immunisation products, including vaccines, have been developed and are being reviewed by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation, JCVI, which will potentially provide advice later this year. His Majesty's Government will decide on future vaccination programmes once they have received that advice.

Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick (Lab): My Lords, as the Minister will know, RSV-related hospitalisations in the under-fives cost £48.2 million in the UK annually. At a time when the NHS is facing increasing pressures, both financially and through capacity, will the Minister clarify how the Government plan to reduce the infant burden associated with it to ensure that the NHS does not experience the same situation next season? If there are plans, will they publish them? If there are no plans, why not?

Lord Markham (Con): I thank the noble Baroness for her question. I am pleased to say that there are promising new vaccinations. The current vaccination unfortunately requires monthly injections, which is why it is not very effective, and costs £2,000, so it is not an effective way ahead. A new injection, nirsevimab, has just been licensed which is showing in tests to be 75% to 80% effective and immunises people for six months, so we are hopeful that it is the way ahead. The JCVI is currently conducting a study on it, and we are hoping its recommendations will suggest a good way forward.

Lord Patel (CB): My Lords, two days ago Moderna from the United States announced that it had used messenger RNA technology to develop a vaccine for RSV. The report was of a late-stage trial and the vaccine has an efficacy of 84% for adults. There are similar results from both GSK and Pfizer, with an efficacy of 66%, but we already have antibody prevention treatment developed by AstraZeneca and Sanofi for prevention of RSV in children and young infants. That has been approved by the European Medicines Agency, and the Moderna vaccine is seeking FDA approval. Why does none of these have market authorisation in the United Kingdom?

Lord Markham (Con): I can report best on nirsevimab, which has just been licensed, is shown to be 75% to 80% effective in the trials and has the approach of immunising people for six months. I am aware of Pfizer developing a maternal vaccination for whooping cough, which will give the baby immunisation through the mother. The House will also be aware of the recent announcement we made with Moderna on the investment in new R&D facilities here, so that we are at the forefront. I hope the noble Lord can see that we are looking at all these new innovations and will roll them out.

Baroness Buscombe (Con): My Lords, have we not learned some lessons, from Covid and long Covid, of the need for children, babies and all of us to build our immune systems? Long Covid is proving that we have a real problem. I caught this virus from my granddaughter, a baby. I am told that the more she catches these wretched things now, the healthier she will be and the better she will be at putting off some serious diseases later in life. While accepting that high-risk babies obviously need particular regard, is it not right that we should be mindful of continually looking for a vaccine every time a new virus is discovered?

Lord Markham (Con): My noble friend is correct in that, for the vast majority of people—infants in this case—it is mild, flu-like symptoms at most. At the same time, it is responsible for 35,000 hospitalisations and 20 to 30 deaths a year, so it is a serious thing that we need to get on top of. We are looking for the best of both worlds. That 90% of two year-olds will have had RSV and so will have that natural protection is a good thing. But in the most serious cases—the risk groups are those with congenital lung or heart disease or spinal muscular problems—these new treatments really will help and are very important.

Baroness Walmsley (LD): My Lords, the innovative vaccines and treatments mentioned by the noble Lord, Lord Patel, all require UK clinical trials. The number

of clinical trials initiated in the UK declined by 4% between 2017 and 2021. What are the Government doing to reverse this decline so as to bring valuable industry money back into the NHS and cutting-edge treatments, such as RSV vaccines and treatments, to patients?

Lord Markham (Con): The noble Baroness is correct. In fact, my maiden speech was in a debate about how we can bring life sciences to bear more. The point about NHS clinical trials and the fact that we are not using this massive potential asset was very much a feature of that. It is key to the work we are doing—I had a meeting on it just this week—so I agree with the noble Baroness and hope we will see improvements in this space.

Baroness Wheeler (Lab): My Lords, we know that older adults are at greater risk of serious complications from RSV infections in children, because our immune systems weaken as we get older, which can lead to exacerbations of underlying lung and cardiac disease. What action is being taken to address the serious underestimation of older adult RSV infections and to improve testing, reporting and treatment for this key group?

Lord Markham (Con): I thank the noble Baroness. The key risk groups in the elderly as well are, as I mentioned earlier, those with congenital lung or heart disease or spinal muscular atrophy. The problem is that the current vaccination needs monthly immunisation to be effective, and I think most people will agree that it can be used in only the most severe cases because it is not a very practical way forward and is very expensive. That is why I am really excited by the new treatments, particularly nirsevimab, which is 75% to 80% effective, versus palivizumab, which is more around 50%. I think we have a good way forward.

Baroness Wyld (Con): My Lords, has the Department of Health done any assessment of how many children may have missed their routine vaccinations during the pandemic lockdown? Is the department doing anything to follow up with these children? If so, can the Minister say what?

Lord Markham (Con): I know that this, like all those areas that were unfortunately missed out during the pandemic, is something the department is working on. There are catch-up activities. I have seen it personally with my four year-old, who of course was two and three during this time. I will happily provide the detail in writing.

Lord Allan of Hallam (LD): My Lords, does the Minister agree that it is wise for the UK to maintain a good level of baseline PCR testing so that we can ramp it up when confronted with novel viruses such as Covid-19? In that respect, does he agree that it is important to consider this resiliency benefit when looking at the business case for PCR testing for other viruses, such as RSV?

Lord Markham (Con): Yes. I should probably declare an interest, having set up a PCR business—in the private sector, I might add. I know at first hand from that how versatile these PCR machines are. They can

[LORD MARKHAM]

be used to diagnose all these sorts of treatments, so we absolutely have to make sure we keep that strategic capacity alive.

Lord Turnberg (Lab): My Lords, we were obviously ill prepared for the Covid outbreak. How prepared does the Minister think we are now for track and trace and delivery of PCR tests? What resources do we have in place to cover that?

Lord Markham (Con): We have the PCR capacity in place. Clearly, as responsible Ministers spending-wise, we are ramping some of that down because we do not need the sort of capacity we had before. From personal knowledge, I can promise that there are a lot of these PCR machines knocking around, so that capacity really is there. There was a Question a few days ago about how prepared we are for the next epidemic. Clearly, we will get the findings of the Covid inquiry, but the whole purpose of setting up the UKHSA was to make sure we have the proper preparations around for next time.

Osteoporosis: Early Detection Question

11.28 am

Asked by **Lord Black of Brentwood**

To ask His Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to improve rates of early detection of osteoporosis.

Lord Black of Brentwood (Con): My Lords, I beg leave to ask the Question standing in my name on the Order Paper, and declare my interest as co-chairman of the APPG on Osteoporosis and Bone Health.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care (Lord Markham) (Con): The Government are committed to improving outcomes for those living with osteoporosis. NHS England, through its Getting It Right First Time programme, is exploring how best to support integrated care systems in the detection and management of osteoporosis. This includes a focus on improving provision of and equity of access to high-quality secondary fracture prevention services, such as fracture liaison services that help to identify those most at risk and offer preventive support.

Lord Black of Brentwood (Con): My Lords, osteoporosis affects half of women and a fifth of men over the age of 50, but all too frequently its late diagnosis means broken bones, pain, reduced independence and, sometimes, life-changing disability. Yet there is no excuse for that, because we have it in our power to identify those most at risk. Is my noble friend aware that almost two-thirds of people with one of three major risk factors have never received a bone health assessment, while a simple and cheap assessment tool proven to prevent hip fractures can be used in five minutes in a GP's surgery? As the costs of helping people recover from fractures are far higher than the costs of identifying and treating those at risk, should the National Screening Committee not urgently reconsider

the case for a targeted national screening programme, so that as a country we invest just millions of pounds in preventing harm rather than billions in managing failure?

Lord Markham (Con): I agree with my noble friend that prevention is always better than cure. The beauty of these processes is that I get to swot up, and I learned that the second largest bed-intake cause is actually a fractured femur from osteoporosis, so he is correct. We have a target that 95% of patients will get a check within six weeks by March 2025. It is good that musculoskeletal services are now part of the national improvement programme, but we clearly need to make sure we are on top of that.

Lord Rennard (LD): My Lords, a year ago the Minister's predecessor said to the House that he hoped NHS England would ensure that effective fracture services were universal. However, unlike in Scotland and Wales, that is not the case in England. Is not part of the problem with healthcare in this country that the Government struggle to resource treatment and pay for those who provide it while failing to invest in prevention and public health initiatives? What action are they taking to ensure that osteoporosis is given sufficient priority by recognising that it needs to be considered in parity with other long-term conditions?

Lord Markham (Con): The noble Lord refers to the fracture liaison services. It is the responsibility of all ICBs to roll out those services or their equivalent. Regarding the numbers that he cited, I should say that 51% of ICBs have a fracture liaison service in that shape or form and the others have different versions of it, and they are all responsible for rolling those out. At the same time, they are also responsible for musculoskeletal services, to make sure that we have nationwide provision for it.

Baroness Blackstone (Lab): My Lords, the Minister said that prevention is better than cure. That is obviously the case, yet we have severely failed to prevent the horrible development of this crippling disease, which mainly affects women, as has been said. He has talked about a 95% target. What is he going to do, as the Minister with some responsibility in this area, to ensure that the target is met, given the failures in the past? Will he find a way of reporting back to the House on progress in reaching that target?

Lord Markham (Con): One of the many things for which I am responsible is NHS performance, as I think the House is aware, and these are exactly the sorts of issues that I am interested in, so I am happy to undertake to give an update on that. We all know that effective spend, which we need to make sure is always put to best use, involves identifying where these problems are, and 3 million people are affected every year. As I said earlier, a fractured femur is the second biggest reason for intake into hospitals, in terms of beds. That is something that I am happy to be measured by and report back on.

Lord Lexden (Con): My Lords, following on from the question from the noble Lord, Lord Rennard, is it not the case that, while the Government accept that

everyone over 50 should have equal access to fracture liaison services, insufficient progress is being made towards that crucial goal? Is there not a case for the appointment of a strong and determined national specialist adviser on osteoporosis to speed things up?

Lord Markham (Con): As I mentioned earlier, this is the responsibility of all the ICBs. Part of my job is making sure that we as Ministers now regularly communicate with all the ICBs. There are a number of boards that I regularly speak to, check in with and visit on a frequent basis, and one of our checkpoints is making sure that they are on top of services such as these. I am delighted to say that every ICB has now set up a community base fall service, to make sure that if someone should fall in a case such as these, rather than an ambulance and two paramedics, we can have someone specially set up to right these people, put them on their feet and avoid an A&E visit.

Baroness Merron (Lab): My Lords, the UK primary care base trial on screening for osteoporosis in older people examined a systematic approach to identifying older women for fracture prevention, leading to a 28% reduction in hip fracture risk, significantly reducing costs and seeing increased adherence to treatment. What plans are there to extend and learn from this important study?

Lord Markham (Con): I thank the noble Baroness for bringing this to my attention. Clearly a 28% reduction is impressive and something that we should take seriously. If she can give me the reference, I will definitely take it up and write back.

Lord Sandhurst (Con): My Lords, is not exercise when growing as an adolescent, particularly impact exercise, important for stimulating bone growth? Should more not be done to encourage impact exercise among children and teenagers, particularly among girls, who do not always want this—in other words, running, jumping on the spot and so on?

Lord Markham (Con): As a player of rugby, which probably has far too many impacts, I agree with the sentiment that exercise is always a good thing, whatever stage of life one is at. Also, we all know that vitamin D is a vital part of helping against bone weaknesses. Things as simple as spending more time in the sun in summer or taking vitamin D supplements in the winter are vital prevention methods. I agree about exercise, but all these measures should be rewarded and promoted.

Lord Turnberg (Lab): I am sorry to correct the Minister but vitamin D does not affect osteoporosis. It is helpful for osteomalacia, the softening of the bones due to vitamin D deficiency, but not very useful for osteoporosis. Exercise is valuable, and at any age it is the only thing that prevents osteoporosis. There are treatments available for osteoporosis but they are not very nice—they involve injections—and are quite expensive. Exercise is the thing.

Lord Markham (Con): I thank the noble Lord. As I say, part of the beauty of this job is being educated. I will take that back to my officials and query them on my briefing.

Baroness Watkins of Tavistock (CB): My Lords, could the Minister comment on whether the department of health is working with the department of energy to ensure that we can afford to heat our swimming pools? Swimming is a really good exercise and reduces the risk of falls, particularly in older people.

Lord Markham (Con): As previously mentioned, prevention is always better. Exercise, as I have learned from my noble friend Lord Sandhurst, is a good way of preventing osteoporosis. Where we can find cost-effective ways of getting that exercise, such as swimming pools, we should be promoting them.

Baroness Manzoor (Con): My Lords, having identified the causes of osteoporosis, could my noble friend say how the message is being communicated? He mentioned vitamin D, which could be an issue, but the reality is that some vulnerable women in communities do not get some of the messages regarding exercise or indeed have access to those facilities. I know walking and so forth can help, but what are the Government doing to put that preventive message across in a very firm and consistent way?

Lord Markham (Con): My noble friend is correct that education and awareness are always the start point on any of these health issues. It was a key part of the women's health strategy that came out in 2022. Osteoporosis is a key part of that, and promotion and awareness are a key part if it as well.

Times Health Commission Question

11.39 am

Asked by **Lord Brooke of Alverthorpe**

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the establishment by the *Times* of the Times Health Commission on 15 January.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care (Lord Markham) (Con): My Lords—

Noble Lords: Hear, hear!

Lord Markham (Con): I thank noble Lords. It is not quite the same as scoring a hat trick in football, but I will take the Order Paper home with pleasure.

We welcome the Times Health Commission's contribution on how we can improve health and social care. We are always looking to build on good ideas, knowledge and experience, which this commission offers in bucketloads. I look forward to working with the commission and building on the best ideas.

Lord Brooke of Alverthorpe (Lab): My Lords, I am grateful to the Minister for that quite positive reply but, first, given our long history of political failure to tackle the increasingly serious care and health problems facing the country, will the Government set out in more detail what support they will give to this initiative? Secondly—this is perhaps more difficult for the Minister—will he seek support from his colleagues to enter into

[LORD BROOKE OF ALVERTHORPE]

discussions with the opposition parties about the way in which we may create a new and entirely separate joint political mechanism whereby the recommendations that come forward from this commission may be amended or revised but in fact, on a joint basis, would then be implemented regardless of the political power held by any of the parties?

Lord Markham (Con): I thank the noble Lord and firmly agree that we should look to implement anything that is a good idea. I know that there are many things we can learn and that I am still to set up the meeting I talked to him about. I apologise that it has taken a while but we have had a few things on. In a word, yes, I will always look to work on a cross-party basis. One thing that I want to bring to Parliament soon is the new hospital programme I am working on, which I believe needs to go on for ever in terms of the way we are going to build new hospitals. It is something I would like to take forward as a cross-party action. Most of the things in this space are not political; they are all about getting good and effective treatment to our population, so I am very happy to work in a collaborative fashion.

Lord Fowler (CB): Should not the Minister go a little further than what he has said? Should not the Government follow the example of the *Times* and set up a full-scale royal commission, with adequate financial support and powers of investigation, so that it can take through an independent look at the state of the health service today? Surely the Minister will agree that no one can be happy with where we are at the moment.

Lord Markham (Con): No, we are working very intensively. We have some very good minds involved in this. I know from my work with my colleagues that we work hard on developing our own plans, some of which were announced just last week. We are facing a challenge, as we all know, from the setbacks around Covid but we are tackling it. What I am saying is that there is an absolute openness to new ideas, which is why I welcome any ideas that come to the table—but, believe me, we are working on a lot of our own ideas.

Lord Forsyth of Drumlean (Con): My Lords, if the Government or the editor of the *Times* want to find out what we need to do about social care or look at what has been agreed on an all-party basis, all they have to do is to read the report from the noble Baroness, Lady Andrews, and the Select Committee that was set up by this House, which sets it out clearly—or even the report that was done by the Economic Affairs Committee three years ago, which predicted the mess that we are now in. We do not need journalists doing reports; we need the Government to respond to what Parliament has demanded.

Lord Markham (Con): I think we have responded and are responding. That is very evident in the plans and funding that we have recently put in place and from the work that we are doing, which the House will see far more about as we announce it over the coming weeks and months.

Lord Allan of Hallam (LD): My Lords, when confronted with evidence of problems in our health system, the tendency of government is to play it down or to blame anyone but themselves while, candidly, the instinct of opposition is to say that everything is a catastrophe entirely of the Government's own making, even when the facts are more complex. Does the Minister agree that it is essential to have the data for us, the *Times* and others to come to firm conclusions? The critical piece of data that we are still missing is the workforce strategy for health, social care and public health. When are we going to see that data in order to be able to have a better informed debate?

Lord Markham (Con): I agree with the noble Lord that data has to be the basis of any decision-making. I know that early drafts of the workforce strategy have already been formed so he and the House will see that before too long.

Baroness Butler-Sloss (CB): My Lords, the noble Lord, Lord Fowler, suggested a royal commission; the Minister did not respond to that. What is the Government's view about a royal commission?

Lord Markham (Con): My experience of royal commissions is that they take a couple of years to report. I do not want to wait a couple of years. I want to get on with it now. We have some very good minds in the department working on it, with access to all of this. I am always willing to take on new ideas from new minds but we do not need a two-year report; we need action now.

Baroness Pitkeathley (Lab): My Lords, does the Minister agree that, in any investigation of health and social care, the voices of patients and users must be loud and strong? How are the Government going to ensure that this happens?

Lord Markham (Con): Clearly, the patient has to be at the centre of everything. That is what the plan for patients is about. It is also what patient choice is about; we are using other ways to make sure that people can get treatment quickly when they need to. It involves using the independent sector, as pioneered by colleagues in this House, and learning lessons from that so that we can get on top of waiting lists, which we all agree we need to do.

Baroness Berridge (Con): My Lords, on the day when the Joint Committee on the draft Mental Health Bill has published its report, can my noble friend the Minister assure us that, while we hear a lot of talk about health, when the ideas are in the department, mental health and the situation in secure units are taken into account—we have the same problems of delay and discharge in those units—so that mental health is given the parity with physical health it deserves?

Lord Markham (Con): Yes. Unfortunately, one of the results of Covid was our understanding a lot more about the cases of mental health caused by it. We have put more investment into that as a result; it will be key to this issue as well.

Lord Patel (CB): My Lords, the Minister mentioned different reports and said that the Government will be willing to implement good advice. The House of Lords Select Committee on the Long-term Sustainability of the NHS also published a report, with clear recommendations. Will the Government implement some of those recommendations, even now?

Lord Markham (Con): As I mentioned, we are working on and taking good ideas from there. I know that it is one of the inputs being considered in all this.

Lord Scriven (LD): My Lords, the Government do not need a Times Health Commission to know that there are 165,000 social care staff vacancies and a 29% turnover of staff in that sector, while 542,000 people are waiting in the community for an assessment of their social care needs. Short-term funding as a sticking plaster is not going to work, so when are the Government going to bring forward a strategic plan, with funding, for social care?

Lord Markham (Con): As I said, we have already announced big increases in funding, with more than 20% over the next two years. Two years is not the short term. Minister Whately is working very hard on this because we know that the flow in social care is a key element of the whole solution.

Baroness Wheeler (Lab): My Lords, I welcome the *Times* setting up the commission. So far, it seems to have a clear and coherent view on the scale of the crisis facing the NHS and what needs to be done, which seems to be sadly lacking from the Government. In the light of all the *Times* research in articles this week on the resuscitation that the NHS needs, the waning faith people have that they will be cared for and the rising billions that levels of ill health are costing the country, does the Minister agree that the Government's ABCD policy for addressing the crisis needs a complete rethink?

Lord Markham (Con): No, not at all. In fact, the things I have read in the *Times* are about what we are implementing. The House has heard me talk about virtual wards; I saw an article on how important those are in helping with the step-down care that is needed in some social care. I have seen that in many places already and it is a way forward. It has also talked about the need for AI and robotic surgery; again, I have seen examples of that in different hospitals. The commission is taking a lot of the good ideas that are already in place throughout the health service and, as I want to do, looking at the ways in which we implement that across the board.

Retained EU Law (Revocation and Reform) Bill

First Reading

11.50 am

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

Arrangement of Business Announcement

11.50 am

The Lord Speaker (Lord McFall of Alcluith): My Lords, before I call the Statement on police conduct and David Carrick, I wish to remind noble Lords of the sub judice rule. One of the purposes of the rule is to prevent the House even appearing to exert pressure on judicial decisions. That is why the rule applies until sentencing. Even though there has been a guilty plea, the sub judice rule applies in the case of David Carrick, except that I have permitted reference to the case to give context to the Statement. These are the same arrangements as were observed in the House of Commons on Tuesday. In particular, noble Lords should concentrate on policy and issue and avoid speculation about sentencing.

Police Conduct and David Carrick Statement

The following Statement was made in the House of Commons on Tuesday 17 January.

“With permission, Mr Speaker, I will make a Statement on misconduct and vetting in the Metropolitan Police Service following the horrific David Carrick case.

Yesterday was a dark day for British policing and the Metropolitan Police, as an officer admitted being responsible for a monstrous campaign of abuse. I am sure the whole House will want to join me in expressing sympathy to the victims and in thanking them for their courage in coming forward. It is intolerable for them to have suffered as they have. They were manipulated and isolated, and subjected to horrific abuse. For anyone to have gone through such torment is harrowing, but for it to have happened at the hands of someone they entrusted to keep people safe is almost beyond comprehension. The victims have shown extraordinary strength and courage. Their testimonies were essential in ensuring that Carrick faces justice for his crimes. It is thanks to them that this vile predator has been taken off our streets, and the public are safer as a result.

The police perform a unique and critical function in our society. Every day, thousands of decent, hard-working police officers perform their duties with the utmost professionalism. They feel pride in putting on their uniform and want only the best for the communities they serve. I know that they will share our collective disgust that a fellow officer could be responsible for such a despicable betrayal of everything that they stand for. It is imperative that this cannot happen again, so I am grateful for Lady Elish Angiolini's assurance that she will look at this heinous case as part of her inquiry.

From the moment I became Home Secretary, I have made it clear that things have to change. Public trust is precious. Our model of policing by consent cannot work effectively without it. I discussed this case yesterday with the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Sir Mark Rowley, and I am encouraged by the action he has taken so far with his team to root out officers who are not fit to wear the badge. This effort is being spearheaded by a new anti-corruption and abuse command, but there is still some way to go to ensure that the force can command the trust of the people that it serves.

It is vital that the Metropolitan Police and other forces double down on their efforts to root out corrupt officers. This may mean that more shocking cases come to light in the short term. It is a matter of the utmost importance that there are robust processes in place to stop the wrong people joining the police in the first place, which is why the Government have invested in improving recruitment processes and supporting vetting as part of the more than £3 billion that we have provided for the police uplift programme. I expect this work to continue at pace, and for all chief constables to prioritise delivery of the recommendations made by the police inspectorate's recent report on vetting, counter-corruption and misogyny.

It is now for the Metropolitan Police to demonstrate that it has an effective plan in place to rapidly improve its vetting processes. Much of the impetus for change must come from within policing, but this Government will continue leading from the front. As I have made clear, we are bringing forward part 2 of the Angiolini inquiry to make recommendations on how forces can improve culture and tackle the root causes of police criminality and misconduct. The inquiry was established by the then Home Secretary, my right honourable friend the Member for Witham (Priti Patel). I pay tribute to her commitment and leadership on these critical issues.

As well as ensuring that vetting processes are watertight, there must be fair and effective arrangements for dealing with those who behave or act in a wholly unacceptable way while serving. The noble Baroness, Lady Casey, recently identified concerns about the misconduct and dismissals process within the Metropolitan Police: it takes too long, it does not command the confidence of police officers and it is procedurally burdened. Bureaucracy and process appear to have prevailed over ethics and common sense. That is why I have announced an internal review into police dismissals. The review's terms of reference are being published today.

This case will rightly throw a spotlight once again on women's safety. No one should suffer abuse or feel frightened or harassed, whether they are at home, out and about or online. We are taking concerted action to prevent violence against women, support victims and survivors, relentlessly pursue perpetrators and strengthen the system as a whole.

On rape specifically, we are focused on delivering improvements across the board, so that victims get the support they deserve and cases are pursued rigorously from report to court. There have been some important steps forward since the publication of the rape review in 2021. The number of referrals and charges has increased nationally, while new operating models for the investigation and prosecution of rape are being developed through Operation Soteria.

None of that can undo the suffering of Carrick's victims, but I assure the House that this Government will not shy away from challenging the police to meet the standards we all expect of them. Change must happen and, as Home Secretary, I will do everything in my power to ensure that it does. I commend this statement to the House."

11.52 am

Lord Coaker (Lab): My Lords, this is yet another truly shocking and appalling case where a serving police officer has admitted to the most serious and devastating crimes. Of course, we pay tribute to the bravery of the police and that of the victims, but does this not show, once again, appalling failures in the police's vetting and misconduct processes? Time and again, case after case shows that the current system is not fit for purpose. The consequences are devastating. Allegations of rape or violence against women are not taken seriously by serving police officers when made against another police officer; allegations of domestic abuse are not taken seriously in any vetting process.

In this case, rape allegations were made in 2021 but he was not suspended, despite domestic abuse allegations made two years earlier. A misconduct process concluded that there was no case to answer. A full vetting check was not triggered and his permission to carry firearms was restored. When is this sort of activity going to change? How are the Government going to drive this change, not only in practice but in culture? Most shockingly of all, this happened at the height of the alarm about Wayne Couzens and the deeply terrible murder of Sarah Everard. Commitments were made then. What has happened? That was supposed to be the turning point. It was not.

Public trust and confidence in our police is everything but it is being undermined, not only for women and victims but for hard-working police officers, including female officers who may have reported misogynistic abuse. It has got to change. We all support the new Metropolitan Police Commissioner's determination to take action, but it is not only about the Met. Concerns have been raised in Sussex, Hampshire, Derbyshire and Gwent, and by Police Scotland and other forces, about misogyny and culture. We are told of hundreds of investigations in London alone. What assessment have the Government made of the scale of the problem? How many investigations nationally are there? Do they know, and can the Minister tell us?

The Government have announced that they have ordered that the record of every officer is to be vetted. Is this in guidance or is it statutory? What is the timetable? The Home Secretary has said that vetting obligations will be made "stronger and clearer". Can the Minister explain what this actually means? Does the Minister agree with us that police officers accused of rape or domestic abuse should be immediately suspended? Does he accept that, in doing so, it would bring the police into line with other public sector workers, such as teachers? Does the Minister agree that it is not good enough that such decisions on whether to suspend are currently left to individual forces?

Does the Minister accept that there is no legal, statutory requirement on vetting? Employment history and character references do not have to be checked. The inspectorate has said that hundreds of officers who should have failed vetting are still in the job, including corrupt and predatory officers and those guilty of indecent exposure and domestic abuse. Is it any wonder that the charge rates for rape have dropped to 1.5%? This is a shameful figure, which is down two-thirds in the last seven years.

My father was a Metropolitan Police officer for 30 years, so I know only too well how hard-working so many of them are, but this cannot go on. The Government have to show leadership, and must tell us their plan and use statute, not guidance or exhortation. The Government promised action after the murder of Sarah Everard, after the murders of Bibaa Henry and Nicole Smallman, after the shameful case of child Q, after the shocking Charing Cross reports, and after the Stephen Port inquiry. Across the country, and in London, we have seen far too many cases of misogyny and abuse based on prejudice. What are the Government doing to change it?

Is it not the case that there needs to be a complete overhaul of the vetting, misconduct and standards system? It is time for change. Is it not the case that we are letting down those police officers across the country who are doing excellent work through failures in the system? The time for warm words is over; it is time for action. That action will not happen if vetting remains the Cinderella department, as it was labelled by the head of the College of Policing, with no real resources given to it. It cannot remain a Cinderella department. Our Government—this country's Government—need to take charge and deliver the change now, not just warm words.

Baroness Burt of Solihull (LD): My Lords, I associate myself with everything that the noble Lord, Lord Coaker, has said. He probably said it a lot better than I could have done. I preface my remarks by saying that the vast majority of police officers, as the noble Lord mentioned, are hard-working, caring, decent and law-abiding. These remarks do not refer to them.

The most galling thing to me is how, again and again, serving police officers feel that they can act with impunity, and even boast about their illegal, corrupt and misogynistic behaviour. Never mind losing the trust of the public, they have lost my trust—something I once believed was unshakeable. But never mind that, our Home Secretary is going to order another review—I am sure that is going to do a fat lot of good.

We have here a caucus of individuals who are out of control, taking the mickey and biting the hand that feeds them. When a police officer believes that they can get away with rape and murder, where do you go from there? With David Carrick, you can add another allegation as well: depravity. Some of the things that he did are too distressing to even talk about. We can improve the vetting, of course, but what is to stop the old rotten culture spreading to the new intake of officers who are coming along? At least the leadership have made a start, by re-examining over 1,600 existing sexual abuse allegations.

We learn that the police are literally a law unto themselves. I was surprised to learn that there are no national rules on vetting, as the noble Lord, Lord Coaker, mentioned, or standards—for example, in recruitment. I ask the Minister why not. Surely a lack of consistency was going to be very unhelpful. The public just see the uniform wherever they are.

Since 2016, getting rid of bad apples has become more and more long-winded and legalistic, with an independent legal chair on misconduct boards. I understand that this is to be reviewed. Perhaps restoring

the power of the chief constable to dismiss, with a robust appeals system, is the way to go. Where does the safety of the public figure on the scale of importance? It took 17 years of suffering before the force got rid of Carrick—17 years of missed opportunities, despite his nickname, “Bastard Dave”. Incidentally, Wayne Couzens’ nickname was “the Rapist”.

That brings me to my final point. Plenty of people must have known that Carrick’s behaviour was out of order and out of control, but no colleague for 17 years dobbed him in or reported him, as far as we know. Why did he succeed in escaping justice scot free to wreak even more suffering? In fact, it was worse than that: he was even promoted. It looks to me like cosy, collaborative complicity—a toxic culture protecting its own. That is the core of what needs to change.

Will there be a review of culpability of senior staff, who should have stamped on this laddish, and worse, culture? Unless someone gets a grip to expose all the other Carricks who are out there, how can I and so many other people feel safe with the police service ever again?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office (Lord Sharpe of Epsom) (Con): My Lords, I thank the noble Lord, Lord Coaker, and the noble Baroness, Lady Burt, for their remarks. I start by echoing my right honourable friend the Home Secretary, who the other day said that this was

“a dark day for British policing and the Metropolitan police, as an officer admitted being responsible for a monstrous campaign of abuse”.—[*Official Report, Commons, 17/1/22; col. 179.*]

I am sure the whole House will want to join me and the Home Secretary in expressing our deepest sympathy to the victims, but also in thanking them for their courage in coming forward. It is intolerable for them to have suffered as they have. They were manipulated, isolated and subjected to horrific abuse.

We should also acknowledge, as did the noble Baroness, Lady Burt, that, every day, thousands of decent, hard-working police officers perform their duties with the utmost professionalism. It is inevitable that those police officers will feel very let down by the latest offence. I am sure that they too deserve some of our sympathy.

I shall go into the specific questions that have been asked of me, but, of course, I agree with the tone of all the remarks that have been made so far. On vetting, noble Lords may have heard on the radio this morning that the Home Secretary has written to the chief constable of the College of Policing, Andy Marsh. He has been tasked with putting the guidance on vetting on a statutory footing by the end of February—the 2007 guidance is not statutory; it is only that: guidance. Importantly, it is worth reminding the House that HMICFRS published a report on this matter last year. The end of February is a new target. Previously, when this was a set of deadlines that forces had committed to meet, it was to be done by the end of October, so it is a significant, and entirely justified, improvement in timing.

The HMICFRS has also been tasked with re-inspecting all the forces by the end of April. Finally, the National Police Chiefs’ Council will ask all forces to check on to the police national database. The Met is already doing it, and it is obviously overdue that that programme should continue.

[LORD SHARPE OF EPSOM]

The noble Baroness, Lady Burt, asked about the police uplift programme and vetting. Obviously, with such a large increase in officer recruitment, there are concerns about the vetting process, but the Government have ensured that all forces have been supported as they recruit officers and work towards meeting the 20,000 additional officer target—as noble Lords will know, that is well on track. That includes funding to deliver significant improvements to recruitment processes and improve infrastructure. A recent review of vetting capacity carried out by the uplift programme in October 2022 showed that, of the 36 forces that responded, 25 had increased capacity in vetting units between February and October of last year, totalling an additional 185 staff in those units—an increase of 33%.

Both noble Lords referred to the dismissals process. Last week, I answered a Question on this—coincidentally, I had a letter in preparation for the noble Lord, Lord Campbell-Savours, who asked it, because the terms of reference for that review were published yesterday. That review will look into whether the current system is fair and effective at removing officers who are not fit to serve in the police. It will include looking at the composition of misconduct panels, including the role of legally qualified chairs just referred to by the noble Baroness, Lady Burt, any trends in the use of misconduct sanctions, and consistency of decision-making in cases of sexual misconduct and other violence against women and girls. The Government expect the review to be completed in approximately four months. I imagine that I will be asked why we need another review, but it is important to stress that we have to look carefully at the evidence to ensure that any change to the system is effective. I agree that it needs to happen urgently, but I think four months is a very reasonable timeframe in which to conduct this work.

The questions on the culture of policing are obviously extremely important. There is no doubt that there is a huge amount of work not only for the Met but for the wider policing community to restore and rebuild trust and confidence among the general public, particularly among women and girls. I know that some important work is being done. For example, my right honourable friend the Home Secretary visited the force in Kent. In her opinion, it is leading from the front; it has instituted a whole raft of operational measures to support victims of serious offences and rape, and I hope that we hear more about that soon. Noble Lords will also be aware that both the Angiolini inquiry—the terms of reference for part 2 of which were published either today or yesterday; I cannot remember which, I am afraid—and the Casey review continue to look at this issue. Part 2 of the Angiolini inquiry will look specifically into the culture around Carrick.

The noble Lord, Lord Coaker, asked me whether all officers who have a sexual or violent allegation made against them should be suspended. There is no place in policing for officers who perpetrate such crimes—that goes without saying—so all allegations should be dealt with robustly. We believe it important that forces have the option to suspend officers while they investigate such incredibly serious allegations, but they must remain as operational decisions which

must continue to be taken by chief officers, having given full consideration to all the circumstances. I believe there are good reasons for that.

The noble Lord asked me about statistics, especially annualised statistics on police misconduct. For allegations that commenced after 1 February 2020, which were finalised in the year 2021-22, 0.6% of all allegations against police officers fell into the category of sexual misconduct. That includes abuse of position for sexual purpose. The Independent Office for Police Conduct publishes data annually on public complaints against the police. In 2020-21, 109 of 109,151 allegations made related to sexual conduct; this accounts for 0.18% of all complaint allegations. The College of Policing publishes annual statistics on those dismissed from the police. In 2020-21, of 257 officers who were dismissed—the statistic was broken down into well over 200 categories; there may be more than one reason for a dismissal—abuse of position for sexual purpose was a factor in 38 of those dismissals. Those are the best statistics I currently have.

I appreciate that time is running on, and I am probably talking far too much. I would like to reiterate that the Government are committed to the safety of the public. I was going to talk at some length about our violence against women and girls strategy, but I do not really have time.

The noble Baroness, Lady Burt, asked about who, effectively, will be the agent of change in the police culture. It would like to commend Sir Mark Rowley, who I spent some time with last week, and his senior team, including Dame Lynne Owens and various others who have been on the news this week talking about these awful subjects. Sir Mark has been in post only since September. He is committed to doing the right thing, and I think that he is utterly sincere in that and the right man for the job. He deserves all our support, so I wish him well and hope that he manages to complete his task with extreme speed.

12.10 pm

Baroness Thornton (Lab): I thank the Minister for his response; it was entirely appropriate. As his colleague in the other place said:

“This is one of the most egregious cases of police misconduct in the history of the Met, perhaps in the history of British policing.”

I struggle with the term “misconduct” when we are talking sustained, sadistic rape and serious sexual assault. In a matter of a few weeks, we have had awful disclosures of racism and misogyny in the uniformed services on whom we depend in London, both the fire service and the police, which indeed raises questions about culture and recruitment. I will ask the Minister a specific question: why was the data and intelligence on this police officer and others not collected? Given that the police depend on collecting data and intelligence to stop crime—particularly terrorism—why are they not collecting data and intelligence on themselves? Why were these complaints not collated, so that somebody could notice that this police officer was out of control and behaving in a completely horrible and inappropriate fashion? It seems that there is a huge gap in management and operations.

I agree with the Minister that the commissioner is deeply committed to dealing with this deeply rooted misogynistic culture, but why is the commissioner against independent scrutiny and support of the progress to deal with these huge culture changes? Why has he not announced that there will be no more recruitment or appraisal of officers without independent input to ensure that that scrutiny has its eyes open to the risks and does not have its eyes closed by the culture that already exists in the Met?

Finally, Dame Vera Baird, the former Victims' Commissioner, said it would be appropriate for his pension pot to be taken away because he was a serious offender. She asked:

"What does it matter if he was on duty or not?"

He used his status as a police officer to perpetuate these awful crimes, so, apart from the fact that there must be some question mark over his pension pot, she said:

"I hope his victims will be compensated without having to go to court."

Lord Sharpe of Epsom (Con): I agree with the noble Baroness that "misconduct" is not the right word for this; this is serious and violent crime. She is 100% right on that.

I cannot answer the questions in detail as to why the Met failed in its responsibilities on the collection and assessment of data, but the noble Baroness is absolutely right that there were serial failures, which unfortunately were repeated very often. I will add go into some detail: Carrick was the subject of five complaints from members of the public between 2002 and 2008, none of which was of a sexual nature. He came to the Metropolitan Police Service's attention nine times prior to October 2021 for off-duty matters; the earliest was in 2000, prior to his police service. He was not charged with a criminal offence on any of those occasions, but his case history clearly revealed a pattern of behaviour which should have raised concerns, regardless of the outcome of individual incidents.

