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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
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HOUSE OF LORDS

OFFICIAL REPORT

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

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

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House of Lords

Tuesday 7 June 2016

2.30 pm

Prayers—read by the Lord Bishop of Derby.

Apprenticeships Question

2.36 pm

Asked by **Lord Lennie**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to work with businesses to ensure that the completion rate of apprenticeships improves, particularly for those under 25.

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park (Con): Ensuring that apprentices are fully competent in a job, have transferable skills and progress their career will all help encourage people to complete their apprenticeships. We are also incentivising completions by ensuring that providers only receive a completion payment when an apprenticeship has been achieved. Our far-reaching reforms will further improve the quality of apprenticeships and ensure delivery of the high-quality relevant training expected by both employers and apprentices.

Lord Lennie (Lab): I thank the Minister for that response. I agree with much of what she has said. The Government's own Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, however, in its submission to the recent apprenticeships inquiry, concluded that under 25s are getting a raw deal, especially young women. It cites a lack of access to the best apprenticeship opportunities, ghettoization into low-pay occupations and a rampant sexism which sees 97% of all apprenticeships in building and 86% in engineering going to men. Will the Government follow the recommendation of the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission and establish an annual apprenticeship opportunity tracker in order that we can be assured that the quality, quantity and, more importantly, social mobility outcomes of apprenticeships succeed—and if not, why not?

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park: We certainly want to increase access to high-quality apprenticeships for all young people. That is why, in future, data about progression into apprenticeships will be included in school performance tables so that we can see where young people are going and what their career paths will be. I can assure the noble Lord that the recent apprenticeship evaluation learner survey found that nine out of 10 of all recent completers were either in full-time or part-time employment, and 77% of those were still employed by the same employer with whom they completed their apprenticeships. So we know that once young people go into these roles, they end up getting worthwhile and good jobs.

Baroness Stroud (Con): Given that apprenticeships play such an important role in the life chances outcomes of care leavers, could the Minister outline the department's plans for ensuring greater take-up among care leavers?

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park: I am delighted to say that from 2016-17, employers taking on care leavers aged between 19 and 24 as apprentices will be entitled to full funding.

Lord Campbell-Savours (Lab): My Lords, in carrying out its recent report, the Social Mobility Committee was told that a six-week course in flower arranging and vegetable wrapping, or something, was to be described as an apprenticeship. Would an apprenticeship of that nature be in the Government's statistics on apprenticeships?

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park: The noble Lord will know that quality apprenticeships are at the heart of what we are trying to do. We are establishing an independent, employer-led institute for apprenticeships to ensure quality and that businesses are involved in the standards. Our definition of an apprenticeship is that it must be a job in a skilled occupation; it should have substantial and sustained training lasting a minimum of 12 months; it should lead to full competency in an occupation; and it must develop transferable skills. That is our definition of an apprenticeship, and that is what will be in the statistics.

Baroness Burt of Solihull (LD): My Lords, given the concerns that have been expressed about these results, does the Minister now accept that 3 million is an arbitrary figure for the number of apprentices we should have in this country? Does she further agree that we would be better off with a comprehensive plan for all kinds of skills and qualifications instead of straitjacketing learners and employers with a payroll tax that fits some but not all of our skills needs? Surely, employers would be happier to pay for their own diverse training needs than to satisfy a Government mantra of 3 million apprentices and one size fits all.

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park: I am afraid that I do not agree with the noble Baroness. It is absolutely right that the Government should be ambitious for young people and that we should offer them good quality university routes, apprenticeships and technical routes. That is why we have this ambitious target and why we are also looking to reform technical education, on which the Lord Sainsbury review, which will be published shortly, will help to lead the way. Moreover, since 2010 some 2.7 million apprenticeships have been started, so I believe that it is a worthwhile target. We would be letting our young people down if we did not offer them a whole range of opportunities to get the good jobs they deserve.

Lord Aberdare (CB): My Lords, to date there have been only some 1,400 starts on the trailblazer apprenticeships under the new standards framework.

[LORD ABERDARE]

What plans are there to retain the existing apprenticeship frameworks, and how do the Government propose to increase uptake of the new standards as the existing frameworks are closed?

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park: The noble Lord is right, in that we are moving towards a new framework. We want to improve quality, which is why we are giving employers the opportunity to design apprenticeships that are more demanding and responsive to the needs of business, looking to have more rigorous testing and grading at the end of an apprenticeship, and giving employers control of funding so that they can become more demanding customers. That way, both employers and young people involved in apprenticeships get the quality training that we all want to see.