The Metropolitan Police's processes did not properly identify the risk and he was granted clearance when he was vetted on joining the Metropolitan Police in 2001, and again in 2017—that was six years later than when he should have been re-vetted after 10 years' service. There is no excuse for any of that; these are just unfortunate and simple facts. I am confident that Sir Mark, as the noble Baroness reiterated, is the right man to root this out and to sort it out, and I have no doubt that he will. I cannot answer the specific questions as to why he is reluctant to do certain other things, but I can ask him and perhaps report back.

I apologise for this long answer. The noble Baroness also asked me about his pension. The forfeiture of a police officer's pension is a matter for the Pension Supervising Authority, and, for officers in the Metropolitan Police Service, that is the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime—MOPAC.

Baroness Bertin (Con): My Lords, I have been sitting on an advisory panel for the Metropolitan Police's ongoing review of PaDP, the armed unit where Wayne Couzens and David Carrick worked. I absolutely do not doubt the determination of either the Government

or Sir Mark Rowley; he is obviously determined to try to root out dangerous and toxic officers. But he needs tools to do that. As it stands, it is an impossible situation, and I really hope that the review they speak of will be robust. Let us face it, the bottom line is that the bar to dismissal needs to be severely and significantly lowered for police officers. At the moment, it is vague and open to interpretation what constitutes serious misconduct and grounds for dismissal; it is absolutely far too woolly, and that needs to change. We well know that charges of domestic abuse, rape and sexual misconduct never get anywhere near court, let alone conviction; so these things are not being picked up in the way they should be.

When the new systems are put in place—I sincerely hope they are; I give full support to what the noble Lord, Lord Coaker, said about a full overhaul of the regulatory system—they should include discretion, common sense and, as we have just spoken about, an ability to join up the dots on these individuals. That may sound easy, but it will not be. It needs a proper restructure, resource and a complete overhaul; if we do not do that, I am afraid that nothing will change.

Lord Sharpe of Epsom (Con): I entirely agree with my noble friend. One of the reasons for setting up the dismissals review is that Sir Mark Rowley has publicly requested that we look into this, to make his life, and those of other chief constables, potentially easier in this regard. It was also partly a review of the interim report by the noble Baroness, Lady Casey.

I happen to have the terms of reference in front of me, and I think it is worth going through them in a little detail; I will try to keep this reasonably brief. The terms of reference are to:

"Understand the consistency of decision-making at both hearings and accelerated hearings ... Assess whether there is disproportionality in dismissals and, if so, examine the potential causes. Establish any trends in the use of sanctions at both hearings and accelerated hearings ... To review the existing model"—

which I have already talked about a bit.

"Ensure that forces are able to effectively use Regulation 13 of the Police Regulations 2003 to dispense with the services of probationary officers ... Review the available appeal mechanisms for both officers and chief constables"—

I know that subject that exercises many noble Lords.

"Consider the merits of a presumption for disciplinary action against officers found to have committed a criminal offence ... Review whether the current three-stage performance system is effective".

That is a very comprehensive set of terms. As I have already said, the review will be delivered back to us for consideration in four months, and I certainly hope that its recommendations will be acted on in full, in order, as I said at the start of this answer, to deal with Sir Mark Rowley's request and to respond to the interim review from the noble Baroness, Lady Casey.

Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb (GP): My Lords, we have been here before; this is not the first time we have debated the issue in this Chamber. I have been here for nearly 10 years, and it has been debated several times, so I am sadly not convinced that determination is what is needed—there definitely needs to be an overhaul. I support all the comments that have been made.

[BARONESS JONES OF MOULSECOOMB]

My small knowledge of the police from the outside, and from having discussed this with many officers and former officers, is that it is impossible that there was not a lot of gossip about Carrick before now—and, before him, about Couzens and many others way into the past. Senior officers must have known and must, at some point, have turned a blind eye. That is what disturbs me the most, because this issue is not only about new recruits and officers on the street but about senior officers. It goes to the root of the problem: deep misogyny, which of course is not only in our police but in wider society, which is why it is so difficult to eradicate. The Minister has made good points on the collection of data and so on, but what makes him think that this will be any different from every failure in the past to reform the police?

Lord Sharpe of Epsom (Con): I thank the noble Baroness for those remarks. I am not going to speculate on the whole “blind eye” situation; that would be unwise given that the case, as the Lord Speaker mentioned earlier, is still very much ongoing even though there has been a plea of “guilty”.

That affords me an opportunity to talk a bit about the strategy on violence against women and girls, which is a government priority. We have taken firm action to tackle these crimes; that includes delivering more than 127 commitments, worth over £230 million, that were made in the tackling violence against women and girls strategy and the domestic abuse plan. We are implementing the Domestic Abuse Act; introducing new offences, such as threats to disclose intimate images, controlling or coercive behaviour, stalking and forced marriage; introducing new schemes allowing women to check whether their partner has a violent history; supporting Greg Clark MP’s Bill in the other place, which will create a specific offence of public sexual harassment; and launching a national communications strategy, Enough.

Those are all words; obviously, we have to deliver on those words. There is more to do. I hope to be able to say more about that from this Dispatch Box in due course. On what will be different this time, I think that the team in place is absolutely committed to making this happen; that includes in the police force and among other stakeholders, including this one.

Lord Houghton of Richmond (CB): I slightly hesitate to say what I am about to say but I am going to say it, although I do not want to draw crude comparisons between the police force and the Armed Forces as institutions. I know that there is much about the Armed Forces that we need to sort out because of cultural behaviours, misbehaviours and those sorts of things. However, helpfully, I would like to ask the Minister whether the role of quality leadership in mitigating these sorts of problems can be looked at in the review.

I ask this because the recruitment and training models in the police force as opposed to the Armed Forces are very different. In the Armed Forces, we recruit at two different levels: we recruit soldiers, sailors and airmen; and we recruit officers, for officer training, based on their potential leadership qualities. We reinforce

leadership training and betterment throughout their careers. In the police force—although I am not an expert—they just recruit police officers. Yes, they have some fast-trackers with degrees, but I do not think that leadership potential is highlighted as an especial criteria for entry.

As I say, I do not want to make a crude comparison. My own gut instinct—in the Armed Forces, dare I say it, we deal with some quite raw recruits and put them in some quite difficult positions, so it is not surprising that sometimes some of it goes wrong—is that investment systematically throughout the recruitment, training and career development of officers in the Armed Forces does much to instil the right cultures and disciplines. I therefore think that it is worth looking at that in any review.

Lord Sharpe of Epsom (Con): The noble and gallant Lord makes some extremely good points, if I may say so. They echo some of the points from the noble Lord, Lord Dear, a couple of months ago when I was answering a Question, which piqued my interest. He raised the subject of the closure of the Bramshill police college, which trained police officers for senior leadership and ensured a degree of consistency across forces. As a consequence of that Question, which was asked of me a couple of months ago, I had a chat about this issue with Andy Marsh at the College of Policing, where a leadership academy is being established. Progress is not particularly fast at the moment—there are all sorts of reasons for that—but conversations will be ongoing because it has certainly piqued my interest. I have the Policing Minister’s agreement to continue to pursue this particular subject.

On the Metropolitan Police specifically, Sir Mark Rowley is setting up a leadership academy. The noble and gallant Lord raised the subject of degrees and what have you; I think that there is a problem with the consistency of delivery of degree services across police forces. It is certainly true that there is a problem of consistency of leadership across police forces. The noble and gallant Lord also hinted at an interesting point, towards the end of his question, about the types of officer that are now recruited. Obviously, the skills required to break up a fight in a pub and those required to tackle online crime are very different. They really ought to provoke some serious thinking about who, how and why we recruit.

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage (Lab): I am grateful to the Minister for his points about the violence against women and girls strategy. The measure of that, of course, will be whether we stop losing 140 women a year at the hands of domestic abuse attackers.

Although PC Carrick was a Metropolitan Police officer, he lived in my hometown of Stevenage. I express my great thanks to Hertfordshire Constabulary for the very thorough investigation that it carried out into this issue. I join noble Lords in expressing my shock at the disgraceful and troubling revelations regarding this case and others. I worked in policing for many years. I feel deeply for the thousands of officers out there who do amazing things in our communities every day and who will feel so badly let down by the appalling conduct of PC Carrick and the other cases

that we have heard about. They have damaged the trust and confidence of the communities that our good officers serve.

With the Met Commissioner, Sir Mark Rowley, saying that he has a further 800 officers suspended or on limited duties because they are under investigation for serious misconduct, what reassurance can the Minister give about the liaison between the Metropolitan Police and the surrounding areas and forces where these potential offenders may live?

Lord Sharpe of Epsom (Con): I echo the noble Baroness's comments about the vast majority of serving officers who do such a fantastic job, whom I have already referenced. As the noble Baroness says, their work is undermined by situations such as this. As regards liaison with the surrounding areas, I am afraid that I really do not have the answer to that question. I shall ask Sir Mark and see whether he is willing to say something in public on that subject.

Baroness Berridge (Con): My Lords, this is the 75th anniversary of the arrival of the "Windrush", which we will have a debate on later today. For years, there have been many complaints from certain communities and officers who have left the force, talking about the cultural problems around ethnic minority policing. Can my noble friend assure the House that this assessment of culture will be wide enough to cover that matter?

Can my noble friend also go back and ask for some urgent advice for women? Many of these situations involve off-duty or plain-clothes police and occur when women might be on their own. What is the advice to women in particular, and vulnerable people, if they are approached by somebody in plain clothes, either on or off duty, and they produce their warrant card? We are left in a serious situation here of not knowing whether to trust that person.

Lord Sharpe of Epsom (Con): I reassure my noble friend that the review into police culture will be a review into all the police culture. I can confidently say that because I know it to be the case. As I just referenced when talking about the terms of reference on the dismissals process, there is a specific question there on proportionality, which very much relates to the matters that she has just raised.

On guidance for women, it would be difficult for me to comment on the operational guidance that is handed out but I remember that, after the appalling Sarah Everard case, there was some updated guidance given by the police. I cannot remember exactly what it was, I am afraid, but I shall refer back to it and come back.

Lord Campbell of Pittenweem (LD): A point has occurred to me as a result of this extremely interesting and powerful debate. On the question of vetting, who does it? What rank are those who conduct the vetting and what training do they have in vetting? If you want to join a merchant bank in this country, you are subject to vetting of a very effective nature. If that is the beginning of the mistakes, surely that is a place where there must be a much more effective way of deciding who is eligible, by reason of experience and ability, than has been the case so far.

Is there any independent element to vetting? We know—we can point to ourselves—that, when it comes to the issue of discipline, we now have a substantial element of independence. Indeed, we had two recent cases when a noble Lord and a noble Baroness were suspended. If we look at the document upon which those suspensions took place, we see just how substantial the independent element is in our discipline procedures. Can the Minister ensure that any review deals properly with the whole question of the quality of vetting, and that every sympathy is expressed to the extent that there should be independent contributions to both vetting and dealing with complaints?

Lord Sharpe of Epsom (Con): The noble Lord raises a good point. I think that I have dealt with this to some extent by talking about the Home Secretary's letter and instructions to the College of Policing as regards vetting standards and to how they are going to be upgraded to the statutory code of practice. There is authorised professional practice guidance—I do not know what it contains and I am afraid that I do not know who is responsible for vetting, but the people who do it work to very professional guidelines, as set out by the College of Policing. The other important thing to remind the House of is that the Home Secretary has tasked the HMICFRS to re-inspect all police forces by the end of this April.

International Holocaust Memorial Day

Motion to Take Note

12.31 pm

Moved by Lord Pickles

That this House takes note of International Holocaust Memorial Day.

Lord Pickles (Con): My Lords, it is with respect and sombre reflection that I move the Motion standing in my name on the Order Paper. I draw the House's attention to my entry in the register of interests, particularly those concerned with Holocaust remembrance and tackling anti-Semitism.

I start the debate in some sadness as, yesterday morning, a friend of many of us in this Chamber, Zigi Shipper, passed away, on his 93rd birthday. He survived the ghetto, concentration camps and the death march. He devoted the latter part of this life to telling his story. His Majesty the King had his portrait commissioned and hung in Buckingham Palace. Zigi guided the present Prince and Princess of Wales around Stutthof concentration camp. Whether he was greeting royalty or giving his testimony in the classroom, he was always the same old Zigi. He will be very much on my mind when I light my candle on Holocaust Memorial Day. I will particularly remember his motto: "Do not hate". May his memory be a blessing.

The theme of this year's Holocaust Memorial Day is "Ordinary People". I think all of us in this Chamber could imagine ourselves being victims of the Holocaust, but few of us could imagine ourselves being perpetrators of the Holocaust. Unless we understand that both victims and perpetrators were ordinary people who

[LORD PICKLES]

led ordinary lives, we run the risk ourselves of Holocaust distortion. The Holocaust turned ordinary people into monsters.

The Nazis had a powerful propaganda machine, which was deadly effective, but curiously, from small villages nestling in the Pyrenees to the impenetrable forests of Belarus, the Nazis never needed to explain to anyone what Jew hatred was. Nor would it have been possible to murder 6 million Jews, hundreds of thousands of Roma, people with a disability, homosexuals or political and religious dissidents without the active collaboration of others. Thankfully, there were of course many ordinary men and women willing to stand up to this hatred. Ordinary people often showed extraordinary bravery to save victims of the Holocaust and subsequent genocides. But we delude ourselves if we think this is the norm.

Across Europe today, we see collaborators rehabilitated as national resistance leaders. History is being rinsed, and countries are recasting themselves as Nazi victims. As this decade progresses, the last survivors who witnessed the Holocaust as children will move from contemporary memory to the pages of history. We owe it to them and to ourselves to keep their memory, and that of their parents and grandparents, alive.

The destruction wrought by the Nazis and their collaborators was so great that, for hundreds of thousands of victims, the only reminder of their existence in this world is a very ordinary item of clothing: a shoe. Many of us are familiar with the piles of shoes at Auschwitz-Birkenau or at Holocaust museums worldwide. They are stark reminders of the fragile nature of life during the Holocaust. Shoes were described by the Polish poet, Moshe Szulsztejn, as “the last witnesses”.

As a Minister, I presented to Auschwitz a cheque on behalf of the UK Government to restore some of these shoes. I witnessed the process. When you looked at the shoes carefully, you saw that they were not so different from the footwear that might be worn by Members in the Chamber today. These shoes were not bought to board cattle-trucks to travel to death camps; they were bought as expressions of optimism and of the future: maybe they were bought for a wedding, a promotion, the first day at school or a summer picnic. Within the shoes were often hidden objects: money, love letters and photographs of children and spouses.

The hardest thing to look at are the children’s shoes. I remember a small pair of shoes, where a carefully folded piece of paper was found in the heel. It was a maths test. Can you imagine how precious this piece of paper was to a child? It symbolised, despite the conditions, that there was still hope and the prospect of survival and a future. The tiny shoes of the youngsters of Auschwitz are a special symbol of the crimes perpetrated there. They are a reminder that, in many cases, they were the only witnesses to the murder of 232,000 children at that death camp.

The memories contained in shoes and other footwear remains important in remembering other genocides. In Rwanda, in the absence of DNA and dental records, shoes and clothing were used to identify the dead found in mass graves following the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi. In Cambodia, piles of sandals are a

reminder of the brutality of the Khmer Rouge. In 2010, 16,000 pairs of shoes were put on display to mark the 15th anniversary of the Srebrenica massacre, each pair representing a victim of Europe’s worst genocide since the Second World War. The memorial of shoes was a

“warning for all future U.N. employees never again just to stand by when genocide unfolds”—

an allusion to the failure of UN peacekeepers to protect the Srebrenica victims during the Bosnian war. Shoes worn by ordinary people; the final witness.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s working definition of Holocaust denial and distortion. Today, we still see people who actively deny the historical reality of the Holocaust and seek to minimise the extent of the atrocities committed against the Jewish people by the Nazis and their collaborators. They cast doubt on the existence of the gas chambers and the mass shootings, and on deliberate working to death and starvation being used as a tool of government policy. The simple goal of Holocaust denial is to recast history to erase the legacy and reality of the mass murder of Jewish people.

Holocaust distortion is more mainstream and just as pernicious. It casts doubts. It assigns different descriptions to places, with death camps redesignated as transit camps. Contemporary events are compared to the Holocaust. Collaborators of the Nazis are wiped out of national memory. Holocaust distortion can be found at all levels of society and is far from a fringe phenomenon—from facts being twisted on the internet to opportunistic statements by politicians, misleading exhibitions at museums and, most recently, comparing measures to combat Covid-19 or climate change to the Holocaust.

A few years ago, I visited Treblinka, a death camp not unlike Auschwitz. People were murdered there within a couple of hours of arriving. I recall putting on social media, as you do, how moving it was. Within minutes, I was swamped by people saying, “Nobody died at Treblinka; it was a transit camp. Maybe the odd person died of flu, but that was all.” I have no idea whether those people believed that or not.

We are obviously concerned about the growth in the number of anti-Semitic incidents being reported on our university campuses. Our universities must be welcoming and inclusive environments for all students. I welcome the Tuck report into anti-Semitism, published last Thursday. This important report includes details of some quite shocking episodes and illustrates how prevalent anti-Semitism is within the ranks of the National Union of Students. The NUS will have to work hard to ensure that it represents all students in future. This was further underlined by today’s report from the Community Security Trust, which saw a 22% rise in anti-Semitic incidents on campus in the last two years.

The Covid-19 pandemic and Russia’s aggression against Ukraine have further fuelled the soaring levels of online anti-Semitism. Understanding the ways in which hate permeates the online space is not easy. The Online Safety Bill, which arrived here yesterday, will give this House an opportunity to address that hatred.

Close to 80 years since the Holocaust, there are still people waiting for justice and recognition of their property that was stolen by the Nazis. It has been 13 years since 47 countries signed the Terezin Declaration in June 2009. There has been progress: 13 countries in Europe have adopted legislation that either addresses or partially addresses heirless and unclaimed property from the Holocaust era. However, sadly, only Serbia has put together legislation on heirless and unclaimed property. Poland, the anvil of the Holocaust, is the only democracy refusing to address the concerns of dispossessed Holocaust survivors and their heirs. Time is running out; it has a moral obligation to ensure that Holocaust survivors and their families receive justice.

I co-chair with Ed Balls the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation. Our role is to oversee the British promise to remember and to build a striking and prominent new national memorial in Victoria Tower Gardens. I am most encouraged by the pledges from the Government and the Official Opposition to introduce a Bill to facilitate the memorial's construction. It is possible that your Lordships will have an opportunity to debate the merits of its location at greater length than in this brief debate.

We are clear that the learning centre will adopt a warts and all approach. Our narrative will be balanced, addressing the complexities of Britain's response to the Holocaust, avoiding simplistic judgments and encouraging visitors to reflect critically on whether more could have been done by both policymakers and society. We are determined to face history honestly. I am conscious that 2025 will be the 80th anniversary of the Holocaust, and that every day which passes means that fewer Holocaust survivors will be around to see that we honour our pledge.

Finally, I thank Olivia Marks-Woldman, the CEO of the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, for her marvellous work in delivering the UK's national Holocaust Memorial Day ceremony and thousands of local activities. I also pay tribute to Karen Pollock, the CEO of the Holocaust Educational Trust, which is the driving force behind Lessons from Auschwitz. Professor Stuart Foster and Associate Professor Ruth-Anne Lenga from the UCL Centre for Holocaust Education have ensured that the UK leads the way in teaching and learning about the Holocaust. Many other organisations provide help in understanding the Holocaust, and I thank them.

The Holocaust and subsequent genocides show that ordinary people have choices. It is up to all of us to ensure that the choices that we make today and tomorrow ensure that our statement of "Never again" is not a single empty pledge.

12.45 pm

Lord Kestenbaum (Lab): My Lords, I pay tribute to the noble Lord, Lord Pickles, for securing this historic debate and for all his other formidable work. This memorial day is one which binds us all, irrespective of background, but I hope noble Lords will offer their forbearance because, for me, it is a deeply personal matter. As my family name, Kestenbaum, indicates, home for us until the crimes began in the mid-20th century was Germany. Because the enormity of what followed

often defies comprehension, I request that this Chamber bears witness today to one elderly victim and hears her story.

I speak of Dina Eisenman, my great-great-grandmother, who was killed in Bergen-Belsen on 19 February 1944 at the age of 80. Dina and most of my maternal family were living in Frankfurt at the time of Kristallnacht. She fled for her life to Holland and settled in The Hague, where we had family, but the German invasion in May 1940 changed everything again. Anti-Semitic laws were soon followed by the round-up and deportation of Holland's Jews.

Dina was deported to Westerbork in early 1943—the transit station from which trains left for the death camps. The cattle-trucks deporting Jews to their slaughter left every Tuesday morning. This made Mondays equally traumatic, for every Monday evening a list was read out in the Westerbork barracks of those to be deported the next day. On the evening of Monday 15 February 1944, the name of my great-great-grandmother Dina Eisenman was read out. At the time, she was an 80 year-old, sick, weak woman who could be moved only on a stretcher, yet she was mercilessly deported in a cattle-truck to Bergen-Belsen.

Dina Eisenman, an 80 year-old grandmother, was dead within a week of arriving at Bergen-Belsen. Her death at the hands of the Nazis was not the end of our family tragedy. Two of her children and two of her children-in-law were murdered. Ten of her grandchildren were murdered too, the youngest of whom—Lottie, who was 16, and Herbert, who was nine—were gassed to death in Auschwitz. In total, 26 members of my extended family were among the millions of victims of humanity's greatest ever state-sponsored crime. Today we bear witness to that crime.

In the spirit of remembrance, I will share a poignant postscript. Last October, the March of the Living organised a ceremony on the site of the camp to mark the 75th anniversary of Bergen-Belsen's liberation by British forces. At the ceremony, the British Army was represented by Colonel Dickie Winchester, of the Royal Artillery, and Lieutenant-Colonel Simon Ledger, of the very same armoured regiment which was among the camp's liberators, who laid a wreath. A candle was also lit in memory of the victims of Bergen-Belsen by Dina Eisenman's great-great-great-grandson, Yoav Kestenbaum, my son.

At the ceremony that afternoon were several Holocaust survivors. In talking to them, it was clear to me that their deepest concern today is that the passage of time may leave the field of memory open to the deniers and distorters of the Holocaust, as the noble Lord, Lord Pickles, referred to. Recent research has revealed that several online platforms continue to host a significant number of posts denying the Holocaust or distorting its crimes, so today is a timely moment respectfully to ask the Minister what further legislative measures are being taken to hold online platforms accountable for the Holocaust denial content that they host, particularly if we cannot rely on their voluntary self-policing.

It was the late Lord Sacks who said:

"To be a Jew is to carry the burden of memory without letting it rob us of hope".

[LORD KESTENBAUM]

I am sure he would have agreed that this imperative now falls on us all, irrespective of background. Indeed, His Majesty the King himself has inspired us with his personal commitment to Holocaust remembrance. In light of the passing of the survivors and the dangers of Holocaust denial, it falls to this Chamber, many like it, and indeed the entire country to carry that burden of memory and, in doing so, to light a candle of hope.

12.50 pm

Baroness Brinton (LD): My Lords, I declare my interest as a patron of the Traveller movement. I thank the noble Lord, Lord Pickles, for securing this important debate today and the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, the Library and many others for their excellent and helpful briefings. It is a pleasure to follow the noble Lord, Lord Kestenbaum, who described the moving experience of his own family.

This year's theme of ordinary people who let genocide happen is extremely important for all of us at a time when we hear and see rises in anti-Semitism and other discrimination. In the brief time available, I want to make some links with things that are happening today but started in the early 1930s.

Pastor Martin Niemöller's famous comment about remaining silent even in the face of evidence begins:

"First they came for the Communists
And I did not speak out
Because I was not a Communist ...
Then they came for the Jews
And I did not speak out
Because I was not a Jew",

and ends:

"Then they came for me
And there was no one left
To speak out".

Most people do not understand that he spoke from his own experience: he was a pro-Nazi supporter in the very early 1930s. He did not support the Jewish community at all, and he recognised that in his later life.

For me, what happened to the Roma and Gypsy community in the 1930s was appalling. The Porajmos, or the Devouring, started in 1933 with prejudice and discrimination. Tens of thousands of Romani men, women and children across Germany and occupied Europe were first badly treated, and then killed. The human rights commissioner for the Council of Europe has reported this year on compelling testimony she heard about discrimination, a lack of publicly provided sites for our Traveller community and the barriers that people in the GRT community face in developing sites. In particular, she commented on the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act, and how it is much harder for our Traveller community to live their way of life.

In that same visit in the middle of 2022, she also commented on addressing the increasingly toxic discourse against trans people. That, too, is how genocide started against the LGBT—particularly the "T"—community in May 1933, when the Nazis raided and looted the Institute for Sexual Science. Some employees just disappeared and were assumed to have been murdered; their archives and research were burned. During the Holocaust, transgender people were deported to concentration camps, and many did not survive.

Much more recently, in this last year there has been a chilling echo of what happened to Polish children in the 1930s after Germany invaded Poland, where they were sent to German families and to SS home schools if they were thought to be of previous Germanic descent. This year, in the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts of Ukraine, we have seen Ukrainian children being removed and sent to Russia and "adopted" by Russian families. That is appalling.

If Martin Niemöller were alive today, he would be asking us to look at and think carefully about all we see and do. It is not just about the horrific end of lives; it is about the slow and gradual movement towards othering particular communities and feeling that they are not part of us and that this is acceptable. He said:

"We preferred to keep silent. We are ... not without guilt/fault, and I ask myself again and again, what would have happened, if in ... 1933 or 1934 ... 14,000 Protestant pastors"

had intervened? He believed that millions of lives would have been saved. We all need to heed that challenge and speak up.

Baroness Bloomfield of Hinton Waldrist (Con): Can I say at this point that this is a time-limited debate? If people exceed the limit consistently, there will be very little time for the Minister to respond. This is a very difficult debate for me to intervene on, but I just make that reminder.

12.55 pm

The Lord Bishop of Carlisle: My Lords, it is a privilege to follow the noble Baroness, Lady Brinton. Like so many others, I am most grateful to the noble Lord, Lord Pickles, for this Motion. It provides an opportunity not only to hear such moving contributions but to express from these Benches our deep appreciation of the history and values that Christians and Jews have in common, as well as the importance we attach to our ongoing dialogue, understanding and attempts to work together for the common good. Our central Christian act of worship, the Eucharist, originated in Christ's participation in the Jewish ceremony of Passover. We note the huge contribution that Jewish people have made to British society through the centuries, which is a great expression of the significance of faith in public life.

However, the Christian Church has not always behaved in ways that have honoured Jews—in fact, quite the opposite, as the most reverend Primate the Archbishop of Canterbury made clear in a statement just last week. This is something we now deeply regret. As we remember today all those who suffered and died in the Holocaust, we are glad to confirm our absolute commitment to remembering those victims, opposing anti-Semitism, and helping to educate people about the Holocaust and against anti-Semitic hate crimes, which are still not entirely absent from our culture. Indeed, the Church of England's vision for education has at its heart a theme of community and living well together. It is that for which we and our Jewish colleagues work in our shared endeavour to build community relationships which enable the people of this country to flourish, mindful of the Prayers offered each day in your Lordships' House, for the

“uniting and knitting together of the hearts of all persons and estates within the”

realm,

“in true Christian Love and Charity one towards another”.

12.57 pm

Lord Polak (Con): My Lords, it is an honour to follow the right reverend Prelate, and I appreciate his words. I pay tribute to my noble friend Lord Pickles for securing this important debate. Those who have visited Yad Vashem in Jerusalem will have walked along what is known as the avenue of the righteous, where a tree is planted and nurtured in honour of those non-Jews who saved and protected Jews during the Holocaust, putting themselves and their families in mortal danger. For the work and dedication my noble friend has undertaken over so many years across the globe—on community cohesion, combating anti-Semitism, championing Holocaust education and ensuring a fitting memorial and education centre is established next door—a mere “thank you” is not remotely adequate. If I could create and establish a “Pickles Plaza”, I would.

On 19 January 1943, precisely 80 years ago to this very day, 24-year-old Mordechai Anielewicz—an ordinary person who became extraordinary—the leader of the Jewish Fighting Organisation in the Warsaw ghetto, was fighting the Nazi oppressors who had just begun the process of deporting the last remaining Jews of the Warsaw ghetto to Treblinka. They fought bravely and tirelessly for several weeks, before they were ultimately overcome by the Nazis.

In December 1943, the kibbutz Yad Mordechai in southern Israel, close to the Gaza border, was established in Mordechai Anielewicz’s honour. In the centre of that kibbutz today, a striking and beautiful statue of Mordechai serves as a memorial to the Jewish resistance during the Holocaust. The kibbutz has a museum dedicated to the Jewish resistance in Europe, including an exhibit on the Warsaw ghetto uprising. It seems deeply appropriate that, today, the modern kibbutz Yad Mordechai is known for its production of honey, jam and olive oil—a perfect tribute to the young, brave leader.

I join the noble Lord, Lord Kestenbaum, in quoting the late Lord Sacks. He wrote this in his book, *The Dignity of Difference*:

“The Holocaust was an attempt to destroy the dignity of the Jewish people. It failed. Those who suffered and died in the concentration camps, ghettos and death camps left a legacy of human dignity and moral greatness that continues to inspire and uplift the Jewish people and all humanity.”

Today, we should not focus only on the persecution of those who were murdered in the Holocaust. We should be emboldened by Lord Sacks’ words and be uplifted by the brave and resilient actions of those such as Mordechai Anielewicz. As we approach Holocaust Memorial Day, in memory of Mordechai and all victims of the Holocaust, let us pledge to do our part and build a better future for all while keeping in mind the words of Mordechai himself, who said this just before his death in April 1943, at the tender age of 24:

“Only few will persevere. The rest will sooner or later be killed ... The most important thing is: my life’s dream has been fulfilled. I have lived to see Jewish self-defence in the Warsaw Ghetto in all its splendour and glory.”

1.01 pm

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent (Lab): My Lords, I am not sure how to follow the noble Lord, Lord Polak. As ever, his contribution was thoughtful and considered; I am grateful to follow it. Before I start, I refer the House to my register of interests, specifically that I am a trustee of the Antisemitism Policy Trust and a director of Hope not Hate.

This is, I believe, the first time noble Lords have had a debate to mark Holocaust Memorial Day. The fact that it is happening today is a testament to the work of the noble Lord, Lord Pickles, who has done so much in the field of Holocaust commemoration. I thank him for his ongoing commitment and, of course, for securing today’s debate.

I wish that this debate could be solely one of reflection and commemoration; that we could stand here today and consider the issues of anti-Jewish hate and fascist ideology as consigned to the dustbin of history; and that the bulk of today’s debate could be historical comment, highlighting the horrors experienced by the victims and the inspirational acts of the survivors, whose testimony has changed the world, and celebrating those who worked against their own Governments to protect and hide their fellow citizens.

This debate should be a celebration of the life of Zigi Shipper, an Auschwitz survivor who sadly passed away yesterday. It should be an opportunity for us to honour the work of my noble friend Lord Dubs, who has used his own story to inspire so many others. We should be sharing the testimony of Janine Webber, a Holocaust survivor whom many of us were privileged to hear last week at the Holocaust Educational Trust. We should be discussing these amazing people and many others whose names we will learn in today’s debate.

I wish that today’s debate was anchored in the past and that anti-Semitism was not a contemporary matter that required noble Lords’ attention—but I am afraid it is. The Holocaust should have been a unique moment in our global history. It should have shaken the world to its core. For many of us in this place today, I am sure that that is exactly what it has done. Holocaust Memorial Day provides us all with a moment of reflection to remind us of where political rhetoric and hate can lead. It gives us an opportunity to challenge our own behaviour and asks us to recommit to challenging racism, hate and bigotry everywhere we see them.

That brings me to the world we live in today. Noble Lords have already touched on the scourge of anti-Jewish hate that seems far too prevalent in modern society. In recent weeks, we have seen the National Union of Students forced to accept that its culture is hostile to Jewish students. We have seen numerous stories about the antics of Kayne West and his attacks on the Jewish community. It is 2023 and this ancient hatred is in the newspapers nearly every day.

This morning, CST, the Community Security Trust, published a new report detailing anti-Semitic incidents on university campuses across the UK. The past two years have seen a 22% increase in anti-Jewish hate incidents. There have been 150 verified and reported anti-Semitic incidents on British campuses in the past

[BARONESS ANDERSON OF STOKE-ON-TRENT]
two years. For context, there are only 271,000 Jews in the UK of all ages, so this is a terrifying level of hate. Our universities are meant to be cathedrals—or should I say synagogues—of learning and enlightenment. You would hope that, if there was one place where vile racism and anti-Jewish hatred were challenged and beaten, it would be in our educational establishments. This is clearly not the case. I want to put on the record my heartfelt thanks to Mark Gardner and his team at CST, who work tirelessly to keep the Jewish community safe both on campus and in wider society.

I am aware that time is short in this debate but it would be remiss of me not to recognise the amazing work of the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust and the Holocaust Educational Trust, which ensure that the legacy of this evil chapter of our history is remembered every day, not just on 27 January. This is a vital debate and I am grateful that we are having it, but I fear that our work in challenging anti-Jewish hate is far from over.

1.06 pm

Baroness Altmann (Con): My Lords, I congratulate my noble friend Lord Pickles, as others have done, on securing this important debate. I also thank our Government for the tremendous support they have provided to Holocaust remembrance.

It is increasingly important to remember that terrible, dark time. My mother, born in Berlin, and my father, born in Vienna, fled to the UK in the 1930s but most of our families were not so lucky. In preparing for today's debate, I spoke to my cousin Ellen, who was on the Kindertransport aged eight. She still remembers the taunts of Jew hatred before leaving Berlin, the anti-Semitism and the devastation of Kristallnacht. She wanted me to say on her behalf how grateful she is that England gave her the opportunity to live and how proud she has always been of her British nationality.

The main message she feels we need to learn is the importance of tolerance and respect for all other people, not forcing our own views on others—indeed, Jews have never been a proselytising nation—or looking at people with preconceived ideas about race, religion or colour. Will we learn the lessons of history or are we in danger of repeating them? We must not be complacent. Hatred and anti-Semitism have not disappeared, as the noble Baroness, Lady Anderson, just said in her excellent remarks.

Despite the horrific events of the Holocaust, which we remember today, I believe that there are still memories of the anti-Semitic acts that happened in Europe in the 1930s. For example, just this week, anti-Semitic taunts were used against a Jewish football supporter and her friends in a London pub that was showing the Arsenal v Spurs match. When she asked fellow Arsenal supporters not to use the word Yid, which was one of the Blackshirt Nazi taunts against Jews, she was told to take off her Arsenal shirt and 30 people shouted this at her: “You are a dirty fucking Yid”. Findings this week, which reported the harassment, anti-Semitism and hostility towards Jews in the National Union of Students, remind us that we must not forget where hatred and prejudice can lead.

In 1940, one-third of Warsaw's population was rounded up and forced into a ghetto comprising 2.4% of the city's area. How could this have happened? What lessons can we learn? One lesson is that we must not stand by silently while dreadful things are done around us. Death camp survivor Simon Wiesenthal, perhaps adapting from Edmund Burke, said:

“For evil to flourish, it only requires good men to do nothing.”
Yehuda Bauer said:

“Thou shall not be a perpetrator”,

but above all,

“thou shall never ... be a bystander.”

This is what we must remember. So today, I am trying, in my own small way, to ensure that we record what happened. We can choose evil, like our enemies have done, and create a world based on hate, or we can try to make things better. We must not take freedom for granted.

Before I finish, I will quote the last testament of Israel Lichtensztajn, writing in Warsaw on 31 July 1942:

“I do not ask for any thanks, for any memorial, for any praise. Only to be remembered is what I wish, so that my people, my brothers and sisters overseas, should know where my bones have been taken to.”

He also asked that his wife, Gele, and his 20 month-old daughter, Margalit, be remembered. Today, Israel, we remember you.

1.10 pm

Baroness Thornton (Lab): My Lords, I join everyone else in the House in congratulating the noble Lord, Lord Pickles, on the choice of this debate today and the wonderful way in which he opened it.

As we all know, Holocaust Memorial Day is 27 January, a day when we all remember the 6 million Jews murdered during the Holocaust and the millions of other people murdered by the Nazis, and the more recent genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur. I join others in congratulating the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust on choosing “ordinary people” as the theme for this year. As it says, this

“highlights the ordinary people who let genocide happen, the ordinary people who actively perpetrated genocide”,
the ordinary people who became rescuers during genocide,
“and the ordinary people who were persecuted.”

It highlights things such as the choice of language. All of us who have the privilege of public platforms need to be aware of the language that we use. When a Holocaust survivor asks us to consider the effect of our use of language to describe asylum seekers, she tells us that it is the language that was used to dehumanise and justify the murder of her family; in this case, words such as “swarms” and “invasion”. That echoes the remarks of the noble Lord, Lord Pickles, who said that, when the Nazis moved into certain parts of Europe, they did not have to argue the case for anti-Semitism because it had already been made. That places on all of us the need to be careful of the language that we use. As he says, this is a journey, and that starts with the language that ordinary people use. We in the Labour Party have had to learn and relearn this lesson over this most painful time of dealing with anti-Semitism in our own ranks.

Preparing this speech made me wonder what led me to take part in this debate. I reflected that my left-wing parents sent me on an international youth camp in

East Germany when I was 13 years old. We had a day trip to Sachsenhausen concentration camp, which of course was a huge shock and a revelation to me, and probably not what my parents expected I would be doing.

When I was 16, the Jewish lady who was attempting to tutor me for my German O-level—which was a bit of a lost cause—gave me a book called *Five Chimneys* by Olga Lengyel, which I read and reread in the years that followed. It is a woman survivor's tale of Auschwitz which does not retreat into self-pity or sensationalism, and a stark reminder that the unspeakable can happen in all kinds of places.

I married into a family half of which is missing, because they were lost in the Holocaust. My beloved father-in-law, Henry Carr, was a survivor. He escaped from the Łódź ghetto at 13, making his way across Europe. They lost everyone except Henry and his brother Nathan, who ended up in Israel, and a cousin in the USA. I feel the need to declare an interest because my husband, John Carr, has written a book about his father's odyssey. What it really tells me is that the story of the Holocaust for my family is about the need to make sure that our children and great-grandchildren never forget.