Lord Stevenson of Balmacara (Lab): My Lords, I have rather lost track of the number of times the Minister has talked about ambition. Of course we support the ambition to have 3 million apprenticeships and we wish her well with that. However, is not the problem that currently, 96% of apprenticeships are at levels 2 and 3? These are obviously important to the service sector and associated sectors, but as she has said, we have to provide routes through to degree level. Where is that coming from?

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park: The noble Lord will be aware that we have introduced higher and degree level apprenticeships, and I am sure he will be delighted to know that in fact, higher apprenticeships are the fastest growing element of the apprenticeship programme. Through our national colleges we will be delivering specialist technical skills training at levels 4 and 6, and by 2020 we expect them to be delivering training to around 21,000 learners. We are focusing on higher and degree level apprenticeships, and it is a fast-growing area.

Baroness Shephard of Northwold (Con): My Lords, does my noble friend agree that while the availability and quality of apprenticeships is one thing, their potential for young people is quite another? What careers advice is being given to young people from the age of 14—because age is key in this—in order to enthuse and inform them about apprenticeships as an alternative to university?

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park: I thank my noble friend for the question. As she will no doubt be aware, we have already strengthened the statutory guidance to ensure that independent careers advice is presented in an impartial manner and a whole range of options covering training and education is included. We intend to bring forward legislation to require schools to allow other education and training providers the opportunity to talk to pupils about their offer on their premises, so that young people get high quality information and careers advice about the range of options they have, including apprenticeships.

Animal Welfare: Puppy Farms Question

2.43 pm

Asked by **Baroness Jones of Whitchurch**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to close down puppy farms that breach animal welfare standards and to apprehend gangs that sell illegally bred and imported puppies to buyers across the United Kingdom.

Lord Gardiner of Kimble (Con): My Lords, the Government take these matters very seriously and that is why we are reviewing the legislation on dog breeding and pet shops in England. Local authorities already investigate welfare concerns over dog breeding establishments and can revoke a licence to operate. Checks on pet dogs are carried out at the UK border, with commercial imports being certified by official veterinarians. The Animal and Plant Health Agency carries out inland checks on imported dogs.

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch (Lab): I thank the Minister for that reply. I hope that he, like many others, was appalled at the recent "Panorama" programme which showed industrial-scale dog breeding, with dogs producing endless litters trapped in crates with no natural light. This market is proving lucrative for some very unsavoury gangs who are trading so-called pedigree puppies—some bred in the UK and some illegally imported from abroad. Does the Minister accept that the Government already have the powers to clean up this trade if they want to? For example, they could block wholesale puppy imports which are abusing the pet travel scheme that was designed for family pets, ensure that all puppies have legitimate documentation, including their place of birth, and ensure that we really enforce the proper welfare standards of all breeding establishments in the UK. Why do the Government not act on these now?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: My Lords, as I say, the Government take these matters extremely seriously. It is indeed the whole basis of what we are doing in the consultations. We are now assessing the 1,500 responses on the matter. They are precisely designed for what we wish to do—to enhance animal welfare outcomes. The noble Baroness is absolutely right that there are existing powers, but we think that the review will enable us to modernise the law so that they meet the new challenges and, indeed, improve enforcement, which is so vital.

The Countess of Mar (CB): My Lords, the Kennel Club has done a great deal to publicise the importance of seeing a puppy with its mother and in a good social environment. It is pretty obvious that some of these farmed puppies must be taken to veterinary surgeons. Is there any provision for the vets to report suspicious circumstances to either Defra or Trading Standards?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: My Lords, the noble Countess is absolutely right that it is most desirable for someone wishing to buy a puppy to always see it with

its mother and to go to a reputable dealer. The Kennel Club Assured Breeder Scheme is an excellent industry gold standard; I endorse it as one of the breeders. Under the Animal Welfare Act 2006, it would be the responsibility of those concerned about breaches of animal welfare to report them to the police or the local authority.

Baroness Parminter (LD): My Lords, puppy dealers can make millions of pounds a year and yet face only six months in jail if they cause the death of hundreds of dogs through puppy trading. Is it not time that the Government acted, as happens in Northern Ireland, and increased the maximum sentence for animal welfare offences to five years?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: Obviously, I do not want to pre-empt what will happen with the review of the consultation but I shall certainly take that point back. I cannot promise that that will be part of the proposals as yet. However, it is a very interesting point and I will reflect on it.