1.14 pm

Baroness Deech (CB): My Lords, around the world there are over 300—some say thousands—of Holocaust memorials, and in the UK at least six. All the while, anti-Semitism is growing rapidly and fearfully, not least amongst the young—for example, the National Union of Students. Yet these students have had compulsory Holocaust education at school. It seems to have taught them nothing, except that one can attack Jews most hurtfully by using Nazi symbols. This is why: it is taught as an event of the past—over there, all done with, nothing to do with us. The dotted line is not drawn between remembering the Holocaust—which we have done in many recordings by survivors and in museums—and the anti-Semitism of today. As the late Lord Sacks said, first it was our religion they hated, then our race, and today our nation state, Israel. Israel is the focus of today's anti-Semitism. One cannot separate Holocaust remembrance from anti-Semitism, because that is to deny the centrality of the Jewish experience and the unique nature of the Jew-hatred that drove it. Also, it is because in part there might have been many fewer deaths if the allies had not been so reluctant to take refugees and had not kept Palestine closed to them.

Holocaust remembrance has to mean three things. First, the fate of the Jews has to be set in context, as Lord Sacks explained. Jewish history, culture and traditions have to be taught, the Jewish contribution to the world before the Holocaust, the hatred inculcated by teaching and preaching over the centuries, and the revival afterwards, including Israel and the attachment of the Jews to their land from biblical times onwards. The noble Lord, Lord Mann, set this out in his report on anti-Semitism. He said that schools must teach contemporary anti-Semitism coming from the left, the right and from Islamists.

Secondly, anti-Semitism is not over and done with. Generalities about hatred and intolerance miss the point. Too many politicians strike a pose by a memorial

and declare themselves to be without a racist bone in their bodies. As the American Dara Horn said, they love dead Jews—not so much the living. Building memorials is superfluous: they portray Jews only as dead and victims, and that is not the image we want at the centre of our political life. When designed by financiers and politicians rather than scholars, as is the case with the new plan for Westminster, they are used for political ends, mistakenly presenting British values as the antidote to Jew-hatred and genocide. To claim that the vision of the Palace of Westminster as one emerges from a Holocaust memorial is some sort of epiphany and redemption only engenders complacency. A memorial in Victoria Tower Gardens would be environmentally damaging and would break the promise of 100 years to keep it open. The design is second-hand and meaningless, and the contents have been described by Sir Richard Evans as a national embarrassment. It will be ineffective and essentially not about the Holocaust, not a memorial, and not fitting for my relatives who died. The Jewish community needs to be fully consulted over any plans to build new memorials, and debate should not be closed down as it has been; objectors should not insultingly be labelled as anti-Semitic. The recommendations of the 2015 Prime Minister's commission on anti-Semitism need to be revived, with its emphasis on a campus and a professorship.

Thirdly, the lesson to be learned from the Holocaust is that Jews could not survive without a state of their own as a refuge. Now that we have that safe haven, it has to be kept safe. Politicians need to combat anti-Semitism here and now, and, however uncomfortable it is, they must stand up for the 7 million Jews in Israel under existential threat from their neighbours. It is only Jewish self-defence and self-determination that will ensure “never again”.

1.18 pm

Lord Shinkwin (Con) [V]: My Lords, I too thank my noble friend Lord Pickles for securing this debate. It gives us an opportunity to perform a disturbing but essential duty—the duty to bear witness, as the noble Lord, Lord Kestenbaum, said, to the unparalleled abomination that engulfed and destroyed the lives of millions of what my noble friend Lord Pickles reminded us were ordinary people who happened to be Jewish, and which permanently scarred humanity with the deepest wound it has ever inflicted on itself.

In preparation for today's debate, I read the autobiography of the late and much-revered Rabbi Hugo Gryn. About half of the book recounts an idyllic childhood spent at the foot of the Carpathian Mountains in what was then Czechoslovakia. Its stark contrast with what follows reduced me to tears. The rest of the book is a deeply distressing, dehumanising horror story. As we know, that was precisely the intention of the racist, genocidal Nazi regime: to dehumanise and annihilate a group that it classified as “Untermensch”. Yet as Hugo Gryn himself concedes, even until 1943, he and his family, living in the comparative safety of what was then Hungary, were unsuspecting. Now, 80 years later and with the horrors of Pol Pot, Srebrenica, and Xinjiang among others to remind us of how far and how fast we can fall as a species, we have no such excuse.

[LORD SHINKWIN]

I have heard it said that, "It is terribly sad what happened to the Jews, but it was a long time ago." Was it, and can we ever truly afford to consign a crime of such unconscionable depravity and magnitude to the distant past? Can we, when today in Europe Putin is using missiles designed to sink large warships instead of demolishing apartment blocks full of innocent Ukrainian citizens? Can we, when humanity's propensity for unspeakable, unbelievable barbarity is so much part of the present? It is rivalled only by our capacity to unlearn the lessons of history.

Hugo Gryn speaks of the duty of Holocaust survivors "to impress our fellow men with our terrible knowledge, lest we or our children or our children's children be doomed to suffer the agonies of its recurrence."

We have a duty too. We have a choice. We can choose to ignore irrefutable evidence of genocide in Xinjiang, or we can promise today that what Hugo Gryn describes as "the deafening silence of decent bystanders",

whose passivity allowed the Holocaust to happen, will never apply to us.

1.22 pm

Lord Watson of Wyre Forest (Lab): My Lords, some years ago I was privileged to meet Susan Pollack OBE. After the German invasion of Hungary in 1944, Susan was first sent to the Vac ghetto, from where she was sent to an internment camp, followed by Auschwitz-Birkenau, then a forced labour rearmament camp and finally, after the Allies advanced, she was taken on a death march to Bergen-Belsen. After liberation, she had typhoid, TB and severe malnutrition.

When I met her, she had a twinkle in her eye, but in a very polite and courteous way she asked me why my party allowed people who hate Jews to join it. Your Lordships will not be surprised to know that Susan made a profound impact on me. I wrestled with the question of how liberal-minded people can be anti-Semitic. How can campaigners for a more equal society and a peaceful world be anti-Semites? I came to understand that at the heart of this question, to some people on the liberal left, the problem was psychological. Not wanting to be seen or thought of as anti-Semitic or to feel anti-Semitic, the campaigner becomes anti-Semitic to the degree that they could not forgive their fellow members for troubling their conscience and making them consider whether they were indeed anti-Semitic.

The author and public intellectual, Howard Jacobson, extrapolates this argument and applies it to anti-Zionists, saying that many liberal thinkers operate on a false syllogism:

"Not all critics of Israel are anti-Semites. I am a critic of Israel. Therefore I am not an anti-Semite."

I saw too often that when certain members were challenged on anti-Semitic behaviour, rather than trying to understand the feelings of the members expressing hurt, their reaction was a kind of insolent denial, a closing down of the mind to the possibility that the offence being felt was legitimately held. Yet in all other areas of their life, the member would try to understand the lived experience of a complainant. Even when my Jewish parliamentary colleagues began to collectively organise, to express revulsion at events, they were very

often treated with suspicion or criticised for in some way undermining the interests of their party, or, worse, their country, some even being accused of dual loyalties.

The worst calumny against the Jews is to say that, despite the Holocaust, Jews have not emerged from it as better people. The people who express this view often hold up their so-called proof of this failure as whatever the policy of the current democratically elected Government of Israel is. Therefore, it is a great relief to me that my party is now led by Sir Keir Starmer, who understands these things and continues to take a strong stance against anti-Semitism.

As we mark Holocaust Memorial Day, it is important that people, particularly those in my own party, do not pay tribute to those murdered without paying equal respect to the living. In the years since my conversation with Susan, I have thought of her often, and I have realised that her testimony was a gift. May she continue to be blessed with long life.

1.26 pm

Lord Weir of Ballyholme (DUP): My Lords, I join with others in thanking the noble Lord, Lord Pickles, for securing this debate.

Like most in this House down the years, I have had the honour and privilege of meeting with and hearing first-hand the brutal but brave testimony of Holocaust survivors. Sadly, each year the number of those survivors diminishes, and it will not be many years before they disappear from the face of the earth altogether. However, we cannot afford to have their passing simply mean that our commemoration and education of the Holocaust passes into history as well. Commemoration and education are more relevant today than they have ever been. The work of organisations such as the Holocaust Educational Trust and the Lessons from Auschwitz project, which I was very proud as Education Minister in Northern Ireland to reinstate, are equally relevant.

The Holocaust was the most horrific example of genocide in the history of mankind, with a range of groups targeted by the Nazis and in particular an attempt to wipe from the face of the earth the Jewish population. Stalin once said that the death of an individual is a tragedy but the death of a million is a statistic. We are often faced with mind-blowing statistics about the numbers involved in the Holocaust, but we should always remember that behind every statistic involving the Holocaust lies an individual family, an individual person, an individual tragedy. For that reason alone, it is worth commemorating and educating future generations.

However, it is not simply for that reason that we should do this. We live in an era in which truth, particularly historic truth, is under attack. This is an era in which information is more readily available and in greater quantity than it has ever been in the history of mankind, yet we also live in an era where misrepresentation, misinformation and conspiracy theories pass around the world like wildfire, an era when facts can simply be dismissed as fake news and where history can be twisted and rewritten according to the purpose of those who are prepared to spread those lies. We live in an era in which, very sadly, the Holocaust did not mark the end of genocide on this planet. We have seen

subsequent genocides. We live in an era in which anti-Semitism is still all too rife. Almost unbelievably, we live in an era in which some still try to deny the Holocaust.

Finally, I think that we need to learn the lessons of history from the Holocaust and the warnings it gives us. As the noble Lord, Lord Pickles, indicated in his opening remarks, while frenzy, terror and fanaticism were hallmarks of the Holocaust, so too were cool calculation in terms of organisation; so too were ordinary people who were either acquiescent to or perpetrators of the Holocaust. In particular, at the heart of the Holocaust lay deception. Many—indeed, the vast majority—of those going to the gas chambers did not realise their fate until the very last second. That was not to spare the feelings of the victims but for the perpetrators to ensure that they could carry out their wicked activities with the greatest levels of efficiency.

A former leader of mine, and former First Minister of Northern Ireland, once described politics as a never-ending relay race. As the survivors of the Holocaust complete their race, it falls to us to pick up the baton. It is our duty and honour to make sure that we can not only say to future generations “never again”, but that we take action to ensure “never again”.

1.30 pm

Baroness Harding of Winscombe (Con): My Lords, I begin by declaring my interest as a member of the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation, on which it is a true privilege to serve. Like many others, I thank my noble friend Lord Pickles for securing this debate, and for his tireless leadership on Holocaust commemoration, memorial and education.

I make no apology for repeating—even though we each have so little time to speak today—that the theme of this year’s Holocaust Memorial Day is ordinary people. It is so important that we remember that it was ordinary people—as many noble Lords have brought to life so emotionally today—who were victims of the Holocaust, but that we also acknowledge that it was ordinary people who let the Holocaust happen and who themselves became perpetrators. We need to learn that we too could be those ordinary people: those victims, but also those bystanders and, God forbid, those perpetrators. Germany in the 1920s was arguably the most vibrant and open society in the world—the place artists, philosophers and scientists flocked to. Yet, 10 years later, that same society had turned on its own people and others in the most atrocious way. So, for me, Holocaust Memorial Day is about remembering and learning that it could be us, so that we ensure that we do not repeat the sins of the past.

I fear that there has never been a more important time to do this. I worry that historians and therefore also politicians underestimate the impact the Spanish flu had on society in the 1920s and 1930s. History tells us clearly that pandemics cause inflation and war. We see that today. But I fear that pandemics also scar society in a deep, visceral way that war on its own does not. A pandemic touches literally everyone in society for a prolonged period of time. It requires everyone to do something profoundly inhumane—to separate from family and friends and cut ourselves off from each

other—while at the same time exacerbating existing inequalities and unfairness. As a result, societies emerge from pandemics angry and off-kilter, and this, combined with inflation, leads not just to conflicts with enemies but to huge societal unease: a breeding ground for the worst parts of human nature.

Unfortunately, we are living through one of those times. As the world comes out of Covid, we are seeing inflation; we are seeing war; we are seeing anger, frustration and fear. So I argue that it has never been more important that we remember and learn from the horrors of the Holocaust. We must remember that we cannot be passive bystanders and cannot turn a blind eye to evil, because even the most seemingly progressive societies can turn very sour very quickly. I do not believe that history must repeat itself. Humanity has shown time and again that we can and do learn from our mistakes, but that is not pre-ordained. History will only not repeat itself if we make sure we remember and learn, which is why Holocaust Memorial Day and Holocaust education are so important.

1.34 pm

Lord Griffiths of Burry Port (Lab): My Lords, this is the first time I have spoken on this subject at an event of this kind, and I am terrified that my words will go towards trivialising the important subject that we are discussing. I begin by paying tribute to the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, for her courageous stance on the question of the memorial that is intended to be locally placed, whose line I fully support for the reasons that she has given.

In the 1990s, I lived in Golders Green and was chair of the Hendon and Golders Green branch of the Council of Christians and Jews. We had some wonderful and profound times together, but the most searing memory of those years was when my wife and I attended an early showing of “Schindler’s List” in the local cinema. In the darkened interior of the cinema, we were a small minority of non-Jews. The sighing and the sobbing were searing: I have never forgotten that, and it has posed the question of how I as a non-Jew respond to this in its most radical way.

First, it made me aware of the depth of the suffering, and the continuation of that suffering. But it also asked a question of me about what happens to the memory of such an important event when it is handled in a way that is basically entertainment. Groups of children were going to Auschwitz as part of their education; once again, Auschwitz turned into a visitor centre. My own capacity to say smooth words, which I am a professional at, raises the possibility of using my very gifts to go towards trivialising what is such an inexpressible event. With all that in mind, and with due apologies to people who find this a little difficult, at the time that I lived in Golders Green, I had just finished reading—just one of a whole number of things—a book called *Shadows of Auschwitz: a Christian Response to the Holocaust*. That led me to include a poem in a publication of devotional material that I launched at that time.

There are two things that have challenged my Christian faith more than anything else. One is the Holocaust; the other—again, something with which I have had

[LORD GRIFFITHS OF BURY PORT]

close connections and involvement with over many years—is slavery. The poem is like this, and I hope that noble Lords will bear with me if I read it:

“I look at the photographs
in silence,
deep, deep silence.
One question rises
imperiously:
Where is God?
Bodies are carted into
the inextinguishable blaze
of gaping ovens;
human bones piled in little hills
waiting to be turned into fertilizer,
macabre transubstantiation;
Where is God?
Three corpses hang limply from a gibbet,
swollen tongues loll heavily,
a soldier, an ordinary man, poses for a snapshot
beneath this grim Calvary
proud, it seems, of his part
in blasphemy;
Where is God?
Cadavers strewn at random
in a common grave
big as a football field;
featureless bodies who
once were ordinary men and women
boys and girls
made for life and love;
Where is God?
Human hair made into rugs
flesh turned into soap
skin into lampstands
gold fillings extracted
melted down.
Nothing wasted;
nothing lost;
Where is God?
In a world like this
Where is God?
In the world you made
Where are you God?”
Zakar—remember.

1.39 pm

Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb (GP): My Lords, I also thank the noble Lord, Lord Pickles, for bringing this very important and moving debate. I am not a Jew; I have no Romani or Traveller heritage. As far as I know, my family did not lose anybody in the Holocaust, but I still felt compelled to speak today. Anti-Semitism is on the rise, as are racism, homophobia and xenophobia. We have to be careful not to repeat past mistakes.

It is hard to speak of the Holocaust, simply because it was such a shameless and industrial-scale systematic perversion. My father was a cook in the RAF. He was based in Gütersloh in the summer of 1945. It was 78 years ago this month that Auschwitz was liberated by the allies. My father met servicemen who had been part of the liberation of concentration camps. He said that they were in a state of disbelief, distress and shock at the sights they had seen, which were so horrific they could barely talk about them.

As we have heard, Germany was a nation known for its cultural richness. It was a country that produced intellectuals, yet it conceived and operated a system of slavery and murder in the most horrific and distorted

way. I do not want to be a bystander. I see that we have problems here in Britain, and globally, with all kinds of hatred. I want to speak up about them.

The Holocaust was a brutal manifestation of ethnonationalism—a form of identity politics built on normative and biological difference. We have to ensure that it must for ever exist as an exceptional event. But only last year our security services warned of a sharp rise in far-right extremism here in Britain. The far right in Britain shares some clear common political logic that underpinned 1930s Nazism. Dr Michelsen and Dr de Orellana of King’s College London, who are experts in international relations and nationalism, have demonstrated in their latest research that

“we are witnessing a resurgence of nationalist ideas globally—driven by online social media networks, and it fosters the same violent identity politics which enabled the Holocaust to happen”.

If we understand that the Holocaust must be an historical, appalling exception, never to be repeated, we have to watch for socially unhealthy indicators. Just last year, a young teenager committed suicide in a care home. She had been radicalised by a network of online far-right extremists from America and she had been charged with terror offences. The resurgence of global far-right networks poses a continuous and dangerous threat. We must endeavour to challenge racism and hold those who perpetuate it online to account.

Today is a day where we remember the victims of the Holocaust. We must never forget.

1.43 pm

Lord Robathan (Con): My Lords, we have heard some very impressive speeches. This will not be one, but in my brief contribution I will make three swift points.

First, I pay tribute to Karen Pollock and the Holocaust Educational Trust, which took me to Auschwitz some 17 years ago. It was not trivialised, I can tell you. I knew a lot about the Holocaust. I had read *Five Chimneys*. Because of my age, I was brought up with Leon Uris—okay, *Exodus* is fiction, but it was a very powerful book and film. I had been to Belsen at least twice, because I was stationed near there in the Army in the 1970s. But the experience of going to Auschwitz was shocking, moving and educational, and it will stay with me, as I think it will for everybody who goes there, for ever. I thank the Holocaust Educational Trust.

My second point is about anti-Semitism, which other people have talked about and know much more about than I do. It is unbelievable that it exists in the UK today. There was a report in the *Times* yesterday, which my noble friend Lady Altmann referred to, about people being driven out of a pub by anti-Semitic abuse from Arsenal fans. In Britain, in London, in 2023? Crikey.

I went to school on the edge of north-west London and, because of the catchment area, I should think that one in five or six of the children were Jewish. There was a lot of name-calling, but I can promise noble Lords that there was no anti-Semitism. There was anti-Semitism in Britain some 80-odd years ago. We think of Moseley, the Blackshirts, the battle of Cable Street, et cetera; it was a very different situation.

But after the war, for various reasons—a generation had passed, the shocking understanding of the Holocaust and the concentration camps, and the amazing contribution given to society in Britain by Jewish refugees from Europe, be it in medicine, academia, politics, business or the law—I thought it had gone.

Noble Lords might be interested to know that, when I was at Sandhurst, part of my curriculum included the film—I think it won best film in 1947—“Gentleman’s Agreement”, starring Gregory Peck. It was about anti-Semitism. It was designed to show us—and did—the irrationality and absurdity of anti-Semitism, and indeed discrimination. So why is anti-Semitism on the rise? I do not understand it. It may be social media, which the noble Baroness, Lady Jones, just referred to, or the issue of Israel and Palestine, but it is irrational, and we need to call it out.

My third point will be less welcome to some noble Lords. It is not anti-Semitic at all—indeed, I think it will be supported by a large proportion of the Jewish community in London. Building an education centre in Victoria Tower Gardens is a very bad idea. It has been thrown out by local people, the city council and the High Court, and it has been criticised by Historic England and many others. I walk there regularly. Victoria Tower Gardens is much used by local people, tourists and children, and it is the only significant green space where you can walk by the river on the north bank between Bishops Park and somewhere in the Essex marshes. Questions of security have not been answered. The design of the centre is shocking. The traffic that it will build up will be huge; it has been estimated that there will be 2 million visitors a year, which would be quite interesting. The Imperial War Museum wants it, and there is now the possibility of special legislation to crush the opposition of local people and destroy this green space. I thought we were meant to respect the views of others, but apparently not of local people in Westminster. Why is this being done? I do not understand. I ask proponents of this very foolish idea to think again and accept that it is a foolish idea, or to at least explain why they want to build this monstrosity on a very small green space that is much valued in London.

1.47 pm

Lord Cashman (Lab): My Lords, it is a privilege to speak in this debate. It is a rare privilege that I will remember for a long time to listen to the way the noble Lord, Lord Pickles, introduced this Motion.

The overture to horror is mundane, ordinary. It begins as a whisper. In 1933, approximately 9.5 million Jews lived in Europe, and that number represented more than 60% of the world’s Jewish population at that time. By 1945, most European Jews, two out of every three, had been killed—murdered. Others murdered by the Nazis were millions of Soviets, 250,000 disabled people, up to 400,000 Gypsy and Romani, approximately 200,000 intellectuals, communists and freemasons, and more than 55,000 homosexuals. It happened a stone’s throw away in time, and it could happen again.

Just when we think we have passed an inhumanity too far, memories and fears fade, complacency sets in and evil triumphs in the silence of ordinary people who say nothing and walk away. There have been

echoes in other parts of the world: Darfur, Cambodia, Bosnia and Rwanda. I still remember the photographs in the Rwandan genocide memorial; photos taken by family or friends of ordinary women, men and children who were cut down and killed. They were ordinary women, men and children who, looking out from their photographs, had hopes, dreams and fears, but who never imagined the end they would face.

I also vividly remember the exhibition that toured the world of the piles of shoes from those who entered the Nazi camps, where they would be further dehumanised, worked to death, starved and murdered. I think of the women, men and children who wore them. I think of them as they removed their shoes for what would be the last time—women, men and children who were casually defamed, misrepresented, stereotyped and dehumanised—and I ask myself, “Have we learned the lessons? Does history have enough horrors to shake us from complacency and indifference?”

The answer, I have to tell your Lordships, is no. We have not learned the lessons. Hatred is still with us. Since 2016 and year on year, hate crime has been on the rise. Anti-Semitism, racism, Islamophobia, misogyny, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, rampant xenophobia, anti-migrants and anti-Roma—hatred that connects. Prejudices that were silently housed are now spoken aloud. Culture wars are promoted by government Ministers, printed media and broadcasters.

Such casual dehumanisation affects every single one of us. If we stand back in silence or look away, we are complicit, so Holocaust Memorial Day is a time to remember. Think of the millions of lives and then think of each one of them and how they could have changed this world for the better. Remember them not as numbers but as one would remember one’s own loved ones. Remember them and recall how minorities are still today misrepresented as a threat when all they want to do is live their lives according to the same laws as everyone else.

History demands that we stand with the most defamed, the most misrepresented and the most unfavoured. It equally demands that we speak against those who portray people in need as a swarm, a threat and an invasion.

1.52 pm

Lord Anderson of Swansea (Lab): My Lords, I welcome the initiative of the noble Lord, Lord Pickles, I welcome the Stockholm declaration of 2000 and I am delighted that so many events are taking place throughout the country to commemorate this special day. Of course, there have been other genocides in the past—I had the honour of chairing two reconciliation committees of Hutus and Tutsis following the Rwanda genocide—but nothing in history was so systematic, so state sponsored and so vast as the killing of the Jews before and during the war, with a Government using all the tools of extermination for their ends.

This year’s theme is ordinary people. Ordinary survivors were so important in telling the story to our schools. We talk of 6 million Jews. That number is too vast to comprehend. Far more relevant is to look at the suffering of individuals. For example, I think of the number of obituaries of survivors we are seeing now—they are indeed dying out—which are enough to make the stones weep.

[LORD ANDERSON OF SWANSEA]

Two examples come quickly to mind. One is the woman who was clutching her toddler sister at the gates of a camp when the cane of a camp guard came down and separated them; she never saw her sister again. The other is the woman who was forced to go into the Women's Orchestra of Auschwitz and had to play, tearfully, as many Jews arrived and waved welcomingly to her. She knew the fate they would have. Any doubters should visit Yad Vashem, the Holocaust museum, and see at the entrance the Polish children's choir of about 1936, singing what became the Israeli national anthem. Many of them of course did not survive.

Why do and should we remember? Because anti-Semitism is still alive today. The Stockholm declaration asked us not only to commemorate the victims but to honour those who stood against it. There are remarkable stories of those who were the righteous among the gentiles, such as Sir Nicholas Winton, the prime mover of the Kindertransport, who told me that his great regret was that there was a last train standing in Prague station, full of Jewish children who were ready to leave, having said their goodbyes to their parents, with their satchels and their parcels of food, but at that very moment the SS guards arrived and the train was stopped. Many of those children must have died. That was the major regret of the remarkable Nicky Winton.

Such dreadful events should provoke profound reflections among us all. So many people saw their Jewish neighbours being taken away but did nothing against it. We gentiles must ask ourselves: what would we have done in those circumstances? Would we have turned a blind eye, said it was just too much and chosen a quiet life?

The Holocaust, of course, is not a problem of history. It affects us all. It is not like the French Revolution. There are appalling examples of discrimination today in our world. We should remember the horrors of the past and stand up and be counted today.

1.56 pm

Baroness Greenfield (CB): My Lords, it is an honour and privilege to contribute to this debate, and I thank the noble Lord, Lord Pickles, for making it possible. My father, born into an Orthodox Jewish family, married out, and early on I learned that I was not "actually" Jewish. However, had I been born 10 years earlier and on the other side of the Channel, my fate would probably have been no different from that of those individuals whom we commemorate today.

Moreover, despite my lack of religious qualification, I have been able to explore my Jewish ethnicity. First, before university, I worked for four months on a kibbutz and for a subsequent two months in an old-age home in Haifa. Much later, my ties with Israel were renewed when, in 2002, as a scientist, I served as a member of BRITech, an Anglo-Israeli investment fund promoting technologies that could not have been developed by either country unilaterally. I also declare an interest as a member of council of the Weizmann Foundation from 2000 to 2004 and as a recipient of honorary degrees from the Hebrew University and the University of Haifa.

It is as a neuroscientist that I am particularly interested in the theme today of ordinary people. From a biological perspective, none of us is ordinary. The wonderful thing about being a human being is that, although we are born with a full complement of brain cells, it is the growth of connections between the cells that is crucial after birth. Even if you are a clone, an identical twin, you will have a unique configuration of constantly evolving and dynamic brain cell networks that make you the individual you are. You are a one-off who has never before existed, nor ever will again.

Each brain, and thus each life story, is gradually shaped by the next encounter, the next vicissitude and the next achievement, so that this accumulation of experiences over time gives us an evolving frame of reference to interpret the world, a way for others to see us and, most importantly, a way for us to see ourselves—our identity.

In the Holocaust, ordinary individuals who were extraordinary to their loved ones, their friends and their colleagues, and who would have made a unique contribution to the world, were prevented from doing so. What of those who did the preventing—the ordinary perpetrators who were "just obeying orders"? They too would have had unique, individual minds, but they shut them down in favour of conformity to the Nazi regime. They made themselves ordinary.

Such voluntary abandonment of an open mind is eloquently described in *Defying Hitler*, a memoir by German journalist Sebastian Haffner. Written in 1939 and published posthumously in 2000, it is a first-hand memoir of ordinary German citizens living between the wars. A central argument is that decent, compassionate people suffered none the less from a weak self-image, and were thus vulnerable to a collective identity imposed externally by powerfully effective indoctrination. The consequences were, as we reflect on this special day, devastating. Only by respecting, curating and celebrating the extraordinariness of the human mind can we be sure that the horrors of the Holocaust will never be repeated.

I make the case, rooted in science, for providing an environment where the mind remains open, where learning is prized and thus where individuality and ingenuity can flourish. That is surely in the Jewish tradition and would be a fitting memorial to those who perished.

2 pm

Lord Glasman (Lab): My Lords, I would like to acknowledge the noble Lord, Lord Pickles, and his lifetime of devotion to this cause. I too will go down the road opened up by my noble friend Lord Kestenbaum in talking more personally about this.

I spent all of August in Ukraine. Moving through Ukraine, I travelled from Kyiv all the way down to Odessa, and it brought home to me the reality of genocide. I was treated extremely well by my Ukrainian hosts and invited into the cathedral of St Michael for the mass of St Barbara, and into the cathedral in Odessa to observe the mass there. These masses were full, but all the way down—even in Odessa, which in 1941 was almost 50% Jewish—the synagogues were closed. There was no one there.

President Putin says that the goal of the war is denazification; I would say that a small footnote of the war is that it is the end of the Jewish community in Ukraine. They have left and it is abandoned. A community that in 1941 was more than 2 million and that gave us Jabotinsky, Leon Trotsky, Isaac Babel and the Baal Shem Tov is decimated. That incredible centre of Jewish civilization has gone, and that is the reality of the Holocaust. There are now no longer any Jews in Ukraine. When I was in Odessa, on Friday night I went to the synagogue, where a man just stood there and said to me, "All gone—Jews all gone". That is the reality of what we are looking at.

I witnessed some extraordinary things when I was in Ukraine, not least that the majority of the soldiers who were fighting for the freedom and sovereignty of Ukraine were Russian-speaking. To develop this point, and I would like the Minister to take note of this, the noble Lord, Lord Pickles, said in his opening remarks that there was a rinsing of reputations. I want to raise this issue because the dead scream at me; when I am there, it is not the dead who I miss but those who were not born. I go and I have no family to visit or people to welcome me. The ghosts of the unborn are alive, and the abandonment and fate of my people is clear.

What really disturbed me when I was in Ukraine was the restoration of the reputation of Stepan Bandera. Wherever I went in the small towns, his image was there. When I met soldiers, they had portraits of him. Bandera was an ally of Hitler, an active proponent of the OUN and the UPA. We should remember that between 1941 and 1943, there was no Auschwitz or industrial slaughter; it was all done by hand. The decimation of Ukrainian Jewry was done by all too ordinary people. In the village where my grandfather was born—in his shtetl—they were just slaughtered. In Odessa, they were taken into the main square and slaughtered. In Babi Yar, as we should remember, 100 at a time went into the pit. They were all slaughtered in an alliance between the Einsatzgruppe, the German Nazi group, and local Ukrainian groups. Bandera was a central part of that.

I absolutely support Ukraine. I went to Ukraine to show my solidarity with its people against the invasion, but they created a national holiday for Bandera's birthday only last week. I urge the Minister to please say that in this war, we absolutely support Ukraine but we must also resolutely oppose any rehabilitation of the murderers and perpetrators of the Holocaust.

2.04 pm

Lord Young of Norwood Green (Lab): My Lords, I too pay tribute to the noble Lord, Lord Pickles, for enabling this debate. We should pause for a moment to think of our noble friend Lord Dubs, who is ill in hospital at the moment. He was part of the Kindertransport, a gift that kept on giving—maybe not as much as we would have liked, but it made an important contribution.

When I was about 13, I was quite a precocious reader. I happened to chance upon a book in the library called *The Scourge of the Swastika*. It is not a book that is known about much today, but at 13 years old and as someone who was born a Jew it opened my

eyes to the appalling Nazi war atrocities. It was written by Lord Russell of Liverpool and initially banned by the Government, but they were then forced to allow its publication. Of course, his grandson is with us today as a hereditary Peer. I recommend that book to those who have not read it. It is an amazing description of and example of what can happen. He also wrote another book on Japanese war crimes.

My family were Jewish immigrants from Holland, Odessa, and Lithuania or Poland—the borders were porous, so it is difficult to know exactly where. My cousin Leo survived an Anne Frank experience. He was hidden in a compartment in Rotterdam. He could remember hearing the Gestapo marching around the house, his mother with her hand over his mouth to prevent him coughing and giving them away. What a terrible experience to go through, but he was one of the lucky ones and luckier than Anne Frank.

I was deeply ashamed of our party being found to have practised anti-Semitism by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. It was one of the times in my life in which I thought very carefully about whether I wanted to belong to a party that allowed that to happen and tolerated it. I welcomed the decisive action taken by Keir Starmer.

There are sections of our society in which Holocaust deniers and those who believe that 9/11 was a Jewish conspiracy are still prevalent, unfortunately. That emphasises the need for interfaith co-operation. I am a critic of the current Israeli Government—I certainly would not be voting for Benjamin Netanyahu—but I believe in a two-state solution and, following the Balfour Declaration, Israel's right to exist. I hope that does not make me in any way anti-Semitic. It makes me a critical friend of Israel, and I think that is important in today's circumstances.

This has been a really important debate. There has been an interesting divergence of opinion. That is no bad thing because in today's society we need the ability to respect divergent views. I thank the noble Lord, Lord Pickles, for enabling us to take part in this debate.

2.08 pm

Lord Sandhurst (Con): My Lords, it is with some humility that I venture forth today, having listened to the speeches of those who have so much more to say. It is absolutely right that we mark the Holocaust with a day of remembrance and with this debate, and all the more so at a time of increased denial and distortion. Anti-Semitism is on the rise and must be put down. Holocaust denial is essentially, but not only, an anti-Semitic conspiracy theory. It falsely asserts that the Nazi genocide of Jews and others, known as the Holocaust, is a myth, a fabrication, or an exaggeration. The danger of what happened lies now in the mundanity of so much. For example, I happened by chance upon platform 17 at Grunewald station in Berlin, from which so many left to their doom. One only has to spend an afternoon in the house on the Wannsee to see the astonishing murder organisation laid bare. The photographic history set out there also gave me an important insight into the long-standing anti-Semitism, I am afraid, in Germany, for 100 years or more before that. I left that afternoon with a headache; I am sure that others have left with worse.

[LORD SANDHURST]

In this context, we need to fight against so-called historical revisionists, or worse, who deceive and distort the truth. Friday 27 January is an important day for the focus it brings. We must argue against those who seek to introduce false equivalence with individual occasions in war of wrongdoing. Often, these are advanced under cover of apparent balance and objectivity. Perpetrators thereby lessen the truth of the genocide which was at the core of the Holocaust. We need eternal vigilance.

In this context, the Imperial War Museum in Lambeth is to be congratulated on its brand-new galleries dedicated to the Holocaust and the Second World War. They are 20 minutes' walk from here. They tell the tales of individual Jews murdered in this catastrophic event. They do so through photos, books, artwork and letters—ordinary lives, ordinary people; people like us. Those galleries occupy thousands of square feet. They won the 2022 Permanent Exhibition of the Year award.

Visible memorials remind and teach, but I hope that the Government will think again about putting such a very big memorial in Victoria Tower Gardens, as they previously proposed. I felt, and it is a personal view, that it was the wrong structure for that site. I will leave it there.

Holocaust denial is a poison. We must strive continuously to eradicate it. That is why this memorial day is so important. We must educate our young so that they and the generations who follow cannot ignore, let alone deny, the horrors of what happened. Only then can we prevent repetitions. We must remember them.

2.12 pm

Lord Liddle (Lab): My Lords, I congratulate the noble Lord, Lord Pickles, on obtaining this debate. As a rather humble gentile, and like my noble friend Lord Griffiths of Burry Port, I feel a bit nervous about trying to contribute to this discussion.

My dad fought in the Second World War. As a result, I was brought up on war stories and everything that had happened then. As a student, I was obsessed with the question of how a sophisticated nation such as Germany could end up being run, with a large measure of electoral support, by a bunch of vile criminals. That question still worries me today whenever I see the emergence of what I regard as awful populism in our politics.

There was no Jewish community in Carlisle, where I grew up. My first friend who was a Jew was when I went to work for Bill Rodgers as Minister of Transport in 1976. His wife, Silvia, had come from Berlin, having got out after Kristallnacht with her mother, who was a Communist Party activist and secular Jew. I learned a lot from her. She used to show me pictures of her class and explain that there were only two survivors from it.

The most moving thing was when I paid my first trip to Israel in my 30s and went to Yad Vashem. I will never forget it; to be quite honest, I could barely cope with it. It is one reason why I just cannot come to terms with the anti-Semitism that still exists in our society. Having visited Yad Vashem, I will defend the State of Israel and its right to exist all my life, even

though I object to some of the policies of the present Government and some of the people in that Government. Israel has that right to exist. I reject anti-Semitism in my own party; that was one of the things that brought me almost to resignation from the Labour Party, as a result of what was happening prior to 2019. I greatly respect what Keir Starmer has done to root that out.

I will be optimistic for one moment. I remember walking around the reasonably new Holocaust Memorial in Berlin. The fact that Germany has tried to come to terms with its past and repent for its collective sins is a cause for optimism about the future of the world. I end with my hope that, if other genocides are threatened in the world, we will not just stand back and do nothing, as a lot of our politicians did in the 1930s.

2.16 pm

Baroness Whitaker (Lab): My Lords, we should all be grateful to the noble Lord, Lord Pickles, for his long-standing and assiduous work on Holocaust issues and for this debate. I want to focus on what the Holocaust was a symptom of.

The primary focus has always been on the 6 million Jews who perished. I would be the last to say that this should not be mourned, remembered and understood—none of my grandfather's family who remained in Poland survived it. But it was not only Jewish people who were the victims. It was people who were different—different from a concocted so-called norm of what a nation essentially was. The noble Lord, Lord Pickles, and others referred to some: people who were gay; people with disabilities; people with learning difficulties and mental illness; and, in great numbers, the Roma and Sinti population of eastern and central Europe. As the noble Baroness, Lady Brinton, so eloquently described, all were thought of as to be eliminated. Usually only a passing mention is made of these groups, when they feature at all in the accounts. We nevertheless find this kind of discrimination repugnant now—or do we?

Many countries have passed legislation outlawing discrimination and successive Governments are to be commended for that. Discrimination in jobs, for instance, against some groups is decreasing. But that is not the same as no longer considering those who are different as inferior. Homophobic and racist bullying continues; children with learning difficulties or physical disabilities have a much worse time in school than others; and, as a recent television programme by David Baddiel and the play by Jonathan Freedland have shown, hate speech against, or derogatory stereotyping of, white minority ethnic people is not regarded as anything out of the ordinary. Those two thoughtful events concerned Jews, but they are also intensely applicable to Gypsies, Travellers and Roma people, whose life chances are so severely damaged by prejudice. I declare my unremunerated interests in various posts as set out in the register.

White minority ethnic groups are very small populations, but you can still hear words such as “plague”, “swamped”, “taking over power”, “conspiracy” and so on. Of course, we are very far from ethnic cleansing in this country. But prejudice is a spectrum and toleration of hate speech and stereotyping opens

a door in the climate of opinion that can lead, especially through international social media, to which my noble friend Lord Kestenbaum referred, to much more violent action. It is as if people need a “them” to be confident of being “us”.

I do not doubt that this has been a feature of human societies ever since they emerged, but there are some communities that do not appear to need to “other” groups or to dehumanise or demonise them. I think that we should study that and work on defining nations not by some alleged ethnic character but by their values. It is time that we welcomed difference, because that is how we adapt, innovate and grow creatively, as well as finding our common humanity. That would be the best way to respond to the past terror of the Holocaust and the present terrors of persecution and annihilation still poisoning our world. I ask the Minister whether His Majesty’s Government are doing any work on how societies that embrace difference conduct themselves, or how we can, through education, particularly in history, move our culture on to be truly inclusive.

2.21 pm

Baroness Burt of Solihull (LD): This has been a remarkable debate. I have taken part in debates in the other place, but this never ceases to move me. The lessons that I learn every single time makes it very much worth while being here every year.

The noble Lord, Lord Pickles, painted a bright, vivid picture of all those shoes. I, too, have been to Auschwitz-Birkenau and seen those piles of shoes and the hair, which are a moving testament on their own. We have heard many moving testaments today. I draw attention to, among others, the moving story from the noble Lord, Lord Kestenbaum, about his great-grandmother and the tragic toll on his wider family.

We have been talking about ordinary people for the whole debate. My noble friend Lady Brinton talked about another demonised group, the Roma and Gypsy community, so many of whom died in the Holocaust and who are vilified to this day. She also stole my line. I was going to talk about Martin Niemöller and how we stand by and do nothing. Many noble Lords have said that today. Indeed, the noble Baroness, Lady Whitaker, talked about discrimination on the same lines—the “them” and the “us”, and “them” defining “us”. It does not have to be that way.

I wanted to mention the noble Lord, Lord Watson, who gave a brave explanation of anti-Semitism in his own party. I have always wondered about it but not been able to figure it out, because of how Labour conducts itself in so many different ways. We have to remember that it is just a few who take that unfortunate point of view. I commend Keir Starmer for the work that he has done on that.

There was nothing trivial in the comments of the noble Lord, Lord Griffiths of Burry Port. I thought that his remarks were very moving. We often tell stories to explain, in a vivid way, what we are trying to say.

How fascinating to have the noble Baroness, Lady Greenfield, point out to us how unique we all are, and how that uniqueness and development

shapes our views and our behaviour in later life. Vive la diversité—I think; I do not speak French very well.

The noble Lord, Lord Glasman, spoke profoundly about going to Ukraine and how someone came out of the synagogue and said, “All gone”, and how he saw the ghosts of the unborn.

The noble Baroness, Lady Anderson, talked about where political rhetoric and hate speech can lead. I also want to pick up that theme a little more.

The noble Baroness, Lady Jones of Moulsecoomb, talked about the rise of the far right as a warning. A number of noble Lords have talked about the polarisation of society and how we have to be very careful.

As well as all the stories, information and images that have been shared today, I want to add two little stories of my own. The first relates to when I was a new Member of Parliament. My first caseworker was a Scottish girl, newly married with a strong Glaswegian accent, which stood her in good stead because it gave her an air of maturity that belied her years. I also had an elderly constituent who wanted to come and see me to ask what I was going to do about “all these immigrants”.

She had a clear picture in her mind of what “these immigrants” were like—it was not like this hijab-wearing young Muslim woman. When the old lady walked into the surgery and set eyes on Bara, she quickly said, “Oh, I didn’t mean you, dear”. But she did, because all racism stems from ignorance. Ignorance permits all kinds of beliefs and leads to actions—actions that my caseworker knew all about: the catcalls, the insults on the bus, the bullying and the violence—that may, one day, lead right down to the thickest edge of the thickest wedge and, eventually, to the final solution. We should never believe that it cannot happen here.

My final story, which I will finish with, is another true story. It happened less than a week ago and has already been referred to by a couple of noble Lords. It is about another elderly lady expressing her views. This was a lady called Joan, who had been a child survivor of the Holocaust and whose family had all been murdered, asking a question of the Home Secretary of the United Kingdom. Joan called Suella out in a meeting for the use of the terms “swarms” and “invasion”, which had also been

“used to dehumanise and justify the murder of my family and millions of others.”

Braverman replied:

“I won’t apologise for the language that I’ve used to demonstrate the scale of the problem ... I will not shy away from saying that we have a problem with people ... breaking our laws and undermining our system.”

She certainly did not say, “I didn’t mean you, dear”. She should beware the thin edge of the wedge, as should we all.

2.29 pm

Baroness Merron (Lab): My Lords, there are some debates where it feels daunting to do justice to the enormity and significance of the subject. I feel that today, but I also feel among friends and colleagues. At the outset, I declare my interests in the register as a vice-president of Liberal Judaism and the European co-chair of the International Council of Jewish

[BARONESS MERRON]

Parliamentarians. I have also been an adviser to the World Jewish Congress and am the former chief executive of the Board of Deputies of British Jews.

I thank the noble Lord, Lord Pickles, for leading today's debate in his characteristically powerful way. I continue to be grateful for the diligence and dignity with which he carries out his national and international responsibilities for Holocaust remembrance. I have been moved by the contributions from noble Lords across the House, whom I also thank. The sentiments expressed in this Chamber today will echo far beyond its walls.

I start by speaking fondly of Bob and Ann Kirk, who came to this country from Germany on the Kindertransport. As my noble friend Lord Anderson said, we should be grateful to the likes of Nicholas Winton, who did not stand by, for saving so many. Ann was an only child whereas Bob, whom she would later marry in 1950, was the youngest in his family. His parents perished in a concentration camp in Riga. Ann tells the story of her parents frantically waving as she left on the Kindertransport—the last time she ever saw them.

Many thousands of parents showed unimaginable courage in letting their beloved children go unaccompanied to England on the Kindertransport, with no idea what would lie before them. These were ordinary people doing extraordinary things. Bob and Ann cautioned me on the use of language, as did the noble Baroness, Lady Altmann. As my noble friend Lord Cashman said, it all started with a whisper. They also talked about the value of Holocaust remembrance and what it meant to them, because it could prevent the same devaluing of humans being repeated and the brutal consequences that follow. My noble friend Lord Griffiths read a moving poem that repeatedly asks, "Where is God?" I say to him that Bob and Ann put it to me in a similar way, asking, "Where was humanity?"

Ordinary people just like Ann, Bob and their parents are the theme for this year's Holocaust Memorial Day. I congratulate the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust on its organisation of remembrance through this fundamental truth. As it says:

"Genocide is facilitated by ordinary people. Ordinary people turn a blind eye, believe propaganda, join murderous regimes. And those who are persecuted, oppressed and murdered in genocide aren't persecuted because of crimes they've committed—they are persecuted simply because they are ordinary people who belong to a particular group".

The noble Baroness, Lady Greenfield, made an elegant scientific case for the ordinary and the extraordinary, while my noble friends Lady Whitaker and Lord Glasman talked about the relevance of hatred and standing by in our world today.

My noble friends Lady Thornton, Lord Liddle, Lord Watson and Lord Young all spoke of the pain of anti-Semitism that was a stain on the Labour Party. It was a stain not only on Labour but, we felt, on politics in our country. Like them, I acknowledge and appreciate the determination and action of Keir Starmer in rooting it out, which he has done and will continue to do. I thank the noble Baroness, Lady Burt, for her commendation of his actions.

This debate resonates deeply with me, reflecting on my visit to the Holocaust Galleries at the Imperial War Museum, no doubt in the same way as it does for the noble Lord, Lord Sandhurst. The light and brightness of those galleries is a deliberate feature to highlight that 6 million people were not murdered in the dark, nor did they live in it.

It was a profoundly shaping experience for me, as an MP, to first go to Auschwitz-Birkenau with the Holocaust Educational Trust on its "Lessons from Auschwitz" project. I thank the Holocaust Educational Trust for its work and influence over many years. The project allows young people to pass through the infamous "Arbeit macht frei" gates and through the rooms filled with tonnes of human hair, prosthetic limbs and glasses seized from the victims, to walk along the train lines and to stand at the site of the former crematoria. It has an unparalleled impact on understanding the past, and through reflective assemblies on their return, it often ignites in them a determination to speak out against the anti-Semitism and hatred that allowed the Holocaust to happen.

For me, the most powerful impact of being immersed in this experience was when I saw a wall of black and white photos of ordinary people doing ordinary things: young women having a laugh with each other; families strolling on the beach; people getting married; or toddlers taking their first steps. These ordinary people were condemned to persecution, inhumane cruelty and extermination on an industrial scale just because they were Jews and were inferior and expendable in the eyes and minds of some—as were the Roma and Sinti people, gay men, disabled people, political opponents and others.

As these murderous events soon pass from living memory and leave us without the first-hand testimony of survivors, it is all the more necessary that we tell the individual stories of some of the 6 million Jewish people who were murdered. I want to pay tribute to the survivors, as many noble Lords have done—those ordinary people who have done and do the extraordinary without even seeing it as such. Their strength, testimonies and very existence present not just an inspiration but a reminder. As Lily Ebert said on her 99th birthday—which she marked with a family trip to the seaside—she was proof, in her own words, that the "Nazis did not win".

I am immensely proud that the UK played such a pivotal role in the establishment of Holocaust Memorial Day as the International Day of Commemoration in 2000, but let us remind ourselves that the underlying issues have not gone away. The Community Security Trust recorded 786 anti-Semitic incidents across the UK in the first six months of 2022. As my noble friend Lady Anderson said, today's CST report shows a 22% increase in anti-Jewish hatred. The world's oldest hatred is alive and kicking, and this is shameful. This year, 2023, is a particularly poignant anniversary for genocide commemoration as we mark 20 years since the start of the genocide in Darfur, while also remembering those affected by genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda and Bosnia. With misinformation so often leading to hatred and prejudice, we all have a responsibility not just to remember but to act, and to identify the warning signs of genocide today.

The UK needs a national memorial to the Holocaust, and there is no site more appropriate than next to the mother of Parliaments—this Parliament. I hear that some noble Lords do not share this view, and I am sure we will continue to debate this. There has been a stalling in the progress of this important project, but I hope the Minister can commit today to a cross-party, all-community effort to revitalise it.

As my noble friend Lord Kestenbaum said, today we all carry the burden of history. It is a responsibility which we all share. There are many ordinary people who have done and will do extraordinary things—I hope we can be among them.

2.39 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (Baroness Scott of Bybrook) (Con): My Lords, I start by conveying my thanks to my noble friend Lord Pickles, the United Kingdom Special Envoy for Post-Holocaust Issues, for securing this debate. I echo so many noble Lords in expressing thanks to him for everything he does in this area. I also send sincere condolences from myself and, I think, the whole House to the family and friends of Zigi. May he rest in peace.

I am grateful to noble Lords from all sides of this House for their valuable and moving contributions to this important debate. I thank especially the noble Lords, Lord Kestenbaum, Lord Glasman and Lord Young of Norwood Green, my noble friends Lord Polak and Lady Altmann, and the noble Baroness, Lady Thornton. They all looked into their heart and soul and told their stories. Those are what I will take away most strongly from today's debate, so I thank them for doing that.

The United Kingdom can be proud of its record when it comes to Holocaust remembrance and education. We were one of the first signatories to the Stockholm declaration of 2000, which called on countries to recognise 27 January, the day Auschwitz-Birkenau was liberated, as International Holocaust Remembrance Day. We hosted our first Holocaust Memorial Day in 2001.

The Stockholm declaration is also the founding document of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance—IHRA. This year marks the 10th anniversary of the IHRA's working definition of Holocaust denial and distortion, which will be a key focus for the IHRA member countries in 2023. The United Kingdom has the honour of chairing the IHRA in 2024.

Many noble Lords have mentioned this year's theme for Holocaust Memorial Day: ordinary people. The Holocaust may have reached its barbaric climax in Treblinka, Auschwitz and Belzec, but it started in the hearts of ordinary men and women. We have seen it again: a madness that takes hold of individuals and then sweeps through peoples and whole nations. As we have heard, the killings in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur shock our conscience, but they are the awful extreme of a spectrum of ignorance and intolerance that we see every day; the bigotry that says another person is less than my equal—less than human. These are the seeds of hatred that we cannot allow to take root in our hearts.

We are all familiar with the stories of the ordinary people who were involved in extraordinary acts of bravery to save Jewish people. In the United Kingdom

we have recognised 44 British Heroes of the Holocaust—15 of whom were women—who went beyond the call of duty to save members of the Jewish community and others. Jane Haining was one of them. Born on a farm in Dunscore in Dumfriesshire, Jane was deeply committed to her faith and sacrificed her life for her ideals. It was her calling that took her away from her native Scotland, first to Budapest and finally to Auschwitz, where she perished.

Jane was appointed matron of the girls' home of the Scottish Mission in Budapest, Hungary, in 1932. Refusing to abandon her children in the face of the rising Nazi threat, Jane was eventually arrested by the Gestapo in April 1944. Charged with working among Jews, as well as other supposed crimes, Jane Haining was deported to Auschwitz, where she became prisoner number 79467. Her last message to friends was a postcard asking for food. She ended her letter with the words:

“There is not much to report here on the way to heaven.”

Haining succumbed to starvation and the terrible conditions in the camp and died, probably on 17 July 1944. She was 47 years old. She was declared Righteous Among the Nations in Israel in 1997 and received the British Hero of the Holocaust medal in 2010.

But ordinary people also planned and executed the Holocaust. We do ourselves a disservice when we think they were all monsters: they were ordinary men and women like us—mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers, with choices. Soldiers who participated in mass shootings of Jewish people in the east were not forced; they were not punished if they declined to participate. There was another group of ordinary people: bystanders—people who raised no objection to the horrors that befell their neighbours, who had no qualms when they bought the neighbours' furniture and crockery or took over their homes. We all like to think that we would have stood up as one of the extraordinary, but it is important to realise that we all have the capacity to look the other way—or worse.

This will be one of the key themes explored in the planned UK Holocaust memorial and learning centre next to the Houses of Parliament. I have listened to a number of noble Lords on this issue, and there will be a time and a place to discuss it further in the future. We plan to provide visitors with what we believe to be a genuinely unique perspective by addressing the Holocaust through a British lens. While relating the whole story of the Holocaust in continental Europe, the exhibition will look particularly at what was known in Britain—far more than most people think—and what was done, or was not done, with that knowledge. It will look at the responses not only of the Government but of society, highlighting the power of communities' and individuals' choices to make a difference for good, or ill.

We remain committed to the creation of a new national memorial to honour the 6 million Jewish men, women and children murdered in the Holocaust, and all other victims of Nazi persecution. Sadly, there will come a time in the not-too-distant future when the Holocaust will pass from living reality and shared experience to memory and to history. That is why we have a duty to remember and why the new Holocaust

[BARONESS SCOTT OF BYBROOK]

memorial and learning centre is so important in keeping alive the memory of those murdered during the Holocaust and subsequent genocides.

We do Holocaust remembrance a disservice if we remember the dead and forget the present persecution of Jewish people across the world. The Community Security Trust—the CST—which we have heard about, particularly from the noble Baroness, Lady Merron, and which monitors anti-Semitism in the UK, recorded, as she said, 786 anti-Semitic incidents from January to June. May 2021 saw a record high of such incidents, partly due, we think, to the Middle Eastern war. Without that conflict or influences of other factors such as the pandemic, the latest figures show that the base level of anti-Jewish hatred remains far too high and may even be worsening among young people. The noble Lord, Lord Mann, who is our adviser on anti-Semitism, highlighted this in his most recent report and recommended that secondary schoolchildren should be taught about the wrongs and consequences of contemporary anti-Semitism.

The latest figures on anti-Semitic incidents underscore the need for government to continue working with the Jewish community to ensure that synagogues, Jewish schools and communal buildings are afforded maximum protection, and we have already supplied over £14 million of government funding to make sure that that work happens. I am proud of my department and the many others in government that are supporting the Holocaust Educational Trust to work with universities across the country in challenging the scourge of anti-Semitism. However, as we have heard from the noble Baroness, Lady Anderson, and others, we need to do more.

Like many previous speakers, I pay tribute to the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust and its CEO, Olivia Marks-Woldman OBE, and her team, who delivered the annual Holocaust Memorial Day ceremony and thousands of other local activities across the country. Similarly, like many other noble Lords I thank the CEO of the Holocaust Educational Trust, Karen Pollock CBE, who as we have heard works tirelessly to ensure that the next generation learn of the unspeakable horrors of the Holocaust and can visit Auschwitz-Birkenau as part of the very successful Lessons from Auschwitz programme. I want also to mention the UK Holocaust Map, an ongoing joint project with the Association of Jewish Refugees. The interactive map allows users to explore places relating to the victims, survivors and refugees of Nazism, as well as the rescuers, the liberators and the aid givers.

Despite our failure to learn the lessons of the past, we must not give up hope that one day we will see a world free from genocide, a world that fully grasps what happens when hatred, intolerance, prejudice and anti-Semitism is left unchecked and unchallenged. When we look at current conflicts across the globe, especially what is happening in Ukraine, it can be tempting to throw up our hands and resign ourselves to humanity's endless capacity for cruelty. It is sometimes tempting to believe that there is nothing we can do and that all of us have those doubts; but it is also in those moments that we must remember all those murdered during the Holocaust and in subsequent genocides. We need to remember the survivors, the witnesses

who have never given up, who continue to share their testimonies today. We owe it to all of them to remember.

2.51 pm

Lord Pickles (Con): My Lords, I thank everyone who has contributed to this debate. I will be brief but I want to say a couple of things.

This is the first time the House of Lords has had an opportunity to debate Holocaust Memorial Day, and it has been a very big success. I say with much love and affection to the Front Benches that this could become a regular part of the calendar. I will give some evidence for that. There is no padding in a speech on the Holocaust and Holocaust Memorial Day. You do not do it just to take up a little bit of time; it is well thought out and it comes from the heart, and that has been very clear today. It also says a lot about people as individuals and what is important to them. I do not want to sound too soppy, but I feel that I have got to know people a little bit better today. It is particularly effective when we talk about the impact on our families, as shown in the speeches of the noble Lord, Lord Kestenbaum, and my noble friend Lady Altmann.

I will not mention everybody, but I refer in particular to speech of the noble Lord, Lord Kestenbaum, who talked about his experience in Ukraine. It struck me a little while into doing this job that the legacy of the Holocaust is a great gaping hole inside Europe. You see it particularly in Poland: the heart has been almost ripped out of that country. A noble Lord—forgive me, I cannot remember who—spoke about the people who would have been born, and all the possibilities.

I was talking to the noble Lord, Lord Anderson, in the downstairs cloakroom before the debate. Like him, I was around when Holocaust Memorial Day began. It was essentially three men and a dog to start with, but gradually, we managed to get something going nationally. Now, there is not a community in the United Kingdom that will not have a commemoration involving schools. We do this not just because the Holocaust framed the latter part of the 20th century and the beginning of this century, but because the Holocaust speaks to us all.

That is why, following on from the Stockholm declaration, Malmö renewed that in 2021, and this next year is going to be enormously about dealing with Holocaust distortion. It is why the definitions that IHRA has put together, both in terms of anti-Semitism, Holocaust distortion and anti-Roma sentiment, are so important.

I thank noble Lords very much for their contributions, and look forward to this time next year—with a slightly longer debate.

Motion agreed.

Ukraine: Update *Statement*

The following Statement was made in the House of Commons on Monday 16 January.

“Mr Speaker, may I start by apologising for the way the information contained in the Statement has come out in the media? It does not do me any favours

and nor does it make my job any easier. I apologise to Mr Speaker and to the House. It is certainly not my doing and it does not help us in furthering the policy.

It has been a month since I last updated the House on the situation in Ukraine. Over the last four weeks, extremely heavy and attritional fighting has continued, especially around the Donetsk Oblast town of Bakhmut and in the less reported-on sector of Kreminna in Luhansk. Over Christmas, Russia continued its assault on Ukraine's civilian infrastructure, but no matter how cruel this is, or how much loss of life accompanies it, Russia has singularly failed to break the will of the Ukrainian people or to change the policy of its leaders.

We continue to closely monitor how Russia's long-range strike campaign will evolve as it eats deeper into the strategic reserves of its own modern missiles. It is notable that Russia is now using the forced labour of convicts to manufacture weaponry. Ukraine, however, continues to use its internationally provided long-range artillery to successful effect.

Throughout the war, Russia has managed to lose significant numbers of generals and commanding officers, but last week's announcement that its commander in Ukraine, General Sergey Surovikin, had been unceremoniously bypassed, with the chief of the general staff, General Valery Gerasimov, personally taking over field command, is certainly significant. It is the visible tip of an iceberg of factionalism within the Russian command. Putin apparently remains bullish, and with Gerasimov's deference to the President never in doubt, we would now expect a trend back towards a Russian offensive, no matter how much loss of life accompanies it.

In 2023, there is no loss of momentum from the international community—quite the opposite. President Putin believed that the West would get tired, get bored and fragment. Ukraine is continuing to fight, and far from fragmenting, the West is accelerating its efforts. The United States has invested approximately \$24.2 billion in support for Ukraine since the beginning of Russia's invasion on 24 February last year. It has delivered thousands of anti-aircraft and anti-armour systems and has recently stepped up that support, delivering Patriot air defence batteries and munitions and 45 refurbished T-72B tanks, as well as donating 50 Bradley infantry fighting vehicles to assist with the counter-offensive. We also welcome the decision of the French Government to provide Ukraine with the AMX-10 light highly mobile tank, which has been used very recently in reconnaissance missions by the French army and was deployed as recently as the Barkhane mission in west Africa.

Important as those contributions are in and of themselves, what matters more is that they represent part of an international effort that collectively conveys a force multiplier effect. None of this is happening unilaterally; no one is doing this on their own. I shall soon be announcing the first round of bids to the jointly Danish and UK-chaired international fund for Ukraine. I am grateful to Sweden for adding, over the festive period, to the pot of money donated. Countries which have donated to the fund now include Sweden, Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Iceland and others.

Meanwhile, Russia, isolated and without such support, has now lost more than 1,600 main battle tanks in Ukraine since the start of the invasion. However, if we are to continue helping Ukraine to seize the upper hand in the next phase of the conflict, we must accelerate our collective efforts diplomatically, economically and militarily to keep the pressure on Putin.

In December, I told the House that I was

'developing options to respond in a calibrated and determined manner'.—[*Official Report*, Commons, 20/12/22; col. 157.]

Today I can announce the most significant package of combat power to date, to accelerate Ukrainian success. It includes a squadron of Challenger 2 tanks, with armoured recovery and repair vehicles. We will donate AS-90 guns to Ukraine; this donation, which comprises a battery of eight guns at high readiness and two further batteries at varying states of readiness, will not impact on our existing AS-90 commitment in Estonia. Hundreds more armoured and protected vehicles will also be sent, including Bulldog. There will be a manoeuvre support package, including minefield breaching and bridging capabilities worth £28 million; dozens more uncrewed aerial systems worth £20 million to support Ukrainian artillery; another 100,000 artillery rounds, on top of the 100,000 rounds already delivered; hundreds more sophisticated missiles, including guided multiple-launch rocket system rockets, Starstreak air defence and medium-range air defence missiles; and an equipment support package of spares to refurbish up to 100 Ukrainian tanks and infantry fighting vehicles. While the tanks and the AS-90s will come from our stocks, along with their associated ammunition, a significant number of the other donations are being purchased on the open market or from supportive third-party countries.

Today's package is an important increase to Ukraine's capabilities. It means that it can go from resisting to expelling Russian forces from Ukrainian soil. President Putin cannot win, but he is equally certain that he can continue inflicting this wanton violence and human suffering until his forces are ejected from their defensive positions and expelled from the country. That requires a new level of support: the combat power achieved only by combinations of main battle tank squadrons, operating alongside divisional artillery groups, and further deep precision fires enabling the targeting of Russian logistics and command nodes at greater distance. We will be the first country to donate western main battle tanks, and we will be bringing a further squadron of our own Challenger tanks to higher readiness in place of the squadron sent. Even as we gift Challenger 2 tanks, I shall at the same time be reviewing the number of Challenger 3 conversions, to consider whether the lessons of Ukraine suggest that we need a larger tank fleet.

We will also build apace on the Army's modernisation programme. Specifically on artillery, I am accelerating the Mobile Fires programme so that, instead of delivering in the 2030s, it will do so during the current decade. I have also directed that, subject to commercial negotiation, an interim artillery capability is to be delivered. After discussion with the United States and our European allies, it is hoped that the example set by the French and us will allow the countries holding Leopard tanks

to donate as well, and I know that a number of countries want to do the same. As I have said, no one is going it alone.

It is worth reiterating why we are doing this. In 2023, the international community will not let Russia wait us out while inflicting terrible suffering on Ukrainian civilians. The international community recognises that equipping Ukraine to push Russia out of its territory is as important as equipping it to defend what it already has. This week dozens of nations will meet in Ramstein, Germany, to progress further donations and international co-ordination. The Kremlin will be in no doubt that we are resolved to stand by Ukraine in her fight.

Doubling down on the success of our basic training of Ukrainian military personnel in the United Kingdom in 2022, we are increasing the number this year to a further 20,000. Canada, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Lithuania, New Zealand and the Netherlands have already joined this effort, and I am pleased to say that we are to be joined by a group of Australian military to train in the UK as well—leaving their summer to join our winter, brave souls.

Our decision today is a calibrated response to Russia's growing aggression and indiscriminate bombing. The Kremlin must recognise that it is Russia's behaviour that is solidifying the international resolve, and that, despite the propaganda, Ukraine and her partners are focused on the defence of Ukraine. None of the international support is an attack on Russia or NATO-orchestrated aggression, let alone a proxy war. At its heart, it is about helping Ukraine defend itself, upholding international law and restoring its own sovereignty. We believe that in 2023, increased supplies, improved training and strengthening diplomatic resolve will enable Ukraine to be successful against Russia's poorly led and now badly equipped armed forces.

From the outset, President Putin believed that his forces would be welcomed with open arms, that Ukrainians would not fight, and that western support would crumble. He has been proved wrong on all counts. Today's package will help accelerate the conclusion of Putin's occupation and all its brutality, and ensure that in 2023, and beyond if necessary, Ukraine will maintain its momentum, supported by an international community that is more determined than ever that Putin's illegal and unprovoked invasion will fail."

2.56 pm

Lord Coaker (Lab): My Lords, given that it has been a month since the last update, I once again reiterate our full support on this for the Government, and the people, Government and armed forces of Ukraine. We all understand that illegal force has to be stood up to, or the consequences can be severe, as we know from history. That is why the war in Ukraine is important not only for them but for us. It is the defence of democracy, and a stand for international law.

We have heard various reports about the war, often conflicting, so I wonder if the Minister could tell us what the latest situation is in Ukraine, as far as she is able to. On that point, is it not remarkable how, in the

face of Russia's attacks on Ukraine's civilian infrastructure, however brutal, it has failed to break the will of the Ukrainian people or their Government? Is it not important that they continue to hear the support of us here in the UK, and of the unity of NATO? Is it not the case that sometimes the importance of maintaining the morale of the civilian population can be forgotten? Personal courage, human fortitude and a determination to stand up for what is right need to be saluted wherever they occur, in this instance in Ukraine. Can the Minister update us on the provision of food, energy and other supplies to help the Ukrainian people in their need?

The Secretary-General of NATO said a few days ago that it is important that we provide Ukraine with the weapons it needs to win, so we support the first package of military assistance for 2023 that the Government have just announced. Can the Minister tell us when the 14 Challenger tanks and the other equipment will be supplied to Ukraine, as I understand that speed of delivery is essential? Where are these tanks coming from—are they in storage or currently in active service?

The integrated review cut the number of Challenger tanks from 227 to 148. Do the Government now regret this decision, and will the review of this decision that the Defence Secretary has announced mean reversing the cuts or increasing the numbers above the original 227? Can the Minister tell us what the Chief of the General Staff meant when, according to press reports, he said that the donation of these tanks would leave a gap in our own capability?

The Prime Minister has ordered a review of UK military aid to Ukraine. Could the Minister update the Chamber on whether this has started and why the Prime Minister felt it was necessary to do that when the importance of our support is obvious?

Over the weekend we were also told that No. 10 has tasked

"the Defence Secretary with bringing together European allies to ensure the surge of global military support is as strategic and coordinated as possible."

The Defence Secretary is in Estonia and Germany this week, I believe. Can the Minister reassure us that European unity remains as strong as ever and that Ukraine is being provided with all the weapons it needs from us all and, indeed, from all our allies?

There was one particularly interesting sentence in the Defence Secretary's Statement that I draw the Chamber's attention to. He said that this military package means that Ukraine

"can go from resisting to expelling Russian forces from Ukrainian soil."

Is that now the Government's strategic aim?

President Putin believed that his forces would win in Ukraine in a matter of days. He believed that NATO's resolve would weaken and that western support would fracture and split. In fact, the opposite has happened: NATO is strengthened and we have all shown great resolve, but nowhere near the resolve and bravery of the people of Ukraine and its armed forces. We must continue to do that. Would it not be appropriate for this Chamber and all of us in this Parliament to demonstrate this through not just a Statement but a full debate in this Chamber, so that many noble Lords

can contribute to show our solidarity with the people of Ukraine? There is a war in Ukraine, a struggle for democracy on our doorstep. We should debate it in full in this Chamber.

Baroness Smith of Newnham (LD): My Lords, as usual on matters of defence and in particular Ukraine, from these Benches I fully support the words of the noble Lord, Lord Coaker. These Benches also support what the Government are trying to achieve in Ukraine.

The Secretary of State for Defence has again given a very considered Statement to the other place. We should be grateful for the fact that he has been in post now for a considerable amount of time. He has not been one of the Ministers subject to repeated rotations. That is important, because we need to send the right messages—not just to Ukraine, the Ukrainian Government and the Ukrainian people but to Vladimir Putin and Russia—that we are standing shoulder to shoulder with Ukraine in its battle for its independence and sovereignty.

First, I note the helicopter crash yesterday and the loss of the Interior Minister, the Deputy Interior Minister and others from Ukraine since the Statement was given in the other place. I send sincere condolences to their families, and to the Government of Ukraine, whom I hope will be able to find worthy replacements in the interior ministry, because it is important that the Government of Ukraine can continue to defend themselves and their country as effectively as they have been doing for the past 11 months.

I very much support the suggestion from the noble Lord, Lord Coaker, that we should have a full debate on Ukraine. We are coming up to the first anniversary of the invasion, and I wonder whether the usual channels could consider having a full debate, perhaps as soon as we come back after the half-term recess.

The noble Lord, Lord Coaker, raised questions about what is happening with supplies of food and energy. I noted in the Statement that the Secretary of State talked about the importance of

“collective efforts diplomatically, economically and militarily.”

As one might imagine, much of the Statement is about the military support that His Majesty’s Government propose to give. I realise that this is not quite the Minister’s remit, but could she tell the House whether there are any further moves for co-operation and co-ordination in economic and diplomatic sanctions and other activities to reinforce our commitment to ensuring that Russia understands the strength of western feeling on these matters?

The noble Lord, Lord Coaker, asked about the tanks we are proposing to send. In addition to the question of the location of the tanks, one of the other questions we need to think about is what availability of equipment His Majesty’s Government have. The *Hansard* recorders and the Minister will probably think, “Oh, no, does Baroness Smith of Newnham really have to ask this question again?” But I think I do, because we are 11 months into this war and our support for Ukraine. Can the Minister advise the House, not on specific negotiations that would breach commercial confidentiality, but on what work His Majesty’s Government are doing with suppliers, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises, to

ensure that supply chains are in place? It was one thing in February and March 2022 to say, “We will support Ukraine. We will supply artillery” and so on and so forth. But, 11 months on, are His Majesty’s Government really sure that the UK has the supplies that we need and that in the pipeline for 2023, 2024 and 2025 we have the capabilities? We support the acceleration of support for Ukraine, but the Government need to be very clear that they have in place equipment and supply chain availability to ensure that we can keep the commitments that we are making. They are the right commitments, but we need to be able to deliver.

The Minister of State, Ministry of Defence (Baroness Goldie) (Con): I thank the noble Lord, Lord Coaker, and the noble Baroness, Lady Smith, for their helpful comments. As I have said before, that unanimity of political support in the UK is really important. It has been commented upon to me, and it sends out a very significant message, so I wish expressly to thank both noble Lords for their contributions.

On the latest situation in Ukraine, noble Lords will be aware that the announcement made by my right honourable friend the Secretary of State in the other place on Monday reflected a very significant augmentation of everything we have been doing. In fact, as I prepared to address the House on the Statement, I looked at the list of equipment, ammunitions, help and provisions, and I thought it might be useful if we managed to produce some kind of summary of everything that has been produced, because in aggregate it is a fantastic amount. With the help of not just the UK but our partners and allies, we have in aggregate produced something really substantive that has absolutely put energy in the Ukrainian armed forces to defend their country and take forward courageously the difficult and deadly fight in which they are engaged. There is no doubt that, by listening to their needs and requests and assessing their intelligence, our intelligence and United States intelligence, we have been able to respond very positively to those needs.

Very importantly, because a request was made for co-ordination, what exactly is happening? I remind the Chamber of what I alluded to yesterday, which is that there is a NATO CHODs meeting yesterday and today, where we are represented by the Chief of the Defence Staff. The Secretary of State is currently in Estonia, at Tapa, and tomorrow there will be the donors conference being convened by the United States in Ramstein, which will be attended by the Secretary of State and the Chief of the Defence Staff. These fora illustrate the extent to which everybody is speaking to one another. There is a very fluid dialogue going on, and if you marry that into structures that have been put in place, such as the international donor co-ordination centre and the international fund to help Ukraine, I think noble Lords will understand that there is a really solid framework to support Ukraine in its endeavour to defend itself.

The noble Lord, Lord Coaker, asked specifically about the situation in Ukraine. As I think we are aware, it has been going through considerable challenge with the relentless and merciless onslaught from Russia. The nature of that onslaught is in itself interesting, because it suggests that Russia continues to be

[BARONESS GOLDIE]

disorganised, in a sense. Its strategic aims are not clear. From the Russian end, I think the recent switch of commanding officer—the commanding officer has now been sacked and the original one brought back in—indicates that there is some disarray in Russia's activity.

None the less, we can try to help on both the military front and the humanitarian front, and that is what we have been doing. I think Members are now pretty conversant with where we have got to on the military front and everything we have been offering. On the humanitarian front, Members will be aware that we have been a leading humanitarian donor, with a £220 million package of humanitarian aid, a fiscal support grant of around £75 million and a £100 million grant to support Ukraine's energy security and reforms.

We have also been doing grant-in-aid medical equipment to the armed forces: ambulances, tourniquets, field dressings, individual first aid kits, medic packs and hospital consumables. We have used the conflict, stability and security fund to support payment of salaries to the Ukrainian armed forces. Over and above that, the Prime Minister confirmed in November that we would provide £12 million to the World Food Programme and £4 million to the International Organization for Migration to help meet some urgent humanitarian needs, particularly of course during winter. That funding will help provide generators, shelter, water repairs and mobile health clinics.

The UK has more than 350 staff in the region working on the response to the crisis—so that is no small amount of support. That includes humanitarian experts, and within the UK more than 70 staff are working on our humanitarian response. I think it is important to mention that the UK has matched pound for pound the public's first £25 million for the Disasters Emergency Committee's Ukraine humanitarian appeal. That is the UK's largest-ever aid-matched contribution.

On more specific things, as Members will be aware, we have been trying to help with work to restore energy supply and with provision of generators. Very interestingly, we have been trying to help with an array of measures, not least the provision of some military equipment, to assist with de-arming equipment that has been left and also with minefield hunting, to try to identify where there are perils. That is all a very necessary precursor to trying to do anything in the rebuild sense.

In an earlier debate on Ukraine, the noble Baroness, Lady Stuart, brought to my attention the Wilton Park report in December, and I was very grateful to her. I commend this report to any of your Lordships who have not yet read it. It is a really interesting analytical and constructive suggestion as to how we may go forward with rebuilding the country.

The noble Baroness, Lady Smith, talked about the tragic helicopter crash yesterday. We were desperately saddened to hear about that, and our thoughts obviously go out to the families of all those affected by that tragedy, including the Minister and the other 14 people. Our thoughts are very much with the Ukrainian Government at this time. I have no further information about the crash, so I am unable to give your Lordships any more detail.

The noble Lord, Lord Coaker, asked me about the location of the Challengers. For security reasons, I cannot disclose that, but I can say that training has already begun. Somewhere in this voluminous briefing pack, I saw a reference to training starting as soon as the Ukrainian troops arrive in the UK. That is likely to be by the end of this month, which is quite encouraging. All the equipment that we have announced—the subject of this repeated Statement—will be operated by Ukrainian troops on the battlefield in the coming months. I cannot be more precise than that but I think your Lordships will understand that there is a mutual desire on the parts of both the UK and the Ukrainian Government to accelerate this as best we can.

The noble Lord, Lord Coaker, asked about the Prime Minister's earlier reference to a review of what we have been providing. I think your Lordships will now understand that that was more a mechanical inquiry in order to be satisfied that what we have been providing has been used to good effect and is actually changing the dynamic of the conflict, which I think it is. The Prime Minister's subsequent personal commitment to the new tranche of equipment bears testament to his resolve that the UK Government will stand shoulder to shoulder with the Government of Ukraine to support them in this conflict; there have been significant aid gestures from the United Kingdom since the Prime Minister talked of his review. The noble Lord raised that question with me earlier and I said to him that I saw nothing sinister or alarming about that; to me, it was just a routine check to make sure that we are providing the right things and making a difference.

The noble Lord also referred to the language used by my right honourable friend the Secretary of State when he talked about the war changing from resisting to expelling Russian forces. I have checked *Hansard* to see what he said. He was talking of Ukraine. He meant that Ukraine can go from resisting to expelling Russian forces from Ukrainian soil. We have always been clear that our defence policy is to support Ukraine in defending itself against this illegal aggression and to take whatever steps it needs, within international law, to repel that aggressor.

The noble Baroness, Lady Smith, asked about replenishment. I can provide some information that may be more specific than she thought I might be able to give her. We are fully engaged with industry. That is happening not just within the United Kingdom; it is happening across the piece with our NATO allies. As I said yesterday, none of this can be done in a silo. The United Kingdom cannot have a solitary conversation with a producer; we have to be doing it in tandem with our allies and partners to work out clarity on what is needed, who is going to provide it and when. So we are fully engaged with industry allies and partners to ensure both the continuation of supply to Ukraine and that all equipment and munitions granted in kind from UK stocks are replaced as expeditiously as possible.

Exact stockpile details are classified for obvious operational reasons so I cannot give further comment on that, but I can say to the noble Baroness that a number of substantial contracts have already been placed to replenish UK stockpiles directly. These include the replenishment of the Starstreak high-velocity, lightweight, multirole missile. I can confirm that the

replacement next-generation light anti-tank weapons, NLAWs, are currently being built, and several hundred missiles will be delivered to UK stockpiles from 2023 onwards. A contract for further NLAWs was signed on 7 December 2022. I hope that reassures your Lordships that this is actively being engaged on.

I have tried to deal with the points that have been raised. I will check *Hansard* and, if I have omitted anything, I apologise and I shall write.

Lord Robertson of Port Ellen (Lab): My Lords, I thank the Minister for repeating the Statement. Through her, I thank all those at the Ministry of Defence who are assisting Ukraine at this difficult time. The Ukrainians are defending themselves but, in defending their country and themselves, they are defending us as well. Vladimir Putin has made it clear that he is at war with the West and with us; we must take that extremely seriously.

The decision to send the Challenger tanks is a good one. I hope that it will put additional pressure on the German Government to release the Leopard tanks that other countries wish to give at present, so it is symbolically important too. I associate myself with what my noble friend Lord Coaker said: it is time that we had a full-scale debate in this House on this issue. We are at war. Vladimir Putin is at war with us and, in a wartime situation, we really need an opportunity for Parliament to say its word.

Finally, can I offer a suggestion to the Minister that she might take away? When the Prime Minister goes to Kiev, as he will and as he must, he should issue an invitation to the Leader of the Opposition to join him. It is extremely important that the Ukrainians and the Russians see that it is the British people who are fighting at present, not simply the British Government. I hope that she will pass that message on.

Baroness Goldie (Con): I thank the noble Lord for his comments. The matter of a debate in this House was raised with me by someone from my own Benches yesterday. As I indicated, it is a matter for the Government Whips' Office and the usual channels but I am sure that, if they pick up that there is an appetite for it, they will pay close attention. The noble Lord's other suggestion is interesting. It is certainly something that I will take back and relay to the department. I do not know when the PM is next scheduled to visit Ukraine but I understand the point that the noble Lord makes.

The Lord Bishop of Leeds: My Lords, I endorse all that has been said thus far in strong support of the Government on this. First, the Minister gave us some details of how some of the armaments being given to Ukraine are being replenished. Have the Government made any assessment of what the head of the UK Armed Forces said recently about the impact on UK defence of the donation of tanks? Secondly, it is clear that Olaf Scholz is putting the onus of responsibility on to the United States—that is, if it will send tanks, the Germans will agree to Leopard tanks being sent. Are the Government putting pressure on the United States to do that?

Baroness Goldie (Con): My understanding is that the United States has sent tanks. It has also sent Bradley vehicles. I think I am correct in saying that, in

addition to the UK, France and Poland have sent tanks. As to what pressure we can bring to bear, the meetings to which I referred in my responses to the noble Lord, Lord Coaker, and the noble Baroness, Lady Smith, reflect exactly the comprehensive and high-level discussions that are taking place. Everybody is clear that we all have to pull together in support of Ukraine. There is no doubt that, if the Leopard tank could be part of the facility provided to Ukraine, that would be an important addition.

The right reverend Prelate also asked about existing capability in the UK. I will say just two things about that. We have a mixture of equipment that we have provided and, if we take the recent example of the Challenger 2 tanks, I can assure him that there will be no long-term capability gap. We currently have 227 Challenger 2 tanks; we are giving 14. We will operate 148 upgraded Challenger 3 tanks in future so this donation will not reduce the total number of tanks that the Army holds. As to the other equipment, munitions and related material that we have provided, we are very careful to ensure that it does not in any way imperil the capability that we need to protect the security of this country.

Lord Anderson of Swansea (Lab): My Lords, those of us who have been sceptical about the Government's pretention to leadership post Brexit must surely applaud their leadership in respect of Ukraine, particularly in the provision of tanks. Are we confident that the Ukrainians will have sufficient training to deal with these tanks in time for the anticipated Russian onslaught in the spring? What precisely is the position of Germany in respect of those countries that need its permission to supply the German tanks? I have one final thought: what do we now understand as the war aims of Putin? Are they limited to the four areas that he purportedly annexed in the past?

Baroness Goldie (Con): Perhaps it is easier if I tell the noble Lord what I cannot reply to. I do not know what is in the mind of President Putin—does anyone? As to the attitude of Germany, I have said before that this is a subject of fluid discussion at these important fora, and that discussion is taking place as we speak. I very much hope that the force of that discussion will be to make clear the desire for the Leopard tank to be included in the facility being provided to Ukraine.

On training, I said in response to an earlier question that the UK will train Ukrainian detachments to operate all the platforms we donate. That will start as soon as Ukrainian troops arrive in the UK, which is likely to be by the end of this month. There is a mutual interest in making sure that training is conducted as effectively and swiftly as possible. The estimate is that the equipment we are announcing will be operated by Ukrainian troops on the battlefield in the coming months. I obviously cannot be more specific than that.

Lord Swire (Con): I thank my noble friend the Minister for the Statement and update. It is right that much talk is concentrating on holding the coalition together in Europe, and we must guard against inevitable fatigue beginning to creep in. Can the Minister also confirm that our wider diplomatic network, right around the world but particularly at the UN in New York, is

[LORD SWIRE]

working tirelessly to stiffen the resolve of countries which have been slow to come forward and share our view about the situation?

Baroness Goldie (Con): I think I can give that reassurance to my noble friend. Obviously, his question is more within the remit of my noble friend Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, but as he will be aware, we have been very active on the diplomatic front. The United Nations General Assembly vote on 12 October last year was a powerful demonstration of the international community's widespread condemnation of Russia's outrageous and illegal attempt to annex the Ukrainian regions of Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia.

That global pressure is continuing. I had the privilege of meeting a group of United States Congressmen and Congresswomen earlier this week. I was very struck by the unanimity of acceptance that what is happening is wrong and has to be resisted. This may be happening in Europe, but it is understood in the United States that if you do not address that wrong, there are consequences which could be global in their impact. I reassure my noble friend that diplomacy is a critical part of what we are doing to support Ukraine in its endeavour.

Lord Hannay of Chiswick (CB): My Lords, can the Minister say a word or two about how combating the Russian policy of disinformation and misinformation is going? The evidence is that, unfortunately, a large part of the Russian population remains prepared to tell someone who asks their opinion, at least, that they support President Putin, so there is obviously a long way to go. However, a lot of the lies they tell are easily refutable. What are we doing to boost the work of the BBC World Service, the language services and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office worldwide to deal with this disinformation?

Baroness Goldie (Con): I agree with the noble Lord that the wilful disinformation and misinformation engaged in by Russia is absolutely appalling and very unwelcome. It is worth emphasising that it remains the case that the UK respects the people, culture and history of Russia. The conflict in Ukraine has confirmed the UK assessment as set out in the integrated review: that the current Russian Government remain, and will continue to pose, the most acute threat to the UK and the alliance for the foreseeable future. Our criticism and objections are directed to the behaviour of the Russian Government.

However, the noble Lord makes an important point. The UK, and particularly the MoD, made a courageous decision fairly early on to release more intelligence to the public. That was quite a culture change for the MoD; we are usually pretty protective of our intelligence information. We decided to do that to counter Russian disinformation by providing an accurate and truthful picture of Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine. To date, those intelligence updates, issued via social media, have proved very popular; they are reaching a large audience across the UK and internationally. There was some reference recently to a poll carried out in Russia—I was trying to find the specific information, but I do not seem to have it in my brief. My recollection

is that the poll indicated that, in Russia, there has been a sharp decline in support for the war over a period of months. It seems that many people are becoming very unhappy and very questioning about what the Russian Government are doing in their name. We will continue to do what we can with the careful release of intelligence—the noble Lord is absolutely right—to neutralise lies and to provide a counternarrative which is correct.

Lord Adonis (Lab): My Lords, the Ukrainian Prime Minister has said that the Ukrainians need and could deploy more than 100 tanks. We are providing 14 Challenger 2 tanks. The Minister said that there are 227. Could we not do rather better than 14?

Baroness Goldie (Con): As I said earlier, the issue is not just what we as an individual country can do. We are providing Challenger, and the weaponry and ammunition accompanying it, to work with the American Bradley vehicles. That is a tandem capability. I indicated earlier that other countries are providing tanks as well. The question is where the need arises and the best way of addressing it. The Challenger 2 is obviously a very formidable piece of equipment, and it has a remarkable reputation for withstanding damage—in the current battlefield in Ukraine, that is a very important component. It is not a question of any one particular vehicle being what is needed universally; it is a question of thinking intelligently about how we ally with other bits of equipment and capabilities that allies and partners are producing to ensure that, in aggregate, we have something really effective.

Earl Attlee (Con): My Lords, I fully support what the Government are doing in a range of carefully made decisions, but I have two anxieties. The first is about the amount of technical cloning that is needed to support complex NATO main battle tanks and other armoured fighting vehicles that might partially answer the points made by the noble Lord, Lord Adonis. My second anxiety is about the capacity of the Russian people to absorb and tolerate pain in order to avoid defeat—which follows on from the point made by the noble Lord, Lord Hannay.

Baroness Goldie (Con): On training, I do not think that there is much more I can add. What we know from our experience of Operation Orbital, which was the UK's close training relationship with Ukraine prior to the conflict, and the subsequent Operation Interflex, which is the ongoing, very successful training programme we have been engaged in in the UK—we are now attracting international support for our efforts—is that the Ukrainian armed forces have shown themselves agile, receptive, quick to understand and responsive to training provision. I seek to reassure my noble friend that every aspect of training has been looked at, and it is anticipated that that will not be an impediment to the effective use of the equipment which has been donated.

On the situation within Russia, the sanctions regime both imposed by this country and in concert with other allies is certainly having an effect on Russia. At the end of the day, any change of attitude by the Russian Government has to emanate from the Russian

people. As sanctions continue to bite in Russia and impact on what it is able to do—not least a predicted drop in its GDP—Russian people may begin to question, as that recent poll suggests they are already doing, what is happening and what the Government are doing in their name. Frankly, if that is a question that the Russian people start to ask, I think it is healthy. As I said earlier, we have to be very clear that our opposition is to the activity of the Russian Government; it is not in any way a hostile reaction to the Russian people.

Lord Triesman (Lab): My Lords, could the Minister comment on what progress is being made to seize the assets and to deal with the financial movements of cash of those who have appeared on the sanctions list? Are we making progress and are we beginning to hurt their ability to operate?

Baroness Goldie (Con): The information I have is that we have sanctioned more than 1,200 individuals and 120 entities; and, with our allies, we have frozen over 60% of Putin's war chest foreign reserves, which is worth about £270 billion. Open-source evidence indicates that several of Russia's weapons manufacturers have suspended their activities completely or partially due to sanctions and the lack of spare parts and components. Sanctions against companies such as Kronstadt, the main producer of drones used in Ukraine, is certainly making it far harder for Russia to resupply its front line.

Baroness Meyer (Con): My Lords, given that there are approximately 500 political prisoners in Russia, can my noble friend the Minister tell us what the Government can do to try to push for their release in exchange for all the spies hanging around in the United Kingdom? I also reiterate that the young population is very much against the war; the older population is basically ignorant, getting their information from the television and therefore still sort of supporting the war, but a lot of mothers are getting quite upset about the number of deaths.

Baroness Goldie (Con): I thank my noble friend for referring to that interesting issue of public opinion in Russia. I have stumbled upon a bit of my briefing that I was trying to find: a Statement that my right honourable friend the Secretary of State made in the other place on 20 December. He noted:

“Russian public opinion is starting to turn. Data reportedly collected by Russia's Federal Protective Service indicated that 55% of Russians now favour peace talks with Ukraine, with only 25% claiming to support the war's continuation. In April, the latter figure was around 80%.”—[*Official Report*, Commons, 20/12/22; col. 155.]

That is a very interesting indicator of where opinion is going.

I am afraid that I do not have information on the plight of prisoners within Russia. That is very much the responsibility of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, but I can speak to my noble friend Lord Ahmad to see if we can provide any more information.

Lord Coaker (Lab): My Lords, I made a mistake in not noting the helicopter incident at the beginning of my remarks, even though it was in my notes. So I

associate myself with the remarks made by the Minister and the noble Baroness, Lady Smith, on that subject. I apologise for keeping the House, but it is important, from the point of view of His Majesty's Opposition, to put that on the record.

Baroness Meyer (Con): I will also add that, apparently, a lot of children were killed in that incident, because the helicopter landed next to a school.

Windrush: 75th Anniversary

Question for Short Debate

3.38 pm

Asked by Baroness Benjamin

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the arrival of the Windrush and the contribution made by Caribbean people to Britain.

Baroness Benjamin (LD): My Lords, I thank all noble Lords who will take part in this important debate. In 2018, to celebrate Windrush's 70th anniversary, I had a vision of creating a Windrush garden for the Royal Horticultural Society Chelsea Flower Show. The RHS was fully behind the idea, and I set about trying to raise sponsorship for the garden. I spoke to numerous large companies, banks and supermarkets, but I got nowhere. They would ask, “What is this ‘wind rush’? We know nothing about it”. Then came the press revelations of the Windrush scandal, which shone a spotlight on that terrible injustice. Suddenly everybody in the country knew what Windrush was, and people were scrambling to be involved.

I believe out of bad comes good. Not only did we receive an RHS gold medal for the Windrush Garden, which was eventually sponsored by Birmingham City Council, but the then Prime Minister, Theresa May, decided to create an annual Windrush Day on 22 June, a dream of the late Sam King, with the commitment of £500,000 each year for community projects. Most importantly, she committed £1 million to erect a national Windrush monument to recognise the contribution made by Caribbean people to Britain. She asked me to chair the Windrush Commemoration Committee and gave me the responsibility of overseeing this historic creation.

This task took four hard, challenging years, littered with obstacles and setbacks but, with total commitment and dogged determination, a magnificent 12-foot high monument, designed by the world-renowned Jamaican artist Basil Watson, was delivered and unveiled at Waterloo station last year, on Windrush Day, by Windrush pioneers and their descendants and in the presence of the Prince and Princess of Wales. It is now part of British history, and millions of people will see it, including schoolchildren when they pass through Waterloo station on school trips. The monument has quickly become a landmark, and Network Rail plans to hold a 75th commemoration event there to celebrate its links with the Windrush generation.

[BARONESS BENJAMIN]

The Windrush Commemoration Committee and I were very pleased to have come under budget with the monument, and had an underspend of approximately £200,000, partly because many organisations supported the project as their way of acknowledging the wrongs of the Windrush scandal. It had planned that we would use the underspend to develop a comprehensive Windrush IT educational resource to support the monument as part of the lasting legacy. Can the Minister let me know what plans her department has to fulfil that important obligation and promise to the nation?

Many British Caribbean people relocated to Britain as pioneers in 1948, loyally and courageously answering the call to come and rebuild the country after the Second World War. The thousands who followed up until 1973 also showed bravery, resilience, dignity, pride and fortitude, despite facing rejection, humiliation, violence and hatred. They came with hope and optimism in their hearts. They would not have known then that their arrival would mark a pivotal moment in British history. Many Caribbean people who visit the monument at Waterloo are moved to tears and overcome with emotion, as it evokes memories of the treatment that they received when they arrived in Britain. Some say that they wished that their deceased relatives were still alive to see this monumental symbol.

I am part of that lived Windrush experience, because I came to England in 1960 as a 10 year-old, travelling from Trinidad by ship, then by train from Southampton to Waterloo station, arriving on platform 19 with my grip—what we Caribbeans call a suitcase—just a few feet away from where the national Windrush monument now stands. Who would have thought? This is why I say to children and young people, “Never give up”. Today in every part of British life, people are finally recognising the massive contribution that the Windrush generation and their descendants have made. This chapter of our history is now being acknowledged, celebrated and studied in every corner of the country.

My book *Coming to England* is now read in almost every school in Britain, and I get letters from seven year-olds saying that they now know all about Windrush and will never be racist towards anyone because of the colour of their skin or because they are different. They say that they see me and others from the Windrush generation—for example, religious and business leaders, politicians, writers, actors and sporting heroes—as role models, and understand what it is like to be black. Childhood lasts a lifetime, so this gives me a great feeling of hope and optimism, especially when I think of the time when I came to Britain and my classmates relentlessly called me racist names. They did not know where Trinidad was, and told me to go back to where I came from.

We are now at a significant moment in history, so I ask the Minister: what are the Government doing to further encourage knowledge of the Windrush experience to be taught in schools today as an important part of British history? The National Archives holds copies of passenger lists of the many ships that brought Caribbean people to the UK. When I saw my name on a 1960 passenger list, I was overcome with emotion and wept looking back at my past history. I recommend visiting

the National Archives to anyone who made a similar journey. This year, as part of the Windrush 75 celebration, it is formulating an educational schools project to empower ethnically informed learning of British history.

I was asked by the now King Charles to set up a Windrush portrait committee, as he wanted to celebrate Windrush 75—which coincides with his birthday and now also his coronation—by having 10 portraits painted of Windrush elders over 90 who have made a contribution to British society in areas such as the NHS and the economic well-being of Britain across the decades—those whose shoulders we now stand on, as they had to overcome adversity and prejudice on a daily basis to survive. The committee scoured the country to find eligible sitters, which we did, except in Scotland, where we could find only one, who is in their 80s. The finished portraits will be unveiled at Buckingham Palace and will become part of the Royal Collection and represent communities nationwide.

The BBC is producing a documentary about that project. ITV is also producing a documentary about the Windrush experience, telling the story of Windrush pioneers such as Alford Gardner and John Richards, the last two living passengers to have arrived on the “Empire Windrush” 75 years ago. There will also be a Royal Mail stamp and a 50 pence coin, beautifully designed by Valda Jackson, to celebrate Windrush 75 and honour those who have helped enrich British society. Tilbury Docks, where the “Empire Windrush” landed, will be holding events to mark the 75th anniversary. There will be other community events across the country.

This year, there should be a promise of jubilant celebrations of the Windrush 75th anniversary. However, I recently wrote to the Prime Minister after reports that the Home Secretary was planning to go back on the recommendations in Wendy Williams’s lessons learned report. I told him that this would be disrespectful and perceived as wicked, vindictive and heartless. Because of the Windrush scandal, one can be forgiven for feeling anxious, nervous and worried. I have not yet received an answer from the Prime Minister and the silence and uncertainty are casting a shadow on the plans to celebrate the 75th anniversary joyfully. It feels like an insult to people such as me and thousands of others who have dedicated their lives to this country and have made a difference to other people’s lives. However, I am an optimist and believe that, eventually, good will prevail. But we all need to work together to prepare the way forward as a solid foundation for future generations.

The Government must play their part by supporting and leading the way for the Windrush 75th anniversary and show that they truly care about the feelings of the Windrush generation in every respect—to make them feel valued, appreciated and celebrated. I ask the Minister: what are the Government planning to do to build on the work already done and to put the stain on British history of the Windrush scandal and the hurt caused to the Windrush victims behind us, once and for all? The Windrush generation and the decent, compassionate people of this country deserve no less. I look forward to hearing the Minister’s response on this important subject.

3.48 pm

Lord Kamall (Con): My Lords, it is an honour and a privilege to follow the noble Baroness, Lady Benjamin. I am grateful for all the work she has done in making sure that the issue of the Windrush generation is high up the political agenda. I associate myself with her words and would be happy to work with her in the future.

We in this country owe a great debt of gratitude to the Windrush generation. When the United Kingdom faced a post-war labour shortage, it was people from the Caribbean and the wider Commonwealth who saved our public services. The noble Baroness and others speak of Afro-Caribbean people, but on the “Empire Windrush” there were also Indo-Caribbean and Chinese-Caribbean people. They also played their role.

On my phone, I keep an early 1950s press clipping from a local newspaper in Guyana about two young men, Muntaz Kamall and Vincent Wong, who were sailing on the MV “Wiruni” to Trinidad and then catching another ship, the SS “Colombie”, to England. Muntaz Kamall was my father. He was part of the Windrush generation and came to work on the railways and then as a bus driver. His brother joined the Post Office and his sister was an NHS nurse—a story so typical of many families from the Commonwealth and their contribution to this country.

When the “Windrush” docked at Tilbury in 1948, many of its passengers were veterans who had fought for Britain in the Second World War against the spectre of fascism in Europe. But how did we repay their loyalty and willingness to rebuild post-war Britain? While calypso artist Lord Kitchener sang

“London is the place for me”,

neither the Labour Prime Minister nor the Conservative leader wanted the “Windrush” to dock here.

In later years, as members of the European Union, we had so-called freedom of movement—an immigration policy of discrimination making it easier for mostly white EU citizens than for mostly non-white non-EU citizens. Whenever anyone suggests that the UK rejoins the EU single market, they should be reminded that it would mean returning to a discriminatory—many would say racist—immigration policy.

We let down not only immigrants from the Commonwealth but the Commonwealth itself, with a post-war Foreign Office establishment preferring white Europe and viewing the Commonwealth as an embarrassing legacy of the former Empire. However, today we see countries not previously part of the Empire asking to join, while existing Commonwealth members take it more seriously. I refer noble Lords to my register of interests as a lecturer on international politics; from a geopolitical angle, it is an appealing global and multiregional international organisation of which the US, Russia and China are not members. Aspiring applicants see it as a safe haven. I hope that noble Lords will join the Commonwealth APPG and go to future meetings to listen to people from other countries talk about their experiences of and visions for the Commonwealth.

Alan Johnson, a former Labour Home Secretary, admitted that the order to destroy the records happened under his watch but said that

“it was an administrative decision taken by the UK Border Agency.”

I do not blame him—I do not blame that decision on politicians—but how did we have a system that allowed this to happen? Why did people not think about microfiche or digitising the records? Why did we allow this to be a stain on our national record? Let us make sure it never happens again and join the noble Baroness, Lady Benjamin, in celebrating this 75th anniversary. Let us bring justice to the Windrush generation. What is my noble friend the Minister doing in her department to clear the backlog?

3.52 pm

Baroness Lawrence of Clarendon (Lab): My Lords, I thank my friend, the noble Baroness, Lady Benjamin, for this short debate. It is very significant at this time as we recognise the rights of workers and the importance of the National Health Service, both of which were fought for and built by the Windrush generation.

In 1948, as has been mentioned, there was a labour shortage in the United Kingdom following the end of the Second World War. On 22 June 1948, His Majesty’s Troopship “Empire Windrush” travelled back to the UK from the Commonwealth with hundreds of passengers from the Caribbean and other parts of the Commonwealth to fill this labour shortage. Many such passengers continued to arrive in the UK until 1973. These people were popularly referred to as the Windrush generation. The adult passengers had immigration papers, but children travelled on their family members’ passports and did not have their own. The adults went into industries such as the buses and railways, and those who were qualified went into the NHS, which began on 5 July 1948.

A report published by the National Audit Office in 2018 found that the Windrush generation, who were given the “right of abode” in the UK under the Immigration Act 1971, were adversely affected by immigration legislation from subsequent Governments. This was because, in many cases, the Government did not provide documents or keep records confirming their status. These people who did not have UK passports or sufficient documents to prove their right of abode have been subjected to detention, deportation, loss of employment, homelessness, loss of access to healthcare and benefits, and being unable to return if they left the UK. The Windrush scandal came to light in 2018 but was happening as far back as 10 years prior to that.

For a nation that has records of all slaves and was able to compensate each slave owner for the loss of their “property” in the slave owner compensation scheme—the collection of such compensation went on until 1943—I find it disappointing that the Government and the Home Office claim not to have kept records of those who have been caught up in this scandal.

As for the situation so far, the Government acknowledged the wrong in 2018, and many Home Secretaries have apologised to those affected. In 2019, the Government set up the Windrush compensation scheme, which people can apply to until 2 April 2023. Wendy Williams’s report was commissioned by the

[BARONESS LAWRENCE OF CLARENDON]
Home Office, and in 2020 her original *Windrush Lessons Learned Review* was published. The report aimed to identify the factors that led to members of the Windrush generation being caught up in immigration enforcement measures which were designed for those who were in the country unlawfully—

Baroness Bloomfield of Hinton Waldrist (Con): Perhaps the noble Baroness could draw her comments to a close—we are rather over time.

Baroness Lawrence of Clarendon (Lab): Wendy Williams made 30 recommendations. In conclusion, on behalf of those who have been affected, I ask the Government to help right those wrongs by implementing Wendy Williams's recommendations in compensating all affected by the Windrush scandal.

3.56 pm

The Lord Bishop of St Albans: My Lords, I too thank the noble Baroness, Lady Benjamin, for this important and timely debate. I thank other Members who have spoken so eloquently about the contribution of Caribbean people to this country.

In 1948, we invited Caribbean people to come to this country to help rebuild after the terrible devastation of the war. Some were welcomed; indeed, I have an auntie and uncle who, for 40 years, offered accommodation to people coming from the Caribbean. They did it joyfully and gladly and introduced them, wherever possible, into their Methodist church. However, at the same time there were many instances where they were not welcomed and, sadly, not even welcomed into some of our churches. They experienced appalling racism, which was simply shameful.

We in the Church of England have expressed our regret and shame at the treatment of many people of that Windrush generation. Three years ago, we voted unanimously in our General Synod to apologise for any racism and to give joyful thanks for the wider contribution of the Windrush generation and their descendants to British life and culture. Last week, my most reverend friend the Archbishop of Canterbury announced that the Church Commissioners are setting aside £100 million over the coming years to work with those communities adversely impacted by historic slavery—which, of course, goes way back beyond the specific point on the Windrush generation but is nevertheless part of the same phenomenon.

It is important that we, both as a Church and as a nation, continue to put right the wrongs of history. Perhaps the simplest and most effective way we can do that now is to celebrate the contribution of Caribbean people to Britain. Indeed, a large part of that contribution is seen in the many Caribbean Christian communities we have here in the UK. They have made a unique contribution to the Christian culture of our country, providing pastoral care for a little over half a million British-Caribbean people. They have championed numerous social causes, including the fight against racial injustice and knife crime. With almost three-quarters of under-25s killed in London last year coming from the Afro-Caribbean community, it is important that

Caribbean churches continue their important work. We need to challenge our history of racism and celebrate the Windrush generation and Caribbean people in Britain. That is an important first step.

3.59 pm

Lord Sahota (Lab): My Lords, the celebration of the Windrush generation is long overdue. Just think of all those men and women who were born thousands of miles away in a land they loved and left their friends and loved ones behind, making their way to the shores of this sceptred isle, seeking a better life. It was not an easy move, but they did it. It takes courage and fortitude to leave everything behind and start a new life in another country. You have to be in that situation to understand the feelings of loss you suffer in those early days and months, not to mention the slings and arrows of racial discrimination. This happened to me. I was only 14 when I came to join my father here. I remember to this day how I cried in the early weeks and months before I settled into my new life in this country.

I have great admiration for the Windrush generation, who made their way here to work in British industry and help to build this country. This celebration of them is long overdue. In acknowledging and appreciating the contribution of the Caribbean people, we should recognise that Britain owes so much of what we take for granted today to the contribution of people from across the world, particularly the Commonwealth countries, including the south Asian communities who came here after the war, seeking a better life. These were men like my father, who came to Britain in 1957 and worked in the foundries of the West Midlands, along with other immigrants who worked in not just the foundries but other heavy engineering industries as well. You have to work in those places to know what heavy and dirty work it was. It was soul-destroying. We must remember their contribution. We must also celebrate the unity among all the diverse immigrant communities at the time of the Windrush generation, who toiled alongside each other to make Britain great. Unity is a lesson we must never forget.

Once more, I congratulate the noble Baroness on organising this debate on the 75th anniversary celebration of the Windrush generation. I sincerely hope that the Government will implement all 30 recommendations of the Wendy Williams review.

4.02 pm

Lord Parekh (Lab): My Lords, the history of Afro-Caribbeans in modern Britain begins with the arrival of the “Empire Windrush” on 21 June 1948, which brought hundreds of passengers from the Caribbean to meet the labour shortage. They had been here before; what was new with the “Empire Windrush” was that they had arrived in this form, at this point in history and at this particular destination.

What has been their contribution during the 75 years they have been here? It is immense and best understood at three levels. The first level is what I would call moral and spiritual. They have forced us to recognise our racism. When we met them, we talked about human dignity but showed little of it in our behaviour. They forced us—sometimes patiently, sometimes through struggle—to recognise their fellow humanity. In so

doing, they have allowed us to raise our level of moral consciousness and raised us as a people. One people's ability to raise the moral level of another is a great contribution for that community to make.

The second level of their contribution is very considerable. It is that they kept us going as a society. There were lots of areas where we desperately needed their labour and that labour was available, from the NHS to transport, music, drama, sports and athletics. Mention an area and you see the beginning of a new energy, which activates not only them but a lot of the British people and begins to show the emergence of new traditions and new kinds of dance and music.

The third important thing that the Windrush generation did was to be readily available for any kind of work that British society expected of them.

I end by suggesting that the Windrush generation's contribution would have been much greater than it has been so far if only they had not been subjected to what I generally call institutionalised racism. That is a concept that some people seem to resist but I want to push it because it is absolutely valid. One comes to it if one asks a simple question. Nobody seems to practise racism, yet still it happens. I do not see anyone discriminating against me, but the reality is that I am discriminated against. How do we explain this gap between my personal experience and what is happening? It is caused by the concept of institutionalised racism. Therefore, when one talks about institutionalised racism, the important thing is not to ask, "Who did it?". It is like a man starving to death. You ask, "Who did it?" when nobody did it. Does it mean that it is of no concern? No. The question to ask is not who did it, but how did it happen? What were the processes in our society that allowed this to happen? What could we have done? I therefore suggest that institutionalised racism is an important concept.

4.06 pm

Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle (GP): My Lords, I thank the noble Baroness, Lady Benjamin, for securing this debate and for her powerful, positive contribution in introducing it. The noble Baroness referred to the problem of amnesia, which has had so much impact on the Windrush generation and their descendants. In the interests of making a modest contribution to tackling an amnesia that goes much further back, I will look at the part of this debate that focuses on the Caribbean contribution to Britain before the Windrush generation.

I will start in Bristol in the 1640s with a woman called Frances. We do not know her surname or anything about her origins except that she was black and worked as a maid, and it is very likely that she was either from the Caribbean or came through the Caribbean. Remember that we are in the 1640s here. We know about her because she was a leader of a radical religious congregation there and one of the church elders in that congregation, Edward Turtle, wrote about her. We have only a trace of her but she was there, contributing to British society in the 17th century.

I come forward to London in the early 19th century, to a man we know rather more about, Robert Wedderburn. He was the son of an enslaved woman from Jamaica,

but his mother was sold on so he was raised by his grandmother. To escape the plantation, he joined the British Navy and then became a campaigner against the abuse of sailors, the quality of the food and the living conditions. He then moved on to write a book in 1824, *The Horrors of Slavery*, a tract that was hugely influential with the anti-slavery movement. We have here a person from the Caribbean contributing very significantly to British intellectual life.

I will move forward a little further and invite your Lordships perhaps to wander down to the Royal Gallery and look at the painting of the Battle of Trafalgar. Wedderburn was a member of the British Navy in that era, and about a quarter of the Navy then was from minoritised communities; significant numbers would have been from the Caribbean. I therefore invite your Lordships to go down to the Royal Gallery to look at the painting of the Battle of Trafalgar there and see how representative you think it is of the Royal Navy of the time.

To come forward again, to 1944, just a few scant years before the Windrush generation, some people might know that about 2,000 Chinese seamen were deported from Britain after the Second World War, despite many of them having family and children here. Significant numbers of people from the Caribbean were also deported in the same way four years before Windrush, although that is less well documented. We cannot afford the amnesia to fail to acknowledge that Britain is and always has been a multicultural country, and people from all around the world have contributed to all aspects of British life.

4.09 pm

Baroness Blower (Lab): My Lords, in the context of this debate, on which I congratulate the noble Baroness, Lady Benjamin, I highlight one of the asks of Show Racism the Red Card, of which I am proud to be the vice-president and a trustee. The Government should ensure that black history features explicitly in England's curriculum. It already happens in Wales.

Of course, lots of schools engage fully with Black History Month in October but may not focus on the role played by our black communities in England at any other time; neither do they explicitly address the origins of racism. Given what we all know about the treatment of the Windrush generation, this anniversary would be an appropriate time to bring the Windrush and so many other aspects of black history and black experience explicitly into England's national curriculum.

We often say that the curriculum should be a mirror and a window—a mirror so that pupils and students can see themselves reflected in what is presented, but also a window so that they can see beyond the classroom. Many black children do not see themselves reflected. There are now many excellent books, including the one by the noble Baroness, Lady Benjamin, but the Runnymede Trust says that only 1% of GCSE students read a book by an author of colour. In this 75th anniversary, perhaps the Government can encourage all schools to teach about the Windrush, focusing not just on the arrival of the ship but on why Britain encouraged migration from the Caribbean, the hostile

[BARONESS BLOWER]

way in which people who were encouraged to come were often received, and their treatment decades later, for which compensation is still awaited.

At Show Racism the Red Card, the education team, working with current and former footballers, including Trinidad's Shaka Hislop, talk to children about what racism is and how we can work to eradicate it. Much good work is done in many schools but, alas, not in all. A Windrush stamp and a 50p coin are exceedingly worth while, but a proper place in England's school curriculum for the breadth of black experience would be a lasting and fitting commemoration of and for the Windrush generation.

4.12 pm

Lord Davies of Brixton (Lab): My Lords, I join all speakers in thanking the noble Baroness, Lady Benjamin, for introducing this important debate. I have three questions.

First, the Windrush generation has given the UK so much, since docking at Tilbury to help us rebuild our country after the war—extra hands that were so sorely needed. However, those people have also contributed dance, art, writing, cuisine and music, which have done so much to enrich British culture. Do the Government recognise that the Windrush generation has made such an important contribution, which merits a jubilant celebration on the 75th anniversary? Can they give an unequivocal commitment to supporting and sponsoring such a celebration?

Secondly, we cannot avoid the Windrush compensation scheme in this debate. It is a scandal. If there is any doubt about the extent of the scandal, I invite people to read the Commons debate that took place in Westminster Hall, when MP after MP expressed the problems that they faced in their constituencies. It seems that the Home Office would rather make gestures to change but continue with the same culture. The only solution is to take the scheme out of the Home Office and transfer it to an independent organisation that will properly deliver the compensation due.

If the Government are serious about giving the generation its due, they should commit to enact in full all the recommendations of the Wendy Williams review. They should not mark their own homework but should invite Wendy Williams to come back and tell us whether her recommendations have been fulfilled.

Thirdly, there should be a celebration; that is absolutely clear. The lead in determining the form of that celebration should come from the Windrush generation itself—this is absolutely essential—although, in conclusion, I hope I might be forgiven for suggesting that Brixton should have an important role in such a celebration.

4.15 pm

Baroness Burt of Solihull (LD): My Lords, I think the noble Lord read my speech. Certainly, he has covered most of the things that I was hoping to include. I commend my noble friend Lady Benjamin on her work on this issue. In fact, she is so determined, as I am sure noble Lords will have noticed from her remarks this afternoon, that it would not surprise me if she had built the National Windrush Monument with her bare hands.

I want just to mention what has given rise to all this: the role of migrants to this country, during and after the Second World War, in rebuilding Britain. They were not treated very nicely. I have seen “Call the Midwife”; I know of the racism that Nurse Anderson, represented by the actress Leonie Elliott, experienced when she first came here. Sometimes these popular programmes can show us more than we can necessarily learn from a textbook. I also commend the noble Lord, Lord Kamall, on his powerful words and personal experience.

We had the Windrush scandal, as we know. When people first came over on the “Windrush” and subsequent ships, although they were skilled in the war, they were given menial jobs to do to help rebuild this country, as the noble Lord, Lord Sahota, said. They were given the dirty jobs. I come from Birmingham; I know how dirty it can be. So I fully understand the work and the contribution that they have made.

To today: here we are, however many years later, with black people, people from the Caribbean and South Asian communities all still subject to racism. It is quite a stain on our character. I realise that my time has now run out. I just emphasise the question that my noble friend Lady Benjamin asked: are the Government going to honour the promises made by Wendy Williams? My understanding is that there is a £500,000 arts promise for every year; I would like to know specifically what the Government are going to do.

4.18 pm

Lord Khan of Burnley (Lab): My Lords, first, I thank the noble Baroness, Lady Benjamin, for securing this debate and introducing it so eloquently. I also thank all noble Lords across the House for their personal, emotional and powerful contributions. We all owe enormous gratitude to the Windrush generation, who played a pivotal role in rebuilding the Britain that we know today. That generation of Caribbean immigrants, many of whom had already fought for our country during the Second World War, arrived after a torturous journey and were too often met with hostility on their arrival, despite their hope for a better future. It is because of the contribution that they and their families have made to the UK today, as well as their profound impact on Britain's social, cultural and economic life, that we must do all we can for them today. It is precisely because of this that the Home Office's Windrush scandal caused so much pain and anguish. Full acceptance and implementation of Wendy Williams's recommendations is the bare minimum that they deserve. Can the Minister confirm that the Home Office remains committed to implementation in full? If it does, what is the plan for implementation? Can the Minister tell the House what the target date for the completion of any plan is?

I am incredibly pleased that this House has an opportunity to celebrate the contribution that Caribbean people have made to Britain. As a son of immigrants who came here in the 1960s, I understand the great challenges that that generation faced moving to a new country and a new culture because my parents undertook the same pursuit with courage and fortitude, which my noble friend Lord Sahota spoke about.

On top of the community events and projects that people are already organising around the country, the Windrush generation will be celebrated on the first set of King Charles commemorative coins. His Majesty has also commissioned portraits to mark the contribution of the Windrush generation.

I finish by briefly sharing a quote from a daughter of the Windrush generation, Andrea Levy:

“There are some words that once spoken will split the world in two. There would be the life before you breathed them and then the altered life after they’d been said. They take a long time to find, words like that. They make you hesitate. Choose with care.”

That is from Andrea’s fourth novel, *Small Island*, one of the defining books of this century and an absolute credit to the contribution that Caribbean people have made to Britain in the years since HMT “Windrush”. The noble Baroness, Lady Benjamin, said that she is an optimist. She believes that out of bad comes good. When will the Government come good to fully address the Windrush scandal?

4.21 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (Baroness Scott of Bybrook) (Con): My Lords, I sincerely thank the noble Baroness, Lady Benjamin, both for bringing this debate to the House and for all the work she has done, and I know will continue to do, for the Windrush generation. I also thank all noble Lords who have taken part in the debate with some very informed but also passionate speeches. I know that they have been short but the passion has come through.

Before I get into my speech, I want to bring up a couple of things that I think will answer many of the questions asked. My noble friend Lord Kamall and the noble Lords, Lord Davies and Lord Khan, rightly asked about compensation. The Home Office has continued, and will continue, to listen and respond to the affected communities about how the scheme operates and its accessibility. We have published a redesigned claim form; I hope that it is now easier for people to complete it but I am sure that Home Office Ministers will be pleased, if there is anything that they can do better, to do it. We are now fully focused on reducing the time between the claim submissions and the decisions. We have put more people into those teams in order to do that. We expect to reduce the work in progress in the coming months. I hope noble Lords will hold us to account on that because it is extremely important.

Noble Lords also brought up progress on Wendy Williams’s recommendations. I assure them that the Home Office is making real progress in delivering against those recommendations. It is a work in progress; the Home Office is continuing to do so. I am more than happy to ask the Minister from the Home Office to keep us updated on this issue.

The noble Baroness, Lady Blower, asked about education. It is extremely important, particularly in some of our schools that do not see as many multiracial children and do not understand our history quite as well. The annual Windrush Day grant scheme has provided £2.75 million to communities to date. A number of those projects will be about doing that but I will take back to the Department for Education ideas on how we can get it further into the curriculum. I

have spent many years working with communities in Wiltshire, which is not a very multicultural community, on Black History Month, which is a wonderful celebration of our diversity in this country.

Seventy-five years ago, the MV “Empire Windrush” arrived on the shores of Britain to help rebuild our nation after the Second World War. Thousands of men, women and children moved from the Caribbean to the United Kingdom in the decades that followed, and we are proud to say that they have contributed to every aspect of British life ever since.

The year 2023 is particularly significant because there are two 75th anniversaries. It is also the 75th anniversary of the NHS, which was created just two weeks after the arrival of the “Empire Windrush”. In fact, the two are inseparable. Many of the Windrush generation worked in the NHS to give us the health service of which we are also incredibly proud. Today, ethnic community employees make up almost a quarter of the NHS workforce, along with 42% of medical staff. The staff currently represent 200 nationalities. The NHS has served us all throughout our lives, and it would not have existed without the support of the Windrush generation. They played a vital role not just in our nation’s post-war efforts but in shaping who we are as a nation today. But they did not do so with ease—we accept that. Many of us are all too aware of the hardships they faced: from racial abuse and discrimination in the workplace, to being made to feel unwelcome in a country they came here to help. These wrongs shall never be forgotten.

While it is important that we recognise such challenges, both past and present, it is also important that we celebrate and commemorate the Windrush generation for their contribution to this country and for the aspects of their character that we all admire. It is for these reasons that we must honour the 75th anniversary of the Windrush generation’s arrival on our shores. It was in this light that the spirit of this generation was captured so beautifully by Basil Watson in creating the national Windrush monument, which pays tribute to the Windrush generation and their descendants, whose contribution to our society until that point had been overlooked for too long. At 12 feet tall, the national Windrush monument will stand testament to the pride and dignity that is the heart of the Windrush generation and will honour them for future generations who pass through Waterloo station—our country’s busiest railway station, which sees 41 million passengers each year. The monument was backed by £1 million of government funding as part of a manifesto commitment. Its unavailing on Windrush Day last year was a truly momentous day for our country, when our nation stood proud. I want to thank again the noble Baroness, Lady Benjamin, chair of the Windrush Commemoration Committee, for advising on its creation, as well as the many individuals, organisations and officials who worked so hard to create that fitting tribute—I think it is wonderful. People were moved to tears at the monument’s unveiling, at which the two surviving Windrush pioneers, Alford Gardner and John Richards, were joined by Their Royal Highnesses The Prince and Princess of Wales, who were then The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge.

[BARONESS SCOTT OF BYBROOK]

At one point Alford Gardner and his family were the only mixed-race family in their neighbourhood, but today the Britain that his descendants grow up in is very different. His 16 grandchildren, 21 great-grandchildren and one great-great-grandchild will grow up in a Britain that is both diverse and inclusive. Another instance is the Commonwealth Games, which were held in Birmingham last year. The games were an incredible success and showcased a city where more than 50% of the population is from ethnically diverse backgrounds.

Much has been achieved since Alford Gardner and the Windrush generation arrived on our shores, and we still have much more to achieve, but we can be proud of how far our society has come in this momentous year. I am proud to say that, as part of the 75th anniversary celebrations, as of this week the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities has committed £3.75 million towards the day's celebrations and the National Windrush Monument; £2.75 million has been granted to charities, community groups and local authorities through the Windrush Day grant scheme since 2019; and 160 projects have been funded by the scheme across every region in England, with grants awarded directly to the community, allowing it to commemorate, celebrate and educate about the Windrush generation and the contributions it has made to British life.

One project, Inspiring Audio Ltd, worked with children in Nottingham, Birmingham, Manchester, Bristol and London to produce 10 free podcasts to explore the history and social context of the Windrush generation. Another project, Tilbury on the Thames, saw people sail on Windrush Day from Waterloo Pier to the dock where the "Empire Windrush" originally docked in Tilbury, mirroring the historic journey that took place all those years ago.

Without the funding from the grant scheme, many of the projects and celebrations would not have taken place and fewer people would have known about the contributions of this generation to our society. But this is not Windrush history; it is British history. It is vital that we empower communities up and down our country to commemorate and celebrate the important milestone in our history. For this reason I am especially pleased that, in light of the 75th anniversary, we have been able to announce this year's grant scheme. It is now open to applications. In such an important year we have decided to increase the funding pot from £500,000 to £750,000 properly to mark Windrush 75. Communities in Northern Ireland will now be able to take part in the scheme for the first time.

I am happy to confirm that funding will be allocated to further developing the educational component of the Windrush Monument website in time for Windrush Day 2023. I can also confirm that my officials in the department have been asked further to explore what else we can do to make even more impact for these important celebrations.

As His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales said in his speech at the unveiling of the National Windrush Monument last year:

"Every part of British life is better"

for the half a million men, women and children from the Windrush generation. They have made

"our culture richer, our services stronger, and our fellow countrymen safer."

For that they have our thanks.

Arrangement of Business

Announcement

4.32 pm

The Lord Privy Seal (Lord True) (Con): My Lords, Lord Soley retired from the House today. He served this House for 17 years and, prior to that, had a distinguished career in the House of Commons for more than two decades. He always intended to make his valedictory speech in the debate in the name of my noble friend Lady Verma.

However, a misunderstanding arose as a result of certain ambiguities in the *Companion*. None the less, the House of Lords Reform Act 2014 is clear that a retirement takes place at 0.01 am, and therefore Lord Soley was advised, quite correctly, that he would no longer be a Member of the House and could not make a valedictory speech. Lord Soley had not appreciated this, and I understand that a misunderstanding of this type has arisen before.

I believe the sense of the House is that it would wish to hear a valedictory speech from such a long-standing and well-respected Member. I therefore felt, as your Lordships' Leader, that we should seek to address the situation that had arisen in a creative way. After due consultation, I concluded that I should suggest to your Lordships that, on this single occasion, special arrangements be made. So after my noble friend concludes her opening remarks—I congratulate her on securing this important debate—I will move that the House adjourns during pleasure. Lord Soley will then make his contribution and his valedictory speech. I hope noble Lords will remain to hear his remarks. The House will then resume and continue the debate.

I am particularly grateful to the clerks and the House authorities for their work to accommodate this. Measures will be taken to avoid any future ambiguity as to the time of retirement and ensure that retiring Members are fully aware of the consequences of their choice of date, which is irrevocable under the 2014 Act. Today's proceedings should not set any precedent, but I venture to hope that noble Lords believe this an appropriate course in the circumstances.

Baroness Smith of Basildon (Lab): My Lords, I thank the noble Lord the Lord Privy Seal and the Government Chief Whip for their intervention in this matter. I am grateful for the noble Lord's comments about Lord Soley, who has been a highly regarded, well-respected and much-loved Member of this House, and we wish to hear his valedictory speech. He and the Chief Whip, working with us, have made this possible, and we are very grateful.

The Importance of the Relationship Between the United Kingdom and India

Motion to Take Note

4.36 pm

Moved by Baroness Verma

To move that this House takes note of the importance of the relationship between the United Kingdom and India and the case for strengthening future collaboration.

Baroness Verma (Con): My Lords, I thank all noble Lords who are contributing to this important and timely debate today. The number of noble Lords speaking demonstrates the importance that is placed on our relationship with India.

As the UK and India continue the important work of negotiations on the free trade agreement, there is of course far more to the relationship between the two countries than the trade deal. I have spent well over two decades engaging with business organisations and businesses in India, and I refer to my interests in the register. I have led UK business delegations to India, engaging with progressive states that have changed, and continue to change, India, not just domestically but internationally, as India's growth story provides opportunities for new markets. Those who know India know that each state is different, with different languages, food styles and cultures, and each with a unique place in India's history. This makes India an incredibly diverse and interesting country.

We have a British Indian diaspora in the UK of 1.6 million. Interestingly enough, I was listening to the previous debate about previous generations coming to the UK and thought that it is on great shoulders that the rest of us have made our place in the UK. The Prime Minister of India, Prime Minister Modi, refers to the diaspora as the living bridge between the UK and India. Families like mine, which have been present in the UK since before World War II, have remained connected with family and friends in India. I believe that this huge resource has been underused in connectivity and in gaining a wider understanding of the different nuances of engagement with India.

India celebrated 75 years of independence last year. It has one of the largest growing global economies, with an increasingly growing affluent and better-educated middle class. With a wider population nearly 1.4 billion strong, it has among the world's largest population of under-35s.

I want to focus on relationship building rather than solely on the FTA, which, post Brexit, is critical for the UK. We have huge opportunities in front of us as a country. I am sure other noble Lords will speak about student visas and the importance of enabling businesses from India to have ease in sending their senior management employees to the UK when they are investing in our country. We have real opportunities to build on current relationships and forge much stronger and closer collaborations.

Sharing a stronger future is the narrative that I and like-minded people want to hear. Next week, I leave for India to finalise a conference that I am organising

in bringing women-led businesses from the UK, India and Uganda together in Delhi. The conference will be both in person and virtual. There I will be meeting with businesses about electric vehicles produced in Bangalore. Our place in the world makes us a great convening power; we can not only engage directly with the emerging economies but, through our relationships, ensure wider partnerships.

I will also have the opportunity to meet businesses looking to diversify abroad. We in the UK are among the most trusted and safest places for doing business. We must ensure that we are as welcoming and accommodating as possible, and that we showcase our Midlands and northern regions better, so that investment is made evenly across our country. I know that we have many champions for the regions, particularly in this House. They must be included in the strategic partnership planning necessary to attract not just new business from India but the resources needed to provide skills development for those regions as economies change.

I want to see stronger partnerships in defence, cyber and AI development, along with stronger partnerships in the creative industries, pharma and life sciences. As we grow the green economy, of course, we will develop our partnerships in the sustainable sectors. There are so many current and new opportunities in working collaboratively there.

As chancellor of the University of Roehampton, I know that the university is looking hard at greater, wider and deeper engagement with India, as are many universities. I hope that we will work equally hard at engaging with top-level universities in India for our students to spend time there and build new friendships. It is so important to look at stronger collaborative work on research and development in both countries, growing our pool to include working collectively with our friends in developing nations. Some of India's leading universities have a strong presence from developing economies from the south. Education has always been a strong and positive route to building and growing our influence, and we should better explore it.

We are known for our soft power but we need to ensure that it remains at the heart of all we do. The world is moving at pace. New relationships are being developed, as are the challenges. It is critical that we remain at the centre of these relationships, and here I ask my noble friend the Minister to consider my suggestion, which I have mentioned to him in private.

In 2010, the Government appointed trade envoys to a number of countries important to us on a range of fronts. I must congratulate the Prime Minister of the time on doing so. I have seen the incredibly important work that the envoys carry out. It is of course about boosting trade opportunities but, equally important, it ensures regular engagement and influence, and builds on our shared values and friendship. I have consistently suggested that there is an important need to have not one but possibly three or four trade envoys to India, given the size of the country. It is so important to have continual engagement. We talk a lot about strategic partnerships and having envoys would surely only enhance them. I urge my noble friend the Minister to talk to the Prime Minister about these important roles. It could be a lost opportunity, and one we can ill afford to miss.

[BARONESS VERMA]

I visited India when I was 16. Although I was born in India, I came to the UK when I was just under one. Returning in 1976 as a 16 year-old, I was quite surprised at what I found. But over the years, as a regular visitor to India, I have seen enormous change taking place. The infrastructure projects, such as the highways and the metro, and renewable energy projects are just some of the areas that have transformed India. There is so much potential still, as states look at ways to engage inward investment, much of it through online portals.

Can my noble friend the Minister say what work is being done with his department and the Department for International Trade to see what opportunities there are for British businesses and to look at how different states operate? What assistance and support is available and how can collaboration be found? A quick example for me is a recent visit by the Telangana state politicians, who came with businesses. They engaged with us and provided information on the ease of doing business there through their business portals. We are keen to follow up, but how do we ensure that these follow-ups with interested parties progress further?

With the support of the 1928 Institute, the first British-Indian think tank, I suggested to colleagues across both Houses that we set up an all-party parliamentary group on UK-India trade and investment so that we could focus on trade and investment opportunities in both countries and feed in with data and analysis of the impacts of decisions and policy thinking around engagement. I am pleased to say that we have a very strong group with cross-party representation. With the 1928 Institute providing the secretariat, we have regular engagement with our friends at the Indian high commission.

We believe that the group will provide a strong Parliament-wide link that will not just strengthen political engagement and understanding but will build on what will become the free trade agreement for us to make this century one of strong foundations, strong collaborations and new partnerships. We are hoping to take our first delegation in April, so we are looking to plan the visit. The all-party group will undoubtedly play its role in strengthening opportunities for both countries. Will my noble friend the Minister agree to meet the all-party group so we can provide him and his department with our plans of engagement?

As a British Indian, I have lived here all my life. The strength of our nations are the people. They build relationships and protect them. We have a huge opportunity to share the global growth story, but we have to recognise that how we narrate that dialogue and how we view our partnerships matters in what we are able to achieve. The global economy is changing rapidly. We cannot afford to stand on the sidelines. Recent events have clearly demonstrated how quickly Governments and economies come under stress and pressure if we have not prepared well and built the channels for dialogue.

As two nations that have suffered terrible attacks at the hands of terrorists, it is also important to build on knowledge exchange, enhance our expertise on evidence sharing and the tools for data gathering and analysis. This year I hope my noble friend the Minister will

support me in hosting a reception at the Foreign Office on Raksha Bandhan. This is an annual celebration where, in times past, sisters would tie a thread of protection around the wrists of their fathers and brothers as they went off to fight in war. Last year it was suggested to me that Raksha Bandhan also meant “my bond to protect”. I met British Indians serving in our Armed Forces. They do our country proud, with a long-standing association with the services through people like my grandfather, who was a captain in the Indian Army. Through their commitment to our safety, they fulfil the beautiful message of Raksha Bandhan. It will also be wonderful to recognise them and celebrate their presence.

It would be good to see the contribution of the Indian subcontinent reflected properly in our history books. This was mentioned in the previous debate. There is so much to say, but time is always a challenge. I, as someone well versed in the importance of both nations and their place in the world, believe that we can make huge strides economically, politically and through collaborative opportunities. I look forward to the contributions of all noble Lords, but particularly to the maiden speeches by—I had better get the names right—my noble friend Lord Minto and the noble Baroness, Lady Foster of Aghadrumsee. Did I say that right?

Baroness Foster of Aghadrumsee (Non-Afl): Nearly.

Baroness Verma (Con): I knew I was going to screw it up somewhere. I am really looking forward to the valedictory speech of our wonderful noble Lord—my noble friend—Lord Soley. He is a brilliant example of where we do not share the same politics, but we share courtesy and the trust and confidence of the House. I beg to move.

The Lord Privy Seal (Lord True) (Con): My Lords, I beg to move that the House do now adjourn during pleasure so that we may hear the valedictory speech of Lord Soley.

House adjourned at 4.49 pm.

5.10 pm

The Lord Privy Seal (Lord True) (Con): My Lords, I thank Lord Soley for his speech. I remind the House that, although this is a time-limited debate, we were adjourned, so noble Lords need not find the advancement of the clock too perilous. I think we were all very grateful for his speech.

5.11 pm

Lord Browne of Ladyton (Lab): My Lords, I thank the noble Baroness, Lady Verma, for securing this debate and congratulate her on her powerful and persuasive opening speech. She speaks truth to power very well.

It is a particular honour to follow my noble friend Lord Soley, who has sadly delivered his valedictory speech after over 43 years in Parliament—26 years in the other place and 17 years in this House. I say sadly because the whole House will miss his warmth, wisdom and judgment, so I invite the whole House to join me in thanking him for his service.

A probation officer, he was first elected for Hammersmith in 1979. He quickly became a significant figure in the parliamentary party, particularly on Northern Irish affairs, and consequently someone I came to admire well before I even met him. In 1997, the year I was first elected, beyond being re-elected, he was elected by his fellow Labour colleagues as chair of the Parliamentary Labour Party—an indication of the esteem in which he was held. Since then, it has been a real pleasure and an education to get to know him during our times together in both the other place and, subsequently, your Lordships' House, which he joined in 2005 and I joined five years later.

I thank him for an informed and entertaining but characteristically modest speech. He has much to be proud of. I know he must be looking forward to his retirement, but he still has much to offer. He is still a crusader for more and better housing and education, civil liberties—although we now call them human rights—prison reform, Northern Ireland solutions, a responsible press and almost any other deserving cause. He is also an author, photographer and supporter of charity. Born in England, as he told us, he has chosen in his later life to live in Scotland, the wise man. There is a phrase in the Scottish cultural lexicon that perfectly fits Clive Soley and his experience of life: “a lad o' pairs”, meaning

“a youth, particularly one from a humble background, who is considered talented or promising”.

Scotland prides itself on giving the lad o' pairs opportunities for advancement. I am sure that he will seize them in his retirement.

In the time I have remaining, I turn to the subject of the debate. A UK-India FTA is currently under negotiation. We should remember that, in 2013, negotiations for the EU-India FTA collapsed due to concerns about the impact on India's generic supply of and access to affordable medicines. The current negotiations appear to be in danger of foundering on the same rock. A recent leak from them revealed that the UK's strategic position is to strengthen the position of multinational pharmaceutical corporations—many of which are based in the UK—at the expense of India's public health safeguards, thus enabling companies to prolong their monopolies on medical products and charge higher prices for longer periods.

Presently, the UK, along with other countries around the world and providers such as Médecins Sans Frontières, relies heavily on access to affordable, quality-assured generic medicines, a large proportion of which are supplied by companies in India. Some 25% of the quality, affordable, generic medicines available on the NHS and a large proportion of medical products used by many low and middle-income countries are from Indian generics, including no less than 90% of generic medicines for HIV.

It seems rather counterintuitive that someone from these Benches needs to remind a Conservative Government of the basic principle of free trade: that having multiple independent generic suppliers for each medical product is important because the competition among them, and with the originator company, can bring prices down, enabling us better to serve public health needs and save more lives. However, this can happen only if

generic companies are able to produce and supply more affordable medical products once the IP protection, including patents, on these products has expired or been removed.

The consequences of undermining India's generic industry on supply and prices could be devastating for many countries with already stretched health budgets. This is of particular concern to LMICs, but it could also impact all countries that procure medicines from India, including the UK's NHS. While the proposals in the leaked IP chapter of the UK-India FTA do not amount to a final negotiated chapter, they none the less point to the UK's negotiating strategy—

Baroness Williams of Trafford (Con): I remind the noble Lord that this is a time-limited debate. The only person we set that aside for was Lord Soley, because we had adjourned the House.

Lord Browne of Ladyton (Lab): I have insufficient time to go into the detail of this issue, though I would love to, but I am fully briefed on it. I will happily meet and discuss this with other noble Lords, Ministers and officials if that is on offer.

5.16 pm

Lord Bilimoria (CB): My Lords, I have just landed back from India this morning. I was born and brought up in India, and after my studies here in the UK, I started Cobra Beer which, I say with humility and pride, is today a household name and the most famous Indian brand of any sort in the UK. In 2003, I was appointed as the UK chair of the Indo-British partnership in the Foreign Office, and my Indian co-chair was none other than Nārāyana Mūrthy, our Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's father-in-law. Rishi Sunak and I are proud members of the 1.6 million Indians in the UK, as the noble Baroness, Lady Verma, mentioned—I thank her for initiating this debate—who are doing exceedingly well in the “living bridge”, as Prime Minister Modi calls us. In 2007, I founded the UK India Business Council, of which I am the founding chair.

India has now overtaken the UK and is the fifth largest economy in the world. It is also the fastest growing large economy in the world, with 1.4 billion people. With 75 years of democracy, it is a young country. It had a growth rate of 8.7% in the last financial year, and it has contributed one in 10 unicorn companies, with over 100 unicorns. It is also the fourth largest producer of renewable energy and solar power. In every aspect, India is going from strength to strength—including during the pandemic, when it produced billions of vaccines, with the Serum Institute of India partnering with Oxford University and AstraZeneca.

I am co-chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for International Students. Students from India have now overtaken those from China as the largest group of international students. Foreign universities are now being allowed to open up in India; that is a great opportunity for British universities. Indian universities are now starting to want to have a presence here in the UK—for example, the Indian Institute of Technology is partnering with the University of Birmingham, where I am chancellor, and will ideally open a physical presence here in the UK.

[LORD BILIMORIA]

The UK-India free trade agreement is well-advanced. Although our trade at the moment is worth £29.6 billion, India is only the 12th largest trading partner of the UK. That is not enough; it should be so much higher. I am sure the Minister will agree that we should conclude the FTA as quickly as possible, but not in a rush—it needs to be as comprehensive as possible. I am delighted by our chief negotiator, Harjinder Kang, and wish him every bit of luck. He is, of course, a governor of the University of Birmingham, where I am chancellor. The young professionals scheme has just been concluded; 3,000 degree-educated nationals from India will be able to spend two years here, and vice versa. That is wonderful news.

The integrated review talked about the tilt to the Indo-Pacific. I am a trustee of Policy Exchange; we produced the report on that idea, and the Government acted on it. I suggest—I ask the Minister if he agrees—that the UK should join the Quad, the defence and security alliance between the USA, Australia, Japan and India. We should have “Quad-plus”, thus circling the world.

We need large prime ministerial delegations. I have been on every single delegation, under Tony Blair, Gordon Brown, David Cameron and Theresa May, but Boris Johnson did not take a delegation—there were only two of us from India present. I suggest that Rishi Sunak takes one; we should do that as soon as possible.

On the one hand, we have the India Advisory Council, chaired by the Minister, but on the other, the UK-India round table has been disbanded. That needs to be revived. Will the Minister agree? We had UKIERI, Teach India and the two-year post-graduation work visa from it. The CEO forum has not met; we need to revive that. Defence alliances need to continue as well. We are in a race. Everyone wants to do business with India. We need to go the extra mile.

To conclude, as a boy, Narendra Modi sold tea at his father's tea stall at a railway station in Gujarat. Today he is one of the most powerful people on this planet as Prime Minister of India. Today India has the presidency of the G20. Today India has a vision to become, in the next 25 years, the second-largest economy in the world with a GDP of \$32 billion. The Indian express has left the station. It is now the fastest train in the world—the fastest-growing major economy in the world. The UK must be its closest and most trusted friend and partner in the decades ahead.

5.20 pm

The Earl Minto (Con) (Maiden Speech): My Lords, I am honoured to make my maiden speech today regarding a country I particularly admire. I offer my thanks to all your Lordships for the generosity of welcome I have received and my sincere thanks to Black Rod and her staff, the Clerk of the Parliaments and his team, the doorkeepers, the attendants and the police officers for their help, direction and advice so proficiently and professionally given. I also thank my noble friends Lord Sandhurst and Lady Chisholm of Owlpen, my whip and mentor respectively, both of whom have been invaluable in providing advice on the somewhat daunting prospect of arriving at your Lordships' House.

My family, the Elliots, come from the border lands of Scotland, where my family and I live. In the distance, on a clear day, we can see the border with England, which is just that: a border, not a frontier, across which all may freely pass at will. Long may it remain so. The Elliots, for a period of about 200 years, started out as cattle thieves, or reivers, as that profession is known up there. Towards the beginning of the 18th century we stepped smartly to one side and became lawyers—not a huge difference. By the end of the 18th century we had moved into politics and diplomacy and it is through this move that our long relationship with India got under way.

There are two particular periods, one under the East India Company and the other under the Raj, when ancestors of mine were beguiled by the appeal of such an old, culturally rich and fascinating heritage. My own experience has been equally positive. In my commercial life, I was a retailer. As we built our business here in the UK and overseas, we sourced product for resale in many countries across the globe. Our experience of doing business in India was exemplary. Our multiple supply-side partners were creative in thinking, excellent in interpreting a brief, helpful in the extreme in developing new ranges and patient while we decided what and how much we wanted to buy. They were commercially astute, efficient manufacturers and administratively accurate. We developed long and prosperous relationships for both sides of the deal and, without exception, they were consistently placed among our top suppliers, year in, year out.

I sort of knew this would happen from the outset, as the few remaining items I have from my ancestors' time in India are quite beautifully executed and the writings and, more recently, photographic evidence speak volumes about the respect and admiration they all expressed for such a fascinating and culturally rich nation.

Turning to the Motion in the name of my noble friend Lady Verma, there is enormous potential to develop what already is a very important, and potentially most strategic, relationship, as the noble Lord, Lord Bilimoria, said. That relationship is both old and complex, but I suggest we share much in common, both in our outlook on life in general and our expectations for the future. Both countries are trading nations and, as such, are outward looking. We are both staunch believers in democracy—one the largest democracy in the world, the other one of the oldest. We both believe in diversity of thought, faith and culture: India because she is so vast and varied, and the United Kingdom because we have always embraced the world, albeit sometimes for good, sometimes not so good. We share a common language, a belief in the rule of law and a love of cricket. As a result of all this, I believe we work well together, which has certainly been my experience, and while in terms of historical perspective there is a continual need to seek mutual understanding, it is hard to think of two other countries with such natural affinity. India's quite phenomenal rise and increasing power, both commercial and cultural and as a democracy, is a triumph we should be in awe of. We in the UK have so much to learn from India, and would hope to get much in return.

Finally, as a friend pointed out to me the other day, there are many important new concepts in the modern world that are old in India: spirituality, mindfulness, meditation, tolerance, diversity, to name but a few, which is to say that India is so very old while at the same time so very new. Let us aspire to the concept that India and the United Kingdom can be both so very old and so very new together.

It is indeed a humbling experience to address your Lordships, particularly on first acquaintance. I hope I will be able to contribute going forward, and again thank my noble friend Lady Verma for giving me this initial opportunity.

5.26 pm

Lord Risby (Con): My Lords, it is an immense pleasure to congratulate my noble friend on his outstandingly good maiden speech. I was amused by his observation that his family started off as cattle thieves but moved on to become lawyers. He is in effect becoming a politician—which for some people is perhaps a leap even from lawyers and thieves. His family went on to play hugely important parts in public service in this country, of the greatest distinction.

My noble friend brings to us his considerable business background and success, not least in India, a country which he so fully understands and cherishes. His family motto is “He needs not the bow”, but my noble friend has a second motto: “Mildly but firmly”, gently nudging him towards public life and indeed to becoming a Member of your Lordships’ House. I greatly look forward to his first-rate contributions in the months and years to come.

I warmly congratulate my noble friend Lady Verma on securing this debate and applaud her fulsomely for the way she has personally worked so effectively to strengthen links between the United Kingdom and India. I am personally blessed to have many Indian friends, some stretching back 50 years, and to have widely explored the country. I spent new year in Alibag, in Mumbai, and there is an infectious sense of pride in India’s growing prosperity and its importance on the world stage. This is even more in evidence with the country’s presidency of the G20.

India as a democracy is surrounded by neighbours with whom difficulties can so easily arise. It is absolutely in our interest as part of the integrated review, which is being updated, that the considerable progress made in the field of UK-India defence and security co-operation be further developed. Recent increased military-to-military exchanges through bilateral and multilateral exercises are steps in the right direction, and there is justified enthusiasm in the defence industry to coproduce. It is incumbent on the Governments to provide a suitable climate for that. The innovative capacities of UK industry can scale up in India and we can potentially jointly manufacture.

Furthermore, there are huge opportunities for bilateral space co-operation. We have both, as countries, faced atrocious terrorist attacks. Given the wide spectrum of emerging technologies and associated threats to our national security, it is so important that we work closely together. My noble friend will be aware that cybersecurity is another area where India and the UK

can collaborate. Given both countries’ mutual commitment to the law of the sea, does my noble friend agree that our joining the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative underlines the strategic importance of India as a maritime power?

It is particularly gratifying that, for the year ending June 2022, Indian nationals were granted here the most sponsored study visas, an increase of 215% in three years. I note with pleasure that overseas universities can now be established in India, and hope that UK universities will take up this opportunity. India’s role in the world was underlined by the way that the country responded to the Covid crisis. I have visited Pune and seen for myself the astonishing capacity of vaccine production. Can my noble friend inform the House whether the links built up during the pandemic have been maintained to our mutual benefit?

Quite rightly, India is rediscovering its uniquely rich heritage and national pride. There is quite simply no other country which as a democracy must live with more languages, religions and ethnic diversity. May it never lose its historic tolerance, which has been so deservedly admired.

5.30 pm

Lord Parekh (Lab): My Lords, India and Britain’s representatives have worked out a road map to deepen the ties between the two countries by 2030. That framework gives us some idea of where the countries intend to go. Several lines of activity have opened up, such as research, education, capacity building and culture.

Two further things are particularly striking about the framework. First, under the young professionals scheme, 3,000 young Indians are to come to the UK every year for training. It is also interesting that the biennial ministerial meetings are expected to agree on priorities and set the agenda for research, science and technology. All this is fine. However, in my four minutes, I want to concentrate on what I would like to see in the framework but do not. I say this as someone who was invited by the Indian Government to be the vice-chancellor of one of India’s largest universities. I went there and headed the university for three years. Since then, I have gone there regularly and have been deeply involved in India’s education policy.

Looking at the results of my entry into the Indian educational world, and at what we achieved and what we could have achieved, there were some important lessons learned which I will list very quickly. It is important for overseas Indians not only to be at junior levels but to occupy senior positions in Indian universities. Talented people from the diaspora can head Indian universities. Joint research between various departments at Indian universities should also be encouraged. However, there is a tremendous emphasis all the time on science and research. Humanities and social sciences need just as much attention.

The exchange of staff is quite important. The Government of Wales have worked out a scheme which we can build on, where a certain number of Indian doctors come from India to work in our hospitals for a year or two. They gain experience, we benefit from their presence, and then they go back and India benefits from their experience too. Both sides benefit from this kind of exchange.

[LORD PAREKH]

This is also important in the recent context of British universities, like other universities, being invited to open campuses in India. I like the idea, but I hesitate to endorse it wholeheartedly. For a variety of reasons that I cannot go into, I prefer joint campuses, rather than Yale, Harvard or Oxford setting up their own campus. When you set up your own campus, is there a commitment to provide it with your own staff? If you do not, you recruit locally, with the result that existing universities are funded by local people and get no benefit from the home-based staff of the great universities which initially volunteered. There are lots of difficulties which I saw in the United States when I was a professor at Harvard. The scheme can work, but it can also not work. It is very important that these provisions are made intelligently.

Finally, when two countries co-operate—both countries proud of their history—there is always a danger of disagreement. This should be welcome. They should be honest in their criticisms and in pointing out where one country has gone wrong, but at the same time each one should be able to appreciate the other's difficulties and the constraints within which they function. Here I suggest that we in Britain have not been particularly civil or careful. When we talk about the Hindu-Muslim riots and all that, we tend to forget that these are a result of the partition of India, which left behind a very painful memory in the minds and hearts of all the people. That is something that we did as a colonial power; for decades when we ruled over the country, we determined the structure of relations between various communities, and we corrupted the relationship. While we ought to be aware of what we did, we should also be careful in how we criticise people.

My final point, following what the noble Lord, Lord Bilimoria, said, is that despite all of our differences with Mr Modi, I think that he is doing good work and representing India's pride. Lots of Indians see their self-respect restored and, while we may continue to disagree with him, we should also continue to welcome him.

5.36 pm

Lord Patel (CB): My Lords, I thank the noble Baroness, Lady Verma, for securing this debate, congratulate the noble Earl, Lord Minto, on his maiden speech and look forward to the maiden speech of the noble Baroness, Lady Foster, very much.

I will make brief comments about developing a science and innovation relationship with India, an emerging strong economy, which like all developed economies will soon be an even stronger science and innovation country. The UK has an ambition to be a science superpower, and in some areas like life sciences we probably already are. While I support the hopes that we will re-join as members of Horizon Europe, it is right that we develop associations in science, research and innovations globally, if we are to meet our ambition of being a global science superpower.

The Science Minister recently announced during a visit to Japan a £119 million global collaboration fund for science and business. I hope this signals a wish to develop science collaboration not only with countries such as Japan, but even more so with countries such as India, particularly as we share common values

and traditions including education in science. Another advantage is language, as English is commonly spoken and taught in India, particularly in the teaching of science. India has strong research institutions. Nationally, it excels in areas such as space science, computer science and nuclear science, to mention but a few.

I recently met the new high commissioner of India to the UK, Mr Vikram Doraiswami, who is very enthusiastic about establishing a UK-India science link. I hope that our Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office will show the same enthusiasm. We have a model that we can follow: I have been privileged to be a member of the UK-Israel Science Council, of which the noble Lord, Lord Winston, who is not in his place, is a joint chair. It was established over a decade ago by our then-ambassador to Israel, Matthew Gould, and its continuing success, after over a decade, is due to his foresight. It is a highly successful scheme of science collaboration and exchange of scientists, and is worth duplicating. The success is primarily because of the efforts of our embassy in Israel, and I hope that we can duplicate that with our high commission in India.

Government support is essential: importantly, though, that support has meant that nearly all the funding has come from donations from people in the UK and Israel who have affiliations to both countries. I note that several speakers in today's debate have associations and affiliations with both India and the UK.

As the UK develops stronger trade ties with India, it is an opportune time to have such ties for science and innovation. The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office can play an important part. If his time allows, I would be pleased to meet the Minister to acquaint him further about how UK-Israel science collaboration works, and how it could be replicated with India and the UK, and I would hope to have a subsequent informal meeting with the India high commissioner. I have no doubt that the UK science community will be very supportive of developing a UK-India science council that could provide the exchange of scientists with common interests.

5.39 pm

Lord Sahota (Lab): My Lords, as a proud Member of your Lordships' House of Indian heritage, with a family link of more than 100 years with the UK, I feel privileged and honoured to speak about collaboration to further strengthen ties between two great nations. The UK and India have many historical ties over the centuries—cultural, linguistic and social—not to mention the fact that there are 1.6 million people from the Indian diaspora in the UK.

A better economic relationship always leads to conversations about other important issues. What brings our two nations together are our democratic values and commitment to membership of the Commonwealth—the biggest and the oldest democracies in the world coming together and building a solid, all-round trade partnership.

Indian doctors, nurses and care workers are already the backbone of our National Health Service. After the Second World War, thousands of workers from the Commonwealth came to work in UK industry.

They worked hard to make this country what it is today—the fifth-largest economy in the world, I think noble Lords said. India is the second-largest provider of foreign students to British universities, adding thousands to the economy.

It is admirable that both countries are now taking special steps to collaborate on trade and investment. The secret lies in the 2021 agreement between the Prime Ministers of both countries: the *2030 Roadmap for India-UK Future Relations*. This will strengthen the economic relationship between our two countries through an enhanced trade partnership, thus doubling UK-India trade over the next 10 years.

Both our countries need to move on to other areas of collaboration to improve the economic and social lives of our citizens. To achieve this, they need to collaborate in other areas such as cybersecurity, digital, health, finance, commerce, nuclear, connectivity, climate change, green energy, migration, mobility, education, research, healthcare, biotechnology and so on.

The UK is one of the leading investors in India, investing some \$30 billion in the past decade. Notwithstanding some large Indian names in the UK, such as Tata Steel, direct Indian investment in the UK could be enhanced to deepen the financial ties between our two countries.

Just as the City of London is renowned for its financial services throughout the world, India is known for its pharmaceutical industry, particularly generic drugs and contract research organisations. The percentage of the world's generic drugs supplied from India is constantly increasing; it is at 20%, but some say it is as much as 50%. Over 50% of the world's vaccines are manufactured in India, and that number is growing. Currently, India is known as the pharmacy of the world. Therefore, it is time for India and the UK to collaborate and fill the gap in the global pharmaceutical industry.

In conclusion, the aforementioned collaborations between the UK and India, resulting in the 2021 agreement, are part of the 2030 road map for the most promising India-UK relationship. I wish everyone well in their endeavours.

5.43 pm

Lord Swire (Con): My Lords, I add my congratulations to my noble friend Lady Verma on securing this important debate and say what an honour, privilege and pleasure it is to follow on from my noble friend Lord Minto's excellent maiden speech. I much look forward to that of my old friend, the noble Baroness, Lady Foster. I shall be in the Chamber to listen to her; I am interested to hear what she has to say as well.

I cannot claim the same illustrious connections with India as my noble friend did in his maiden speech, but I was the British Minister of State with responsibility for India, and was dispatched in that capacity to engage with the now Prime Minister, Modi, when he was Chief Minister of Gujarat. It was also my duty to welcome him as Prime Minister on his visit in 2015. When I greeted him at the airport he embraced me warmly, saying that I had less hair than when he had seen me previously. I rather fear that, when I next see him, he might be inclined to repeat that, some seven or eight years later.

At that 2015 visit, a joint statement was issued by the then Prime Minister David Cameron and Prime Minister Modi. On the educational issue, it talked of driving further collaboration, including a range of digital technology-enabled education and training initiatives. Of course, that has been greatly accelerated by Covid. The UK India Business Council, whose founding chairman, the noble Lord, Lord Bilimoria, spoke earlier, has called, I think again, for mutual recognition of qualifications and permission for universities to offer joint and online degrees. Would the Minister like to comment on where that has got to?

Incidentally, I was extremely pleased to hear about the number of Indian students studying here. I would be interested to know how many Chevening scholars there are now. I also would like to make the point that I have always thought it ridiculous to include student numbers in the immigration figures.

We are about to enter round seven of the FTA negotiations. I wonder what progress we are making on that front. I do not think we should kid ourselves: India does not have many trade deals, and it will be long and complicated. Can the Minister update us on that?

The Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, Sir Philip Barton, met Foreign Minister Vinay Mohan Kwatra recently and talked about India's ambitious plans for the G20 presidency, including strengthening co-operation and co-ordination in the UN, including at the UN Security Council. Your Lordships will be aware that India has been a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council eight times now, for a total of 16 years, the most recent turn being 2021-22. My old friend the Minister for External Affairs, Jaishankar, said on 15 December that India would be a candidate as a non-permanent member for the 2028-29 term. Is there a chance that, by then, India might be given a permanent seat on the Security Council? I know this is supported by a number of countries, not least the United Kingdom. As India takes a greater role—the stated ambition of Prime Minister Modi—not only in the SAARC region but wider afield, I think that would be welcome.

On a slightly more sensitive issue, India has perhaps not been as robust as we would like on the resolutions concerning Russia's invasion of Ukraine. What diplomatic pressure is being applied in that respect? The great concern that I have, which was articulated by various people and various reports in the papers recently, is about the oil that originates in Russia, is refined in India and is imported into the United Kingdom by a number of companies, including BP and Shell. I am not suggesting that there is anything illegal in that, but at the end of the day it is providing money for Putin's regime. What can the Minister do to make sure that we are not importing oil originating from Russia that is refined in India?

5.48 pm

Lord Anderson of Swansea (Lab): My Lords, I intervene in the debate moved by the noble Baroness, Lady Verma, as a long-standing member of the Indo-British All-Party Parliamentary Group and a great admirer of the dynamism of India, which will shortly be the most populous country in the world. I believe that our relationship is strong enough to bear the sort of criticism that the noble Lord, Lord Swire, mentioned.

[LORD ANDERSON OF SWANSEA]

India is very much a part of our past—we think of the East India Company and the British Empire—and of our present, with 3.1% of UK residents, or 1.6 million people, now of Indian background. It plays a positive role across the spectrum of activity in the UK, in business, as the noble Lord, Lord Bilimoria, said, education, as mentioned by my noble friend Lord Parekh, hospitality, sport—we think of cricket—and health. Where would our NHS be without our Indians? I just had an operation and I think the consultant and virtually all his team were of Indian origin. In politics, it is surely remarkable that the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and the Taoiseach of the Republic of Ireland should be meeting to discuss the future of the union of this country. It is some indication of the changes which have taken place.

Of course, India is very much part of our future if we proceed realistically and with mutual respect, although there is a certain backlash to the so-called Indo-Pacific tilt of our defence policy. Nowadays, particularly post the invasion of Ukraine, people are thinking that the emphasis should be even more on the European role that we should play.

I recall a conference at which I looked across at the Indian delegation, saw the remarkable diversity—from the Tamils from the south to those from Nagaland in the north—and wondered how any federal government could keep together people of such diversity. It is done by a system of checks and balances, by respect and, of course, by the mutual working together of the Indian population.

That is why I, like the noble Lord, Lord Swire, am saddened by the response of the Indian Government to the Russian aggression in Ukraine, against all international norms. India abstained on key UN resolutions, refused to condemn the Russian invasion—what Russia calls a special military operation—and took refuge in generalisations on the protection of civilians and calls for a ceasefire. India has benefited from the breaking of sanctions, certainly in oil imports.

The key current basis for a bilateral relationship is the 2030 road map, formed in 2021. That is welcome but must be systematically and realistically given substance. I have one last reflection; perhaps the noble Lord, Lord Bilimoria, will shoot me down speedily on it. It is triggered by George Osborne's remark:

“There is a whole string of British governments who think there is a special relationship with India. My experience is that the Indians do not have that view of Britain.”

That is certainly my impression from my relationship with the Commonwealth. In my judgment, India does not have that same attachment, certainly at the ground level. It would be interesting to hear from the Minister whether the Government agree with that and equally—again, to follow a point made by the noble Lord, Lord Swire—what expectation the Government have for a speedy resolution of the FTA negotiations.

The road map, with all its problems, gives us the opportunity to broaden and deepen our relationship—*[Interruption.]*

Baroness Williams of Trafford (Con): My Lords, order.

5.53 pm

Baroness Foster of Aghadrumsee (Non-Afl) (Maiden Speech): My Lords, I am very pleased to be able to make my maiden speech during this timely and important debate. I thank the noble Baroness, Lady Verma, and congratulate her on bringing the debate forward.

Before I make my comments on the substance of the debate, I thank all those who have made my arrival in this place such a pleasant one. I place on record my sincere thanks to Garter, Black Rod and all the staff in the various offices, including the magicians in IT help—please always keep well—the catering and cleaning staff, our police officers and, of course, the wonderful doorkeepers, who have already kept me right on a number of occasions and welcomed me every day with a smile. Thank you to each and every one. I also thank the two noble Lords who were with me when I was introduced. The noble Lords, Lord Dodds and Lord Godson, are both dear friends; I thank them for their continued support.

My congratulations to the noble Earl, Lord Minto, on his contribution today. I thank him for going first; that is always good when you are making a maiden speech as well. The Fosters were also reivers from the borders of Scotland. Like the Elliots, they left behind cattle stealing and moved on to law and politics—well, this one did in any event.

Noble Lords may be wondering why I have chosen a debate about the relationship between India and the UK for my maiden speech; it is quite a distance, in many ways, from Aghadrumsee to Chandigarh. Early on during my time as Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Investment in the Northern Ireland Executive—a post that I was proud to hold for more than seven years—I realised the importance of India as a market to do business with and seek investment from. I visited on a number of occasions and, in doing so, appreciated not just the economic ties but the many cultural and educational ties that exist.

For example, in 2019, the Jaipur Literature Festival set up a partnership with Belfast. I enjoyed a wonderful evening celebrating the cultural exchange that took place in the city. I am pleased to see that the festival that is taking place now in India will again have representatives from across the United Kingdom, with Belfast-born author Elaine Canning showcasing her debut novel, supported by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and the British Council.

Reflecting on the point about the importance of educational exchange made by the noble Baroness, Lady Verma, and the noble Lord, Lord Bilimoria, I am pleased to say that the largest group of overseas students at my alma mater, Queen's University Belfast, is from south Asia. Seven years ago, Queen's University attracted fewer than 10 students from there but, today, I can proudly say that it has close to 1,000 such students annually, so the educational exchange and relationship is also strong.

Although I am really pleased to see these developments in culture and education, it is in the field of economic development that I find the most reasons to be cheerful. In particular, I warmly welcome the fact that the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and

the Department for International Trade have recognised that representatives from the regions of the UK are much better qualified to promote the strengths, cultures and propositions of their own regional economies. Then, working alongside the British High Commission is a huge enabler for bringing more business to the United Kingdom.

As a former First Minister and Economy Minister for Northern Ireland, I was fortunate to follow in the footsteps of one of our local Peers and his great passion for developing stronger ties between his original homeland, India, and Northern Ireland. I speak of the noble Lord, Lord Rana of Malone, of course. The output of his work was Northern Ireland's first ever office in Mumbai and Bangalore within the British deputy high commissions. I fondly remember a trip to India that we made together when I was Minister.

Many Indian-based companies have invested in Northern Ireland over the years. HCL, First Source Solutions, Tata Steel and a number of smaller companies have recognised the advantages of investing in Northern Ireland, bringing thousands of jobs for our young, bright population. Likewise, Northern Ireland companies are doing a lot of business in India. Companies such as Radox, CDE Asia and Terex are all companies that I know well and which are continuing to do business globally from their base in Northern Ireland. With an office of the Department for International Trade now in Belfast, and with the Mumbai branch of Invest Northern Ireland again open for business thanks to that department, I think that the future is bright for Northern Ireland as a region of the United Kingdom doing business in India.

It is critical that we have a stable and growing relationship with our friends in India, whether in culture, economic development, trade or defence. There are many strings to that bow; I look forward to hearing from the Minister how we are going to deepen that relationship further. In particular, I look forward to hearing about progress on the UK-India free trade agreement.

5.59 pm

Lord Godson (Con): My Lords, it is my great pleasure to welcome the noble Baroness, Lady Foster of Aghadrumsee, for her maiden speech on this occasion. I have had the privilege of knowing her for near on 30 years, from when she was plain Arlene Kelly, an apprentice solicitor in Enniskillen. It has been wonderful to watch her contribution to the life of the Province and, indeed, to the totality of these islands. I am now able to say that I think the DUP made a great mistake in dispensing with her services because, in my view, she has been the most credible and articulate voice for unionism in these islands since my late noble friend Lord Trimble. Her remarks today have confirmed the quality of her contribution to our deliberations.

I also take great pleasure in paying tribute to the noble Earl, Lord Minto, on the occasion of his maiden speech. I hope we will hear much more from him; I say that with feeling because, before speaking today, I took care to check on what had happened after the maiden speeches of his forebears in this House. It turned out that some of them had spoken very little after their maiden speeches, because they were so busy

serving the Crown overseas in India, Corsica and other places. We hope that we will hear much more from him after his own remarkable comments today.

The purpose of my remarks today is to focus on the unfulfilled potential in the relationship alluded to by my noble friend, if I may so describe him, the noble Lord, Lord Bilimoria, whom I have worked with at Policy Exchange, which I direct and of which he is a trustee. We have worked together on the India-UK strategic futures forum, which was forged by then Prime Minister Johnson and the Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, to look at wider questions of dialogue on issues that perhaps go beyond the day to day in the relationship.

When one looks at it, it is a story of unfulfilled potential not solely because of the pandemic, which has halted or slowed down some of our deliberations. It has almost been a rite of passage, if I can put it that way, for new UK Governments to propose a series of India-related policy initiatives: Tony Blair in 2002; Gordon Brown with his visit in 2007; David Cameron at the international bilateral in 2010; Theresa May in 2016; and the three most recent Conservative Prime Ministers. The purpose, as the noble Lord, Lord Bilimoria, said, is to ensure that there is not that sense of disappointment going forward but the highest level of political leadership. The potential is obviously there now, with the current Prime Minister, and we look forward to maintaining it.

The purpose of the India-UK strategic futures forum, as I have indicated, is to focus on events and issues that are perhaps not foremost in our deliberations. Many have talked about the key issues, such as the free trade agreement and so on, and these are vital matters.

The noble Lord, Lord Sahota, pointed out the issue of shared democratic values. Those values are particularly under threat on India's northern border, with the incursions of the People's Republic of China there. I would be very grateful for any comments and assessment by my noble friend the Minister today of just how the UK and India might best co-operate in this space and where we should be going forward. I mention it, of course, because the Indo-Pacific regional tilt, which was made in the recent integrated review, is one of the areas of growing consensus within the western democratic world. How do we deal with the challenges there? Even in the United States, with its divided political system, the Indo-Pacific is a source of ever greater unity. I would be grateful for the Minister's comments on that in his winding-up remarks.

6.03 pm

Lord Loomba (CB): I thank the noble Baroness, Lady Verma, for bringing this important topic to your Lordships' House today. It is important to the UK because, within the next decade, India will be the world's third-largest economy. It is important to India because the UK is home to the largest Indian diaspora outside Asia and, as we have already heard from the noble Baroness, Lady Verma, Prime Minister Modi has said that non-resident Indians are the living bridge between our two countries.

[LORD LOOMBA]

Twenty years ago, I organised an event at City Hall in London for the Chief Minister of Delhi to mark the twinning of the two capital cities, which has seen business between them blossom. In three weeks' time, I will lead a trade delegation at a business and trade summit in Uttar Pradesh with 12 British businesses.

The importance of the *2030 Roadmap for India-UK future relations* cannot be overstated. The relationship between our two countries is multidimensional. We have shared values, strong family ties and a record of co-operation for mutual benefit. The Indian Government attach a high priority to this, and I hope they will do all that is necessary to remove unnecessary obstacles and back up their ambition with actions.

In particular, I welcome the vision to collaborate on research and innovation, but will the healthy exchange of knowledge and skills be hampered by constraints on migration? Will the Government consider excluding Indian students who are in the UK for a limited time from net migration targets? I also welcome the mutual recognition of qualifications and ask the Minister to tell us what progress has been made in recognising professional, as well as academic, qualifications to improve high-level skills exchange.

India is rapidly becoming a global powerhouse in technology, and the UK has world-leading expertise in areas such as cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, robotics and creative technologies. We also have a mutual interest in global challenges such as climate change and the green economy, the power of arts and culture to drive growth and regeneration, and delivering social value by addressing inequalities. Networks and partnerships are key to leveraging the potential of these common interests and delivering new approaches. Will the UK Government actively facilitate and encourage the development of networks and partnerships between cities, universities, cultural organisations and micro-businesses?

6.07 pm

Lord Leong (Lab): I join other noble Lords in congratulating the noble Baroness, Lady Verma, on securing this debate, and offer many congratulations to the noble Earl, Lord Minto, and the noble Baroness, Lady Foster, on their excellent speeches.

I fear I will face the wrath of an authority even higher than the Lords Procedure Committee if I do not immediately declare an interest in this debate. My wife is Indian, and our daughter is immensely proud of her Indian heritage. As such, I am acutely aware of the vital importance of ensuring an equal, peaceful and mutually beneficial relationship with the people of that great nation.

Last year the economies of the United Kingdom, India and France were of almost identical size, each around \$2.65 trillion. It will not be long before India leaps ahead and consolidates its position as the fifth richest economy in the world. I would like to see more UK citizens and businesses develop a greater understanding of the people and culture of India by living, studying and working in the country that will be a global superpower in the 21st century. India is second only to the United States in having the largest number of English speakers of any country in the

world—over a quarter of a billion people. Think of the potential scope for expansion this offers sectors dependent on the English language, especially the creative arts—pop music, literature, television, film, theatre, in which the UK is the world leader.

This is a two-way relationship. The UK is one of the main international audiences for the Bollywood film industry, including me. In each of the 10 years up to 2019, UK audiences spent more than £10 million watching those movies in cinemas. UK venues, in London especially, have become popular Bollywood shooting locations.

The noble Lords, Lord Bilimoria and Lord Risby, have already indicated that Indian students have now overtaken Chinese students to become the number one international students in universities in the country. Long may that continue.

Change is happening quickly, and we need to be prepared. At a summit in April last year, then Prime Minister Johnson spoke of wanting an “intensification” of relationships between our two countries. While it is unlikely that he envisaged the United Kingdom ending the year with a Prime Minister of Indian heritage, I can only congratulate the Conservative Party on embracing that change quite so completely.

Just as curries and Bollywood movies enrich contemporary British life, we should also ensure that Indians are introduced to the enormous pleasure to be found in a traditional fish and chip supper, and British TV shows such as “Downton Abbey” of the noble Lord, Lord Fellowes, alongside a whole host of other British exports. Undoubtedly, a deepening collaboration between our two great nations will then be assured and welcomed in the years to come.

6.11 pm

Lord Hannay of Chiswick (CB): My Lords, at the beginning of this month, India took over the chair of the G20. In a few months' time, it will overtake China as the world's most populous nation—perhaps not an unmixed blessing but still one with geopolitical consequences. So what better moment to review our own country's relationship with India? All credit and thanks are due to the noble Baroness, Lady Verma, for making that possible. The two excellent maiden speeches that we have had, as well as the unique valedictory speech, show the width of interest in our relationship with India.

The histories of Britain and India have been deeply intertwined for the past several hundred years, but as we look now to the future, we need to remember that the different views of our mutual experience are part of a complex picture, and not invariably a positive one. For many Indians, Britain stands for damage to their economy, for the use of force to overthrow their rulers, and for terrible human rights abuses—the Amritsar massacre prominent among them. For Britons, there may still be traces of imperial nostalgia, and there is justifiable pride at promoting a free press, freedom of speech, parliamentary democracy, the rule of law—my own grandfather was a High Court judge in Madras—and one of India's accepted languages, our own tongue. These histories contain many contradictions which need to be borne in mind but not to be predominant.

Currently, one has to begin with trade relations, since negotiations for an India-UK free trade agreement are ongoing. That is a worthwhile objective. But we really should cease setting artificial deadlines for their completion—“all done and dusted by Diwali” last October was the most recent one—and we should remember that those who show excessive neediness for a deal are likely to pay a price for it. India has a history of trade protectionism—after all, it scuppered the Doha round of multilateral trade negotiations—so a free trade deal on the basis of effective reciprocity, a characteristic not always evident in some recent trade deals that the Government have struck, will be a challenge not best achieved by excessive haste.

The Indo-Pacific tilt proclaimed in the Johnson Government’s security review is currently the object of further reflection following Russia’s war of aggression in Ukraine. That war has upended every previous analysis and cannot be ignored. Britain’s security requires not only continuing support for Ukraine but the strengthening of our contribution to NATO. That does not mean that we have lost an interest in seeing peaceful stability restored to India’s Himalayan border with China, in securing freedom of passage through the Indian Ocean, the South China Sea and the East China Sea, and in avoiding any attack on Taiwan. However, we cannot be everywhere and do everything, and we should not pretend that we can, if only because our claim would not be credible. I suggest that we need to look for ways of co-operating with India in sophisticated areas of military, technology and training to enhance the deterrence of an overassertive China.

We really must not neglect our soft power assets, which have a particular significance in our relationship with India, given our common use of the English language, the BBC’s overseas services, the British Council and our universities. But we are cutting back spending on the first two, and the Home Secretary seems to believe that making it easier for Indian students, particularly post-graduate students, to come to UK universities is something that should be discouraged, even when India clearly wants to make access easier. Does it make any sense to thus damage one of our most valuable invisible exports and, at the same time, to make conclusion of our trade negotiations more difficult?

I have said enough already to illustrate why the eminently desirable objective of strengthening Britain’s relations with India will not be entirely straightforward—and that is without even mentioning legitimate concerns about the effect of the Indian Government’s tendencies towards majoritarian treatment of their minorities and of their effect on their obligations under the UN and other international conventions. These cannot simply be overlooked, nor can the opportunistically limp Indian reaction to Russia’s aggression against Ukraine.

Baroness Williams of Trafford (Con): The noble Lord’s time is up.

Lord Hannay of Chiswick (CB): I am coming to a conclusion.

Let us hope that India’s chairing of the G20 will be marked, as it was in the case of Indonesia, by a better response to flagrant breaches of international law. I look forward to the Minister’s responses to some of these points when he replies to the debate.

6.16 pm

Viscount Stansgate (Lab): My Lords, it was with great sadness that I listened to the valedictory speech of my noble friend Lord Soley. I well remember his election as the Member of Parliament for Hammersmith North in 1979, though I first came across him earlier as a probation officer. I pay tribute to the Lord Privy Seal, the clerks and my noble friends on the Front Bench for having engineered a wonderful parliamentary solution to the problem that was outlined. I saw what a sophisticated parliamentary souvenir he had with the special outing he was given on the annunciator, of a kind that has never been seen before. I wish him well in his retirement. I also congratulate the noble Earl, Lord Minto, and the noble Baroness, Lady Foster, on their maiden speeches. I very much look forward to all they have to say in future in the many years that I know they will have in this House.

It has been 35 years since I first went to India. I had never seen such a difference between getting on a plane at Heathrow and getting off at Calcutta. Before I continue, I want to share my long-standing connection with India, which arises out of the well-known phrase, which has already been used, of the “living bridge” of the 1.6 million people of Indian origin who live in the UK.

My mother-in-law was Indian. In fact, she was born 100 years ago this very year—although, bless her, we never found her birth certificate. She had such a haphazard attitude to paperwork that it caused a lot of trouble in her life and to us. Her great wish was to come to Britain and become a philosopher. After the Second World War, she was able to get here; she eventually taught philosophy at the University of Sussex and wrote books in English and Bengali, the most readable of which, by far, was her own personal story, *The Story of a Female Philosopher*. She married not long after the Second World War, and therefore my wife is half-Indian. It follows that my children, Emily and Daniel, are very proud of their Indian heritage—as am I—and, as we speak, my daughter is taking part in a literary festival in Jaipur.

That is not the only reason that I have a connection with India, and I hope that the House will not mind if I explain why. In the interests of transparency, I point out that, nearly 100 years ago, one of my grandfathers was the Secretary of State for India in the Labour Cabinet of 1929. When I was young, my grandfather and my dad told me about the visit of Gandhi in the 1930s; my grandfather had arranged for him to be invited to the second Round Table Conference. When Gandhi arrived in Britain, he was besieged by the British press, who asked him, “Mr Gandhi, what do you think of democracy in Britain?” He replied:

“I think it would be a very good idea.”

Things have changed since then. As other noble Lords have said, India is the world’s largest democracy and is projected to overtake China as the world’s most populous country and become the third-largest economy before 2040—it is already the fifth.

Time is very short, so I just want to make a couple of quick points. Whatever the future holds, the historic colonial era mindset, which is still observable around

[VISCOUNT STANSGATE]

some opinion-formers in the media in the UK, must play no part in our future relationship. We must have a relationship of regard and respect. One thing that I hope we will achieve is to make India a permanent member of the United Nations; that has already been mentioned by the noble Lord, Lord Swire, and I fully agree. The other thing that I wanted to say was to emphasise what the noble Lord, Lord Patel, did in his speech, in talking about the connections in science between the UK and India. I endorse the biennial ministerial UK science and innovation council and hope that we can play an increasing part in co-operation on satellite technology and even on civil nuclear power. However, it is the migration and mobility partnership that is one of the most important areas. Reference has been made to the young professionals scheme, allowing people to come in, and I hope that the Minister will confirm in his remarks that this scheme has now officially been implemented.

My time has run out, unfortunately, but I just point out that Indian students have a choice. They do not have to come to the UK; they can go to America, Australia or Canada. I thank with great gratitude the noble Baroness, Lady Verma, for having initiated this debate, enabling me to make a brief contribution, because it is a very good time to have a debate about our future relations. I hope that this debate will improve them.

6.21 pm

Baroness Wheatcroft (CB): I congratulate the noble Baroness, Lady Verma, on securing this debate. I speak as a former member of the UK-India round table, where I sat alongside the noble Lord, Lord Bilimoria. I think that we like to believe that the round table acted very effectively in bringing the two countries together. One thing that we helped to secure for India was the equivalent of Teach First, which continues to do a great job there. It is really the issue of culture and education that I want to dwell on today.

While I was involved with the round table, what we saw was the effectiveness of the British Council in particular. It worked very hard with the UK-India Education and Research Initiative and achieved a great deal on the education front generally, all over that country. Like every other aspect of the British Council, it has had to be cut back, and I understand the funding difficulties. If the Minister were able to give any reassurance that there will be no further cuts to the British Council, particularly in India, it would be good news for all of us here this afternoon.

We have heard a lot about the new initiatives to continue increasing trade with India and to bring more students to this country. I would like to look at it from a slightly different point of view, in the very limited time that we have. Like the noble Lord, Lord Leong, I would like to see more people from this country going to India. UK universities have 90 establishments in the world top 1,000, but India now has 41, and many of those are way ahead of the lower tiers in this country. What a fantastic educational experience it would be for our students to go to India—and how much better their student debt might look at the end of that experience.

The other issue that I would like to look at is medicine. We have the new agreement over skills and training in medicine, particularly in nursing, but, again, India is a real pioneer in some important aspects of medicine. For instance, it now has joint replacements down to a fine art. It may be very boring for some surgeons, but they are specialists in hip and knee replacements. India is already the seventh most popular destination for well-being and health tourism; its income in 2022 from health tourism was estimated at \$7.4 billion, and it is predicted to reach £42 billion by 2032.

Would it be such a step of the imagination, with the current waiting lists in this country, to think not just about bringing Indian doctors and nurses—and certainly some of their techniques—to this country, but about getting those waiting lists down by being innovative and sending some people who would like to make the trip to India? Waiting three years for a hip replacement is a very uncomfortable experience, but that is what some people have to undergo now. If they went to India, they could enjoy good weather, perhaps, and would come back healthier. The Department for Health and Social Care really needs to be thinking imaginatively if we are to make any progress through those waiting lists.

6.25 pm

Viscount Waverley (CB): My Lords, I express gratitude for the courtesies extended during my recent all-India visit, which addressed political, economic, cultural, social and educational considerations. It included the uplifting experience of visiting Shanti Bhavan, a school outside Bangalore for economic and disadvantaged children who share the founding father's vision of contributing opportunity to the economic well-being of their families, and who will be the future of a free and independent powerhouse country of India through willingness, courteousness and profound visible gratitude.

India is of profound importance to the United Kingdom and commands attention; however, we should not take positive relations for granted. She is a critical link in much-needed, global, diverse supply chains, for example, and, having spoken at some length already in your Lordships' House on the free trade agreement negotiations, I only add to them by commending the pragmatic approach of Secretary of State Badenoch for stepping back from a rushed conclusion to the FTA and taking the necessary time to settle this complex negotiation, which will stand the test of time and be of long-term benefit to both our countries.

I too join the noble Baroness, Lady Verma, in not understanding the rationale as to why the Prime Minister has appointed no trade envoys to India—and not just one, but four, to reflect India's diversity. India is on the climb: with 50% of the population under 25, with its IT advancing rapidly and with opportunity for closer partnerships, it is set to become the world's third-largest economy by 2050. Thus it is imperative that the UK forges an even closer and more strategically enhanced relationship. The gap sometimes between perception and reality and pressing home comparative advantage is a challenge to overcome. At the least, we must be in lockstep with others around the world who sense opportunity. Confidence among UK SMEs is taking a knock, so unlocking opportunity would be welcomed.

The UK must evolve, and better use should be made of mainstream parliamentarians, who are an asset; they should be involved as a channel to deepen relations. I am delighted that the upcoming initiative of the noble Lord, Lord Howell, as president, and the noble Lord, Lord Kamall, as co-chair—neither of whom is in their place—will reinvigorate and give a commendable boost to the Commonwealth APPG. I trust that they will consider placing relationship-building high on their agenda, not just with Delhi but throughout the four quarters of India.

I move on and venture reflections of a differing nature. I recognise that trade co-operation and security activities go hand in hand. I would like to refer not to the sometimes derogatory regional rhetoric, nor the situation in the high Himalayas in relation to China, which gives cause for concern, but to the importance of encouraging India to be more central to the Indo-Pacific fold. This has been an omission thus far, so global tilt towards that region has not been fully illustrated. India, with its military prowess, has much to offer in being a practical counterbalance to China. It should also be closer to centre stage in policy terms, as it is at the centre of the China-Russia axis. We would be a more secure world if Five Eyes and the AUKUS alliance were more inclusive of regional participation.

6.29 pm

Lord Purvis of Tweed (LD): My Lords, it is always a pleasure to follow the noble Viscount. As others have done, I warmly thank the noble Baroness, Lady Verma, for securing this debate. It has allowed us to hear and pay tribute to Lord Soley, who is no longer with us—I think he is having his drinks upstairs. I thought it was a neat trick of his to ensure that he had a standing ovation before and after his speech, with the Adjournment. We enjoyed it very much.

We also enjoyed the maiden speeches. I think that the noble Baroness, Lady Foster, will be busy in this House, along with her colleagues from Northern Ireland. We look forward to her contributions, as we do to those of the noble Earl, Lord Minto. As someone who took the title of “Tweed”, lives in Roxburghshire, has been to Minto, is from the area and represented a neighbouring constituency, I welcome him particularly warmly. There are few records—I checked—of the Elliots reiving from the Purvises; I think that that is solely because we were so poor that we did not have cattle. Nevertheless, from his family having the honourable profession of being reivers in the Borders, it has been a slippery slope down to law and politics. I welcome him very warmly to this House.

In introducing the debate so well and comprehensively, the noble Baroness, Lady Verma, remarked how interesting it is that it has taken place after a debate recognising 75 years of the Windrush generation. Some of the similarities that she referred to struck me. In a debate that we recently had on India, I said that there is no part of our country that is not touched by our relationship, whether it is our high streets, our research centres or our NHS, which is the same age as the Windrush generation and Indian independence. We are the country that we are today because of India and the contribution that it has made. In the visits I have been fortunate

enough to make there, I have been in awe of the magnificence and diversity of the history and culture of the world’s largest democracy.

There is another alcoholic link beyond the beer entrepreneurship of the noble Lord, Lord Bilimoria, if he will forgive me. India is quite a remarkable destination for malt and Scotch Whisky—our combinations are not just beer.

Some 3.1% of the population of this country is of Indian descent; that is the size of a nation within our family of nations in the UK. The contribution has been huge. That close relationship allows us to debate the complexities, as the noble Lords, Lord Swire, Lord Anderson and Lord Hannay, indicated, when it comes to our relations with other friends with whom we have similarly deep relations, such as Pakistan. We can have debates on sensitive areas such as the dispute in Kashmir and raise issues such as the decision in 2019 to remove special status. We can seek to play a role, with the United States and others, in having an understanding to seek peace in this area. We very much understand the complexities associated with this.

Dr Gareth Price, a former senior research fellow in the Asia-Pacific programme at Chatham House, has commented widely on some who may be reconceptualising the secular agenda in India. The diaspora in this country has very close relationships to those debates. Pakistan’s Prime Minister Sharif has called for third-party support in the relationships with the UAE in particular. I would be interested to know from the Minister whether we are engaged with our allies—India, Pakistan, the Gulf and the United States—on this debate.

The noble Lord, Lord Swire, talked about recent decisions. India is a full, sovereign country making its own strategic decisions for its interests, but they are not always aligned with ours. We recognise that; we are friendly nations. We want to be partners in areas but, as the noble Lord indicated, on the decisions on oil purchases, the rupee-rouble swaps that I have raised with the Minister previously and voting in the United Nations, we need a proper, mature relationship—both on our interests, which I will come on to, and on areas where we disagree.

In areas of human development, we are partners. It is interesting to read the FCDO’s human rights report, published in December, which highlights areas where the UK and India are working together on tackling some of the world’s most complex and difficult issues, such as workers’ rights in garments factories. India is taking the lead in tackling human trafficking in Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat, while the UK and India are working on preventing bonded labour in Uttar Pradesh as well as working in West Bengal and other areas to support development for vulnerable children.

I have seen for myself UK and Indian partnerships in Kolkata—for instance, the support for a charity for girls that focuses on sport and rugby. I took rugby kit bags from the SRU to Kolkata and saw how the UK and India are working together.

I have one final area of concern before I move on to the enormous opportunities that the noble Baroness, Lady Verma, rightly highlighted; it will be no surprise to the Minister. The Government have indicated that, at the Carbis Bay summit that we led, the G7, alongside

[LORD PURVIS OF TWEED]

the Republic of Korea, South Africa, India and Australia, signed up to an open society statement. Oxfam, directly to me, and the Government have recognised that the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act in India—it has halted the work of Oxfam India—is jarring when it comes to the open society statement. I would be interested to hear what the Minister can say on the dialogue we are having with India about that.

The opportunities here are enormous. The noble Lord, Lord Sahota, rightly referred to the five areas of the *2030 Roadmap for India-UK Future Relations*. The first area is connecting our countries and people and, at its heart, enhanced institutional structures. I would be grateful if the Minister could outline at the outset where we are on this and where we want to be. I, for one, would love to have much greater links between this Parliament and the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, parliamentarians to parliamentarians. I have been to both chambers through Commonwealth Parliamentary Association work but I would love for there to be far more bilateral parliamentary work, Parliament to Parliament. Our committees could do joint work with theirs as we work on some of these areas. I would love for parliamentary institutions to be included.

As for trade and prosperity, the noble Lord, Lord Patel, and others indicated the deep level of relationship that could be enhanced by free trade. I, too, welcome the sense of reality on the trade agreement that now exists with the current Secretary of State. I am enthusiastically in favour of a trade agreement. In terms of key areas and sectors to be developed, I would love for there to be innovative discussions on mobility and to have some kind of agreement with India that is similar to what we have with Australia and New Zealand—it is slightly painful to me that France is ahead of us on the mutual recognition of qualifications—as well as discussions on procurement, services and research. As the noble Baroness indicated, in terms of a defence and security partnership, no two nations could have a better way of working on cyberspace, when we look at the difficulties. Work between the UK and India on the non-proliferation of cyberaggression could be a gift to the world. Of course, there should also be discussions on the climate.

Finally, there is another 75th anniversary next week: that of the death of Gandhi. He said:

“Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever”.

I reviewed the *Hansard* of the Second Reading in the Lords of the Indian Independence Act on 16 July 1947. From these Benches, my predecessor, Viscount Samuel, ended his remarks by describing the then Bill as

“a treaty of peace without a war.”—[*Official Report*, 16/7/1947; col. 832.]

We celebrate 75 years of peaceful relations between two sovereign nations, sometimes with disagreement but, more often than not, with agreement. Our people and communities are so linked together that, whatever we do, our future is dependent on our Indian relations and the world's is dependent on India.

6.39 pm

Lord Collins of Highbury (Lab): My Lords, I start by thanking the Leader of the House and the Chief Whip for facilitating Lord Soley's valedictory contribution this evening. He has made a remarkable contribution to Parliament over his 44 years here and his speech, though it may have been a little long, certainly did that justice.

I also thank the noble Baroness, Lady Verma. We have talked on many occasions about the importance of the UK-India relationship, particularly the business and economic aspects. She made an excellent introductory contribution to the debate. I also thank the noble Baroness, Lady Foster, and the noble Earl, Lord Minto, for their contributions. I think we will hear a lot from them in future. I particularly welcome that they have such a wide range of experience to contribute. I say to the noble Earl that I regularly shop in Paperchase, so I hope it is a continued success.

As we have heard, India is one of the world's largest and fastest-growing economies, with deep historical and cultural links to the United Kingdom. The Government's integrated review describes India as

“an international actor of growing importance”,

which perhaps undersells it a bit. Since the publication of that review, we have reached agreement with India on a joint framework for future relationships between the two countries. The *2030 Roadmap for India-UK Future Relations* will, as it puts it,

“guide cooperation for the next ten years”

and cover “all aspects” of the relationship between the two countries. Importantly, it will be subject to an annual strategic review meeting to monitor its implementation and, if necessary, could be updated. I hope in his response the Minister will assure us that preparations for such reviews, together with their outcome, will be fully reported to Parliament.

As we have heard, the road map set out to cover the following five areas: connecting our countries and people, trade and prosperity, defence and security, climate, and health. On connecting our countries, the road map focused on education, research and innovation, capacity building, employment and culture, and we have heard from many noble Lords how important those areas are.

As the noble Baroness, Lady Verma, said in her introduction, the Indian diaspora community continues to make an enormous and important contribution to everyday life in the United Kingdom and is vital to building those links. So I ask the Minister: what cross-departmental effort will be made to reflect this contribution from the diaspora in future talks, particularly on the road map and a future trade agreement?

The noble Lord, Lord Hannay, referred to our soft power. The BBC World Service is an important element of that. In 2006, the BBC World Service bureau in India conducted a study to discover the impact of its services reporting across rural areas in India. It found that:

“In each town people said that the BBC can influence change. Expressing high regard for BBC Hindi programmes, they also praised BBC Hindi journalists' ability to access and interview those in authority.”

I hope the Minister not only accepts how important that service is but understands that cuts will impair this positive impact on our relationships.

On trade, the road map commits the two countries to “create shared prosperity and deliver leadership in global economic governance.”

As we heard from the noble Lord, Lord Hannay, the Government promised to deliver the completion of a trade agreement with India by Diwali 2022. Can the Minister tell the House if a future target date for completion of the Indian trade deal has been determined? I hear what the noble Lord, Lord Bilimoria, says; we certainly want the trade deal to be properly conducted, but it is necessary to make progress as quickly as possible.

It has been widely reported that the failure to deliver the trade agreement was the result of the Home Secretary’s claim that there is a particular problem with Indian visitors to the United Kingdom overstaying their visas. Does the Minister accept that such comments have a negative impact on our relationships? It is so important that we value people’s contributions, particularly those of people from India who visit here. We should certainly be extremely careful about that.

In future negotiations, as we have heard, it is vital that issues such as workers’ rights and environmental and climate standards be fully addressed. The Minister assured the House in discussions on strengthening the road map—whether on trade, investment, technological co-operation or improving lives and livelihoods in India and the United Kingdom—that the issue of lives and livelihoods is intrinsically tied to the whole concept of human rights. I hope in his response he can describe how this will be explicitly addressed in any formal agreement.

On defence and security, the road map emphasised the two countries’ shared interests, which will underpin co-operation in multilateral fora to

“build understanding among diverse partners on international security”.

As the noble Lord, Lord Swire, reminded us, India has ambitions to play a greater role at the United Nations, including on the Security Council, to which, as he also reminded us, it has been elected eight times. The Minister said earlier this week that he supports a new permanent seat for India, as well as others. Can he tell us what concrete steps the UK mission is taking to achieve this, particularly in collaboration with other permanent members of the Security Council?

On climate change, the road map says that the UK and India are committed to safeguarding the planet, building a more environmentally sustainable future and achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement. This includes mobilising investment and climate finance. Can the Minister indicate what role the Government envisage for BII—the former CDC—in this? How does this aspiration in the road map fit in with the BII’s five-year strategy?

On health, the road map describes the UK and India as global forces for good and says that they will use their

“combined research and innovation strength to address the biggest global health challenges, save lives and improve health and well-being”.

We have clear evidence of that with the Covid pandemic. However, as my noble friend Lord Browne and others said, India supplies 25% of medicines used by the NHS. The UK must acknowledge the importance of the Indian pharmaceutical industry to both the NHS and global health. Does the Minister therefore agree that we should seek to protect, not weaken, access to generic medicines from India within the FTA? What analysis has been done in the process of negotiating the FTA to assess the potential impact the agreement may have on the supply of medicines from India to the NHS? As noble Lords have said, India has often been called the “pharmacy of the developing world”, and its generics industry has played an essential role in the provision of generic medicines, particularly in the fight against HIV and AIDS. What analysis has been done in the process of negotiating the FTA to assess the potential impact that that agreement may have on global access to those generic medicines and, therefore, health outcomes?

In conclusion, the negotiating process for the UK-India free trade agreement has not included opportunities for either public or parliamentary scrutiny. I know that many have criticised this, and I hope the Minister can reassure us and tell us what the next steps in the negotiations process are and whether they will ensure civil society and parliamentary engagement, so that we can give feedback.

6.50 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon) (Con):

My Lords, I join others in thanking my dear and noble friend Lady Verma for tabling this debate. I also acknowledge her incredible dedication in promoting understanding and co-operation between the United Kingdom and India through all-party groups. I will be delighted to work with her and meet in advance of the visit to India with the APPG which was recently formed to focus on trade. I also acknowledge her long-term dedication in increasing people-to-people ties, and her devotion to finding solutions to the challenges which are often faced. I will come to the contributions in detail in a moment, but I was struck listening to this debate by the depth, insight, experience and wisdom in your Lordships’ House on this important issue.

I begin by thanking all noble Lords for their insightful contributions. I pay tribute to Lord Soley. As Aviation Minister, I got to know Clive quite well for his resolute campaign for the expansion of Heathrow Airport. I joked with him as I arrived in the Chamber after hearing the creative solution that was reached, for which I pay tribute to my noble friends the Chief Whip and the Leader of the House. Lord Soley will be missed for his, as we saw again, quite candid assessments of parties on both sides. His words of parting that he shared with us I am sure are not the last that we have heard of him.

Equally, I join in welcoming the maiden speech of my noble friend Lord Minto, who shared with us his family heritage. When I saw the speakers in this debate, it struck me that we had about seven or eight who could claim a line of Indian heritage. Interestingly, as I made my notes, we found this expanding link, whether through business links, family links or, through the wife of the noble Lord, Lord Leong, or the mother-in-law of the noble Viscount, Lord Stansgate.

[LORD AHMAD OF WIMBLEDON]

On a lighter note, it reminded me of the programme “Goodness Gracious Me”, in which whenever the son mentions to his father anything positive about the United Kingdom, his father promptly says, “Indian!” Perhaps that came true when we had our first Prime Minister of Indian heritage. It shows that sometimes comedy programmes turn into reality. It was something that I am sure many of us enjoyed.

I also pay tribute to the noble Baroness, Lady Foster. When I saw the series of debates and questions that I was taking this week, I saw one on Northern Ireland which is scheduled for tomorrow. I hazarded a guess that this would feature her maiden speech, so she has totally got me on that one. However, I was very much taken by her assessment of the strong people-to-people links, really showing the depth of our collective United Kingdom, with the rich diversity of the different states that represent modern-day India. Whether we are talking of England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, it is our people and the rich diversity of our union which reflects the strength of building and strengthening our relationship with India.

I was also poignantly making note of links that were made to Rajasthan and the city of Jaipur, including by the noble Baroness. As the son of a mother born in Jodhpur, the golden triangle comes to mind. It is again reflective of the rich heritage in your Lordships’ House of the experience that we bring, which is again reflected in today’s vitality and strength of debate.

My noble friend Lord Godson talked about the importance of India as the biggest democracy and ourselves as the oldest democracy. I agree with the noble Lord, Lord Collins, that it lends to the different pillars of democracy what defines democracy. I acknowledge the points made by the noble Lord, Lord Purvis. It is the investment in relationship which allows us to have quite candid and constructive exchanges on those issues which must be addressed across a wide spectrum of the relationship that we have with India.

As the Minister responsible for our relationship with India as a whole but also the Minister for Human Rights, we of course have strong co-operation and seek to resolve issues as they are raised, from both sides, about the challenges that we face, as noble Lords will be aware. It is true that, as we set up and strengthen this relationship, the United Kingdom’s relationship with India is central to UK foreign policy. At the heart of this relationship is our shared history, values, culture and the links between our people.

The noble Lord, Lord Leong, talked about Bollywood—yes, we grew up with it. There are those who talk about India being challenged by its communities. All I need to say to those who follow Bollywood is “Amar Akbar Anthony”, a famous film with the great Amitabh Bachchan, that showed the rich diversity of Christianity, Hinduism and Islam coming together in defining what India was all about: family to family links, which were shared not just through experiences of religion and culture, but the common values that define modern-day India, and indeed the modern-day United Kingdom.

Now, many noble Lords referred to the 1.6 million-strong diaspora: well, I am pleased to report that, according to my notes, it is now 1.7 million, so it is

ever-growing. May it go from strength to strength. But as we were reminded by the Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, it is truly a living bridge. What we have seen through the debates and discussions that we have had today again describes the strength of that living bridge. From the contribution of my noble friend Lord Minto, that living bridge is not just defined by people’s heritage, but through the living experience of families, communities and businesses.

The integrated review, as the noble Lord, Lord Collins, reminded us, does state our aim to seek a transformational relationship in our co-operation across a wide range of issues. I assure noble Lords that we are doing just that. I of course take on board the point made by my noble friend Lady Verma about the importance of trade envoys, and I assure her that that is a point of discussion.

Enhanced defence co-operation will help to ensure a free, open and secure Indian Ocean region, as my noble friend Lord Risby and the noble Lord, Lord Hannay, raised. Our collaboration, which I will come on to, on research and innovation is also vital to address the issue of climate change and promote health, as the noble Lords, Lord Collins and Lord Purvis, raised. We will further share our expertise in manufacturing, science, education, emerging technology and clean energy, to name just a few. We are well-placed to strengthen our relationships going forward.

As we all know, the then Prime Minister Johnson and Prime Minister Modi committed to a stronger relationship through a new comprehensive strategic partnership in May 2021. It was then that they launched an ambitious India-UK road map to guide co-operation in key areas through to the end of the decade. The noble Lord, Lord Collins, and others alluded to how we are engaging in really strengthening our diaspora. The noble Lord, Lord Bilimoria, is a member of the India Advisory Council—one such initiative that I am taking over, for building our relationship with India—which covers all areas, from security to climate change, health to business, and the people-to-people links. That has provided vital insight and information, but I take on board the point made by the noble Lord, Lord Collins. I will look at other opportunities on how best we can share both the progress we are making, but also, vitally, leverage the incredible insights that we have across our country in strengthening this partnership and playing that into our trade relationship.

Last year, the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary both visited India in support of our shared objectives. My right honourable friend from the Department for International Trade also visited India recently, and this morning, the Permanent Under-Secretary of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office has also just returned from Delhi—I have not had a chance to catch up with him—where he had further discussions with both Foreign Secretary Kwatra and Foreign Minister Jaishankar on the strategic dialogue to discuss the road map further.

I turn to some of the key questions and areas covered. Through our road map, we are working to enhance connections between our people. As noble Lords will know, the UK and India are popular destinations for each other’s students. We welcome around 80,000 Indian students every year, boosting our cultural links. I hear

the points that the noble Lords, Lord Bilimoria and Lord Loomba, made about how we count Indian students. I will share that wisdom with my colleagues from the Home Office, but I am sure that all noble Lords will agree that we have moved forward to a new chapter in this area. We recently signed an agreement recognising each other's higher education qualifications, which should attract even more students to each other's shores. That point was made by my noble friend Lord Swire, who asked about mutual recognition. There is more work to be done in this respect.

In November, the UK and India announced the young professionals scheme—mentioned by the noble Lords, Lord Parekh and Lord Bilimoria—to really strengthen our partnership on migration and mobility. The new scheme gives freedom and opportunity to thousands of young people in the UK and India to live, study, travel and work in each other's country for up to two years. Yes, Indian students will come to live and work here, but British students will also go to India. The scheme was launched earlier this month.

I was delighted, as I am sure we all were, that in December India finally reinstated its e-visa services for the UK, making the process of obtaining Indian visas simpler and easier, further enhancing the connections between our people. I am grateful for the strong co-operation that we had from the new high commissioner for India on that.

On trade and prosperity, I think all noble Lords mentioned the FTA. I will come to that in a moment. As one of the world's biggest and fastest-growing economies, India is a key partner to the UK. The noble Lord, Lord Purvis, pointed out the importance of whisky. That is very much part of the discussions. We are unlocking benefits such as improved market access across industries such as food and drink, and life sciences. We are also looking at lowering non-tariff barriers on medical devices to benefit British exporters, and are well advanced in our negotiations for an ambitious and balanced free trade agreement. A strong trade deal with India could boost the UK economy by billions of pounds over the long term, helping families across the country. Cutting red tape and high tariffs could also make it easier and cheaper for UK companies to sell in India, driving growth and supporting jobs.

As an update, we have now completed six rounds of negotiations for a trade deal and will begin the next round very soon. That is why my right honourable friend the Trade Secretary travelled to India in December, to meet her counterpart in person to move these talks forward. Several noble Lords talked about timelines. I assure them that we are working those through specifically, but it was very much by mutual agreement to ensure that the trade deal signed is not rushed but properly thought through, and that all chapters are discussed in an exhaustive manner so that we reach a deal that is of mutual benefit to both countries and their peoples.

On defence and security, the noble Lords, Lord Bilimoria and Lord Hannay, and my noble friend Lord Risby all talked about the importance of maritime co-operation. That is progressing. I hear what the noble Lord, Lord Hannay, said about not spreading ourselves too thin, but nevertheless we have engaged quite extensively with India on maritime. India is a key maritime partner for the UK in the Indo-Pacific region.

The UK and India are currently implementing a partnership to increase regional maritime security, including in the Western Indian Ocean, as part of our discussions on the 2030 road map. As recently as 6 January, HMS "Tamar" docked on the Andaman and Nicobar Islands as part of its permanent deployment to the Indo-Pacific. Co-operation continues in this respect.

We are also co-operating in joint research, collaboration and development of defence technology and systems, including jet engines. I assure my noble friend Lord Risby that we are looking at and working very closely on cyberspace issues, with both countries committed to a secure, stable, and peaceful cyberspace that can be enjoyed by all.

My noble friend Lord Swire and the noble Lords, Lord Anderson and Lord Purvis, talked about issues with Russia and the challenges faced in Ukraine. As noble Lords will know, we have introduced in lockstep the largest and most severe sanctions that Russia has ever faced, including phasing out Russian oil imports. We are raising Russia's actions in Ukraine with India at every opportunity. Indeed, my right honourable friend the Foreign Secretary did this during his visit to India on 28 and 29 October. He will return, and I assure noble Lords that I am sure this will be a key part of his discussions.

We of course recognise the issue that my noble friend raised about the abstention that India exercised on various votes in the United Nations. We recognise India's long and historic relationship with Russia and that much of its military uses Russian equipment. I assure noble Lords that we are working directly on a co-operative basis with India to reduce its dependency, as well as helping India to diversify its equipment in terms of its defence capabilities.

Counterterrorism is another area of joint working. I attended the UN Security Council chaired by India's Foreign Minister Jaishankar, underlining our strong co-operation in the multilateral sphere, not just in strengthening our bilateral and regional work but in what we can do internationally. As the noble Lord, Lord Purvis, acknowledged, there is much work being done in the field of development.

Turning to climate and health, I say that the importance of our relationship with India is clear to see, and I welcome the comments made by the noble Lord, Lord Patel, about strengthening our further relationship in research and development. I can share with him the fact that the UK and India are world leaders in research and innovation. Since 2008, we have together lifted joint research and innovation investment to more than £400 million by 2021, directly supporting UK and India researchers and institutions. We are India's second biggest research partner, and are continuing to strengthen that further. UKRI and India fund more than 250 projects and are bringing together further collaboration between 220 lead institutions from the UK and India. I will of course be delighted to meet him—I assure him that I am never too busy for him—to hear directly about the Israel-India partnership. As Minister for the Middle East, it is of particular interest, having just returned from a visit to Israel. We will continue to focus on the important issue of further innovative working with India.

[LORD AHMAD OF WIMBLEDON]

The noble Lord, Lord Collins, asked about progress on climate. At COP 27, India launched its long-term strategy of net zero by 2070. We are working with Indian states across the piece, a point made by my noble friend Lady Verma, on green hydrogen policy, supporting pilots, sharing best practice and co-developing standards. In April, we announced our joint work towards a virtual hydrogen science and innovation hub to accelerate our work in affordable green hydrogen. India and the UK will also lead the global shift to a low-carbon economy, and expanding access to sustainable energy—solar and wind power—for our two countries is a key area of work.

On health, the UK and India are committed to working together as a global force for good. The noble Lords, Lord Browne of Ladyton and Lord Sahota, and others mentioned India as the pharmacy of the world, and it is. That was shown during the Covid-19 pandemic. There was mutual reliance. I remember that when we were running short of paracetamol, it was India that stepped up and supported us. When India needed oxygen, the noble Lord, Lord Bilimoria, and others stepped up to the mark, and I pay tribute to them. We talk about the living bridge; these are living, working examples of how we resolved some of the major crises we were facing globally in meeting the challenge.

I assure noble Lords including my noble friend Lord Risby that we are building on the partnerships we have established, and that there has been inward investment—for example, from the Serum Institute in strengthening its relationship with Oxford University.

I am fast coming to the end of my time; I have the joy of taking the Urgent Question in a moment or two. I say to the noble Baroness, Lady Wheatcroft, that we have enhanced the relationship of the British Council with India. She will be aware of the model of working. We provide structure and seed funding, but I think that about 75% of the council's funding comes from turnover—that is, earned income. We are working very closely in that respect. The budget for next year is still being finalised, but I will share that with her.

On Chevening, in India's 75th year, we announced a further 75 scholarships, which I am sure my noble friend Lord Swire is pleased to learn. I say to the noble Lord, Lord Loomba, that we are working to ensure that this recognition is further strengthened when it comes to higher education. Future collaboration is immense; I have alluded to some of it. The noble Lord, Lord Leong, talked about culture, which is a great example. My noble friend Lady Verma and I had the joys of sharing a stage with Akshay Kumar, a leading Bollywood actor; I am sure he is telling his family that he met Lord Ahmad and Baroness Verma and is still writing stories about it. This shows the strength and vitality of our relationship, and I assure noble Lords that we remain very much committed to strengthening this relationship further.

If there are questions that require further detail, I will of course follow up with noble Lords in the usual way, but to conclude, the United Kingdom-India relationship is steeped in history, tradition, family and ties. However, the here and now is really defining our

future. Over the last three years or so, I have led on our relationship with India at the FCDO and I have seen it go from strength to strength. I assure the noble Viscount, Lord Waverley, that we look forward to further strengthening India's role in the Commonwealth context as well. It is a relationship we continue to invest in, that is delivering prosperity, opportunity and a better future for all our citizens, and that I am sure will go from strength to strength.

In opening the debate my noble friend talked about Raksha Bandhan, a bond between brother and sister. It is fair to say that since I joined the House of Lords my noble friend Lady Verma has acted in that very way. Indeed, a few weeks ago I took Ashirvada, which is the recognition of the respect you have for an elder, and she dutifully complied. I will be delighted to host with her a Raksha Bandhan event at the FCDO, where she will provide me with a rakhi, and I have to invest in a gift in return. It is about mutual protection and recognition of each other's relationship, and what better way to define where the UK and India are. I thank noble Lords once again for their very valuable contributions.

7.11 pm

Baroness Verma (Con): My Lords, I thank my noble friend the Minister for his summarisation of this wonderful debate and pay tribute to the two maiden speeches we have had the pleasure of hearing. All noble Lords have given such valuable commentary on so many different areas of mutual sharing that we have with India. I look forward to a really strengthened relationship.

I am so glad that we were able to find a way of hearing Lord Soley's final speech in the House. He has genuinely been a great friend to me. He is courteous, and we could all learn huge lessons from the way he has conducted himself and maybe take a leaf out of that book in how we behave.

Finally, my noble friend the Minister is my little brother; he always has been. Raksha Bandhan is a very important celebration in our communities—but he has yet to give me a gift.

Motion agreed.

Afghanistan: Ban on Women Aid Workers *Commons Urgent Question*

7.13 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon) (Con): My Lords, with the leave of the House, I shall now repeat an Answer to an Urgent Question in the other place on the ban on women aid workers in Afghanistan. The response is as follows:

“I would like to thank the honourable and gallant Member for raising this important issue and for pursuing this matter in such a determined and tenacious way. He served with distinction in Afghanistan and brings extraordinary knowledge and understanding to this matter.

Since August 2021, the Taliban has imposed a series of restrictions, effectively erasing women and girls from society. The ban on Afghan women from working for NGOs represents a further violation of their rights and freedoms, and it is unconscionable.

The decree will have devastating effects. More than 28 million people are expected to be in humanitarian need in 2023. My right honourable friend the Foreign Secretary and my noble friend Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon have been clearly and publicly stating that this ban will prevent millions of Afghans accessing life-saving aid. Around 30% to 40% of all staff in NGOs across Afghanistan are women. They are critical to humanitarian operations. They have access to populations that their male colleagues cannot reach, providing critical life-saving support to women and girls. According to the United Nations, approximately 47% of humanitarian organisations have currently either partially or completely suspended activities as a result of the edict.

Foreign Office officials are working with the UN, NGOs and other donor Governments to understand the impact of the ban and ensure a co-ordinated response. We support the UN's pause on non-life-saving humanitarian operations, and we are working closely with NGOs to ensure that life-saving humanitarian assistance can continue wherever possible.

On 9 January, I discussed the matter with the UN Secretary-General in Geneva at the Pakistan pledging conference addressing the issue of the floods. On 6 January, my noble friend Lord Ahmad spoke to the UN Deputy Secretary-General before her visit to Afghanistan, and he is meeting Afghan women this morning. Our permanent representative in New York is engaging with other parts of the UN system to ensure that countries are unified in their condemnation of and response to the decree.

On 13 January, during a UN Security Council meeting on Afghanistan, the UK reiterated that women and girls in Afghanistan must remain high on the Security Council agenda. Our UK mission in Doha will continue to express our outrage about the impact of the ban on the humanitarian crisis and to lobby the Taliban across the system to reverse this appalling decision."

7.16 pm

Lord Collins of Highbury (Lab): My Lords, I thank the Minister for repeating that Statement. It is of course very welcome that the UN team, headed by the Deputy Secretary-General, Amina Mohammed, met Taliban leaders in Afghanistan about reversing the restrictions on women, including the ban on female aid workers. Today, Andrew Mitchell pointed out that they started by visiting Afghanistan's neighbours, as well as the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. What discussions have we had with Pakistan to underscore the importance of the international community speaking with one voice and taking a unified approach? I also note that the Minister met Afghan women this morning. I hope he can tell us in his response what the outcome of that discussion was.

On funding for NGOs providing humanitarian support, Andrew Mitchell said that the FCDO would take a pragmatic approach. However, I was not clear whether

that included giving NGOs sufficient flexibility as a donor to enable them to keep their female staff on the payroll and cover other essential operating costs. I hope the Minister can reassure us on that point.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon (Con): My Lords, on the noble Lord's question about Pakistan, we have been in direct engagement. I have had various meetings in the past months, including direct engagement during my last visit to Pakistan with Prime Minister Sharif. I have subsequently had various engagements with the Minister of State, Hina Rabbani Khar. I have also met Bilawal Bhutto, the Foreign Minister of Pakistan, when we discussed the issue of the abhorrent practices of the Taliban, including the latest ban.

We are engaging with other key partners. Indeed, the DSG's visit is something that I have lobbied for and advocated for a very long time since the takeover of the Taliban for obvious reasons. She is articulate, educated and the second-highest officer within the multilateral system. She is also Muslim and wears the hijab, so the narrative of the Taliban that somehow Muslim women cannot be empowered is absolutely negated in her own person. I will be meeting her on Monday and I will share with noble Lords the discussions that she has had. I am not expecting there to be great changes. I know she also visited the new UN special representative to Afghanistan, who is also a woman from the near neighbourhood, and the head of UN Women, which sends a very strong message to the Taliban in this respect.

On the specific issue of NGOs, of course we very much favour them. We are working with the UN and other agencies and partners, including the ICRC. There are two elements to this. There are some agencies, including the World Food Programme, that, following the ban on women, face a very difficult decision about whether to keep those vital food supplies going. That has always been the case; notwithstanding the challenges that we face in Afghanistan, we continue to provide humanitarian support irrespective of this abhorrent practice. I share noble Lords' concern that we are hearing speculation, albeit reasonably grounded, that international NGOs are being looked at too, which would pose an extra challenge. More importantly, it would mean further and greater suffering for the Afghan people.

Lord Purvis of Tweed (LD): My Lords, I welcome what the Minister just said and I agree with him. The visuals of the UN visit spoke very powerfully of the very retrograde step that the Taliban is taking. I hope that the UN leadership will be able to have some influence.

I declare that I am the chair of the UK board of one of these INGO charities: Search for Common Ground is a peacebuilding charity operating within Afghanistan with a female leader. It has alerted me to something that is also telling. What happened just within the last couple of days was that over 100 brave women gathered together in freezing Kabul to bring together and distribute warm clothes to male workers. The impact that had on me was very moving. It shows the reality of the venality of what the Taliban is doing, but also how the women of Afghanistan are still inspiring.

[LORD PURVIS OF TWEED]

I will ask the Minister two specific questions. The first builds on a question which I asked him last week about the World Bank trust fund. The UK is supporting the World Bank's work; I too support it, but it is increasingly difficult to justify support through mechanisms which provide direct funding for Taliban services when it now seeks to exclude half of the delivery vehicles for it—those delivered through women. What mechanisms are there in place in the World Bank trust fund, and with UK support, to ensure that we are not supporting the Taliban continuing the discrimination against women? Secondly, what is the UK doing to secure a public statement from our Gulf allies that this act of the Taliban is unacceptable, not just to the UK but to all regional partners and Gulf allies, and to the Islamic world?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon (Con): My Lords, on the noble Lord's first point, we are looking at additional mechanisms and I share his concern. I am aware of the INGO that he mentioned. This morning's meeting with the women leaders involved INGOs, NGOs and, of course, former political leaders in Afghanistan—all women. It was a very enlightening insight into specific steps that we should be taking, and that will continue to be our process. Since the Taliban takeover, I have consistently said that we will be informed by our work with key partners, including on humanitarian aid. We want to identify mechanisms, because the current issues we have with aid distribution are replicated by the concerns of other agencies, as well as other international partners.

On how we will move forward with the Islamic world, we are working on that. I am engaging directly with the OIC's special representative, and a number of countries around the Gulf have condemned the actions. They have also made visits to Afghanistan. I will be travelling to the Gulf region in the middle of February and will look to engage with a number of Gulf partners on other issues, but, importantly, on Afghanistan as well.

Lord Hannay of Chiswick (CB): My Lords, first, I offer the Minister my thanks and congratulations on being active in helping the United Nations to take the initiative that it has by sending the Deputy Secretary-General and some of her colleagues to Kabul. It must be the right thing to do, and I hope the Minister will say that they will have our unstinting support in all the efforts they are making. Secondly, he was perhaps as surprised as I was to see some amity breaking out in the Security Council in recent discussion of what has been going on in Afghanistan, with apparent unanimity in criticising some of the actions taken by the regime there. Does he think that that amity and unity in the Security Council has any development potential in the future?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon (Con): My Lords, I always welcome people coming together to try to work out solutions—and I say “one can only hope” in answer to the noble Lord's second question.

On his other question, we will continue to work on our observation. I thank the noble Lord for his kind remarks. It is important that we strengthen the working

of the United Nations. Often it has the access that other countries will not have. It has the structures that provide the provisions that other countries working individually will not have.

Taking up the point of the noble Lord, Lord Purvis, I assure noble Lords that we are working with the UN, the Islamic world and near neighbours. The challenge remains the Taliban perspective and I am going to be very candid. They believe that every challenge and test, erroneously and rather perversely, is an added challenge from God. That will be their interpretation. That is why we need the Islamic world to speak. I have said to them quite directly, as a direct challenge, that women's rights were not suppressed by the religion of Islam; they were enhanced. If they claim to follow the Prophet Muhammad, they should look at his personal example. Look at who was the first person to accept the religion. He was working for someone. That person was a woman.

Oaths and Affirmations

7.25 pm

Lord Willis of Knaresborough took the oath.

House adjourned at 7.26 pm.

Addendum: Lord Soley's Valedictory Speech

4.49 pm

Lord Soley (Lab) (Valedictory Speech): My Lords, I really did not expect to be starting this speech; I had no idea what had happened until I came in this morning. I was going to start by saying that, after 44 years' continuous service in both the House of Commons and the House of Lords, I would not have expected to have caused quite so much chaos in the management of my retirement.

I must express my thanks to the Government Front Bench and, of course, to my own Front Bench. They have worked very hard to make sure that the legislation as it is carried will not affect other people who make a valedictory speech, because my understanding is that the House wants to encourage such speeches and it would be a good idea if it did not have to be done this way every time. So my thanks to Ministers and my own Front Bench.

Also, I invited everybody up to the River Room for drinks later because that is what the Speaker told me I could do. I will extend that invitation to everyone because I am working on the theory that everybody can come up and have a drink and I will then ask for the bill to be sent to me at the House of Lords, knowing without doubt that it will be sent back marked, “Not known at this address”. So we are going to have a big party tonight.

I am thankful to everybody of all parties and none for the way this House operates. As the noble Baroness, Lady Verma, said, just because we disagree violently at times on politics, it does not mean that we have to do so in an uncivil or unreasonable way.

I also thank all the staff of Parliament at all levels and in all ways. They have always been very helpful to me. Despite little hiccups such as the present one, everything works pretty well most of the time. I therefore offer my thanks to the staff.

I also want to flag up—I am sure others will agree on this—all the staff who work for us, whether in the House of Commons or the House of Lords, such as researchers, our secretaries and others. They are profoundly important. Personally, I have to mention Nora Macleod, who worked for me for more than 20 years and is incredibly effective as both a secretary and a researcher, and in preparing press statements and all the other things. I sometimes thought that I could perhaps just go on holiday and talk about politics, while she and others could get on with running the country—it was really a straightforward matter, but it was very important. There are then the other staff who have worked for me—too many, I am afraid, to mention.

I should also thank the present Minister, the noble Baroness, Lady Barran, and the previous two Ministers in her role. When I introduced the home education Bill in 2017 in this House, it went through all its stages and was accepted. The Government then told me, to my surprise, that they wanted to incorporate it into the education Bill. That has now been withdrawn but I have been assured—I am watching this carefully—that it will be brought back because the Government now recognise how important it is that we give help to parents who want to home-educate but also recognise the dangers to children in a tiny minority of cases who are vulnerable to trafficking or abuse. I am pleased to say that I will be watching that from the highlands of Scotland to make sure that it goes through; I shall come down and knock on the door if there is any slacking on that aspect.

I must also, as I think we all must, thank the members of my family, some of whom are here today. It is sometimes forgotten how much flack families take in the course of a political career. We put ourselves on the front line—that is fine; we know what is going to happen—but families do not. My long-term wife and partner and the mother of my two children, Roz Brown, was not keen on publicity. She did not like being photographed. When I was doing the press Bill and things of that nature, there would be attempts to photograph us all the time. You have to try to get that balance right.

She particularly did not like the children being photographed, especially over the garden wall. Things such as that make many Members very angry—understandably so. However, she was a great source of support for my work. On one occasion, very nobly and without intention, she took an egg for me; it was obviously aimed at me but it hit her when she opened the front door as I was not there. Many people outside Parliament would be surprised just what families take at times so I give them a big thank you.

I thank my daughter, Alice, who cannot be here today because her two young children are not well; they are minor complaints but they are not well enough to be here. She has often put me right on foreign policy when she thinks I have got it wrong. She has travelled

widely in both the Middle East and South America, which is pretty impressive. She is also now proficient in Arabic, so the Minister might find someone who speaks good Arabic in the Foreign Office soon.

My son, Ben, gave me the best political advice I have ever had on something about which I know virtually nothing: football. QPR, which is in my former constituency in Shepherd's Bush, was, on one occasion, about to be moved to Slough because somebody wanted to buy the site because of its property value. A huge demonstration of supporters emerged. They wanted to hear what the MP thought. I told them that I know very little about football. The organisers said, "Don't worry, as long as you are on our side", and I said, "Yes". To those 400 or so people, I said that I know three things about football: first, that QPR belongs in Shepherd's Bush. A huge cheer went up. Secondly, I said that the sale was not about a better ground for QPR; it was a property deal. Another huge cheer went up. Thirdly, I said that I wanted to see QPR back in what was then called the first division. There was absolute silence. Then a voice somewhere in the middle said, "But we're not out of it yet". That goes to show that you can get things wrong in politics. When my son heard that story, he said to me, "Dad, whatever you do in politics, never talk about football"; I have followed that to the letter.

My other problem as a politician is that, while I have always been quite good at remembering faces, I am pretty hopeless with names. Once, a guy stood next to me in the bar. I said to him, "I know I have seen you before but I can't remember your name". He said something to me in a very strong regional accent laced with Guinness. I could not understand him but, on the fourth occasion, I realised that he was saying, "I live next door to you". Despite all those things, noble Lords might be surprised to learn that I kept getting elected. I do not know what it was that I was doing right but I must have been doing something right. Those are the sorts of trials and tribulations I had; they are important aspects of being a politician.

I was born before the Second World War—people very kindly say, at times, that I do not look it—not the First World War or the Crimean War. I was evacuated a number of times and so on. At the end of that war, when there was a big fire on the street I lived on in east London with an effigy of Hitler on it, I got my first understanding of the importance of politics, democracy and the rule of law. That is what has guided me throughout my political thinking; those matters hold me really strongly.

I recall something that is very relevant to the debate introduced by the noble Baroness, Lady Verma. I frequently hear a phrase from Churchill in the 1940s about being "alone". In fact, we were not alone; we had enormous numbers of people from what was then the Empire and the Commonwealth. In the context of the noble Baroness's debate, there were 2.5 million people in the British Indian Army, all volunteers. How often is that recognised?

I turn now to the context of the debate before that. Fairly early on in my political career in the House of Commons, a group of Caribbean women came up to me and asked me to help identify the grave of Mary Seacole.

I then made a decision in the back of my mind that, when I had more time, I would try to arrange for a statue of Mary Seacole to be built. Those five women were all Caribbean and had come to Britain in 1939. In their words—these are not my words—they said, “We have come to help the motherland in the fight for freedom”.

That is a very important statement. For those noble Lords who know the statue—I am sure that they have heard about it now—it is right opposite this House. The disc behind it, incidentally, was cast in the Crimea, where the Crimean war was fought and where Mary Seacole practised her skills. On that disc are the signs of where tank shells exploded in the First and Second World Wars. Noble Lords should have a look, if they have not done so already. I did that because those women were members of what I think was then called the Women's Volunteer Reserve, which serviced the anti-aircraft guns and the balloons that defended London. So, no, we were not alone—we had this enormous back-up from people from all over the world, which has made this country wonderful for its diversity and sense of freedom.

From that, I also have to say that my school background was rather different. A book has recently been published, I gather, with the school reports of people in public office who had interesting reports. A final comment on mine was, “Could make better use of his limited abilities, if only he tried a little harder”. I was 15 at the time, and I obviously did not try very hard. The interesting thing for me, as I left school when I was 15 and did all types of jobs, everything from construction work to offices to factories, was that my “pay”, which was the word used, was always told to me in hourly or weekly arrangements. Much later, in my twenties, I went to university, and when I left, when I was about 28 or 29—at some distant point in time, I am not sure when—all of a sudden, the word “pay” was no longer used. The word “salary” was used, and it was always an annual amount. Most importantly, it was a lot more than I had been used to before. That is a very useful casual definition of class—that if you are getting those lower wages, you are in a job that is usually unskilled, and so on. I think that things are changing, and I very much hope that they do. All the work being done on apprenticeships and other jobs is profoundly important.

So that was my school report. When I was elected, I was 40, which was in 1979. We went into a long period in opposition to the Conservative Party, and my good and noble friend Lord Boateng said at one stage that he considered the Tory Party to be an organised conspiracy to stay in power. What he did not go on to say, which I felt I had to correct him on, was that the Labour Party was an organised conspiracy to stay out of power. I can now tell noble Lords, with some considerable pleasure, that there is a bit of role reversal going on. Since Boris Johnson and Liz Truss appeared on the scene, I actually do think that the boot is now on the other foot, if that is the right simile. The Tory Party has deep divisions in it. I shall not spend time on that, other than to say that they are to some considerable extent ideological. Of course, that also happened in the Labour Party, where the divisions were also ideological. I will simply make this point. Ideology is a useful

guidance, and it is good to have it to structure your thinking, but it is a deadly mistake if you follow it too hard and without any idea of compromise. That is not just in politics; it is also—and this reflects the modern world—in religion. I have said here before that God is an idea—there either is or there is not one—but religion is in effect an ideology. It is subject to splits, divisions and arguments in the same way that politics is. So, yes, by all means have your religions and ideologies, but keep them under control, because they have a nasty habit of getting out of control if you are not careful. But meanwhile, I thank Boris and Liz Truss for the role reversal, which I am sure is very important.

I want to emphasise—this is the core of what I want to say—that it is vitally important that we bring respect back into British politics. We have to get integrity and a sense of duty back into politics, because we have lost quite a lot of that in recent times. It is my experience that politicians of all parties and at all levels, including councillors, actually do work for the people as a whole; they really do. They are very committed and, without them, our democracy would not work. The vast majority are honest and hard-working, and put the country first. A minority will always do us damage from time to time, but it is very important to put integrity and duty right back in—I urge everyone to do that. We can never quite match the sense of duty and integrity that the late Queen Elizabeth II had, including literally on the international stage, but there is no reason why we cannot do it very well as politicians in our own areas. I also say to party members, including my own party in Hammersmith and Ealing, that they work incredibly hard to make democracy work. Without them, frankly, our democracy would look a lot poorer.

However, there is a danger here, too. Something I want to emphasise is that it is a mistake, in my judgment, to allow party members to select the Prime Minister when a Prime Minister resigns in office. We saw this when Liz Truss took over recently. I listened in disbelief to the way that she was going to spend money without raising it; I knew it was a mistake, but of course it appealed to her party. I have to say that the same could have happened to us if Jeremy Corbyn had taken over from a Prime Minister in office. I simply say to both major parties and others: let MPs select the Prime Minister but, yes, it is important that the public, at the end of the day, decide who the Prime Minister will be at an election. Generally speaking, we have to be very careful about losing some of the strengths of our democracy; recently, it has been destabilised by some of these events. That is very important.

I will make a few final comments, if I may, about Brexit—I do not want to go in depth, noble Lords will be relieved to hear. I will simply say that I was not surprised at the result of the referendum; I always felt that Britain had adopted the European Union because it saw it as an economic model, whereas in continental Europe it was seen as politically important. It was seen as—and is, in my judgment—one of the best war-prevention organisations ever invented. Wars in Europe were common—look at a map of Europe in 1914 and you will discover that Austria owned part of Poland. The maps were totally changed. The one country that was not affected in this way is the United Kingdom, because we have not had a war on our soil since the

Civil War. So, again, all I want to say is that, despite Brexit, Britain needs Europe and Europe needs Britain. If you have any doubts at all about that, think Vladimir Putin. What has happened in eastern Europe recently is making the Europeans generally—including former Soviet states—very keen on both the European Union and NATO. The European Union is becoming a nation state, and was always likely to do so. Our relationship with it must be really close, and I hope we will continue with that.

I do not have much more to say, other than to make a brief comment on the constitution. I would hate for the United Kingdom to break up into Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland. I have lived in the Highlands now for some years and I used to live in Glasgow and Edinburgh. I know everybody thinks of the UK as England, but it is in fact wider than that. I just want to say this. People forget at times—and they forget this in Scotland too—that it was King James VI of Scotland,

who became James I of England, who designed the union jack. It was two Scotsmen who wrote and composed “Rule, Britannia!” This has always been the strength of the union: it is deep. It is a bit like an early version of the European Union, and it also had a federal structure before federalism was invented. That is why I do think we are going to have make changes to it.

My final, final point is just to emphasise again the importance, to me, of democracy and the rule of law. I simply say this: Britain was first with the Industrial Revolution, and it was that revolution that unchained all the scientific and technological events that we know about. It opened up enormous possibilities for the future; but possibilities create dangers too. Indeed, if we want to avoid that great novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, by George Orwell, coming off the shelves of literature and into the real world, let us please protect our democracy and our rule of law. Without them, we are at risk. Thank you very much.