Lord De Mauley (Con): My Lords, I recall from my time at Defra that online advertising of pets was an increasing problem. Can my noble friend tell me what the Government are able to do about that issue?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: My Lords, my noble friend had a lot to do with this when he was at Defra and it is certainly the case that people are looking increasingly to buy their pet online. That is why the department supports the voluntary Pet Advertising Advisory Group. Indeed, more than a 130,000 inappropriate advertisements have been removed from the six main websites only last year.

Lord Watts (Lab): My Lords, is it not the case that we will continue to have such problems until we have a dog licence system and local authorities are given the resources to police it?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: My Lords, 86% of dogs are now microchipped and we believe that that is the way forward, not the dog licence system. Certainly, that is making a considerable difference in terms of rehoming pets to their owners and reducing the cost to local authorities and stray homes. Local authorities, of course, have the powers to retrieve the costs of licences.

Baroness McIntosh of Pickering (Con): Will my noble friend give the figures for those dogs that are currently being microchipped? Will the Government send out the message that no puppy should be sold when the mother of the dog—the bitch—is not present?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: As I say, my Lords, our advice to prospective owners is to see the puppy with its mother and never to buy a puppy younger than eight weeks. That is really important and I would encourage responsible pet owners to reflect on that advice.

Lord Lea of Crondall (Lab): My Lords, does the Minister look forward to the day when dogs can choose their owners online?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: Well, I am sure that is the case, but I have always reflected that dogs very often look like their owners.

Dental Health: Children

Question

2.49 pm

Asked by **Baroness Benjamin**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their strategy for keeping children's teeth healthy.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health (Lord Prior of Brampton) (Con): My Lords, Public Health England is leading a substantial programme of work and NHS England will test new ways to improve children's oral health in 10 high-need areas. The Department of Health is working with NHS England to test a new NHS dental contract focusing on improving oral health. We also expect that measures to reduce sugar consumption will have a positive effect on reducing tooth decay.

Baroness Benjamin (LD): My Lords, this is all excellent news, because shocking reports by the LGA, dentists and surgeons warn that the growing lack of children's oral health practice, especially in deprived areas and communities, is costing the NHS millions. Huge numbers of hospital admissions for tooth decay and painful extractions are affecting children's education, well-being and mental health. But this crisis is preventable with early intervention, co-ordinated strategies and funding. How will the Government's new preventive programme to improve children's dental health work, how soon will it happen and where will the funding come from?

Lord Prior of Brampton: My Lords, I think that the obesity strategy, which will be announced later in the summer, will answer part of the noble Baroness's question. The new contract for dentists, which will have prevention at its core, is being piloted and will be introduced in 2018. This is a very high government priority.

Lord Colwyn (Con): My Lords, my noble friend talks about the dental contract. Will he tell us when the Government will complete the long-standing delay on dental contract reform? Will they ensure the new contract works for both dentists and patients?

Lord Prior of Brampton: My Lords, the new dental contract is under discussion as we speak. Prototypes will be tried in a number of areas over the next two years, I believe. It will be heavily weighted towards prevention, with a high degree of capitation in the contract. It will be very much outcomes-based. I believe that we expect the new contract to be introduced fully in 2018.

Lord Maxton (Lab): My Lords, will the Minister agree that the quickest, easiest and cheapest way to ensure that children do not get and suffer as much from tooth decay is to ensure that all water supplies have the right levels of fluoride in them?

Lord Prior of Brampton: My Lords, there is no doubt that fluoridisation is a critical part of good oral hygiene. This is up to local authorities. Public Health England will assist local authorities that wish to introduce fluoride into their water. I add that 3.5 million children in 2014-15 received a fluoride varnish. It is not the same as putting it in the water, but it is fully recognised that fluoride is a critical part of good oral hygiene.

Baroness Gardner of Parkes (Con): My Lords, is the Minister aware that Manchester, which has had reports about hospitals being completely blocked by young children requiring full clearance under general anaesthetic, has no fluoride in the water? Australia has it pretty well everywhere, unless you live in the country, where there is only rainfall and a river. Birmingham, which has had it since the 1960s, has no difference with Manchester in its general health pattern except for the dental difference between the two. I have asked questions on this repeatedly and had Written Answers. Does he think that when Manchester has this new super-authority it might do something about this at last?

Lord Prior of Brampton: I agree with my noble friend. Fluoridisation has a huge and direct impact on oral hygiene. It will be up to Manchester to make that decision in due course. To pick up a point made by the noble Baroness, Lady Benjamin, social deprivation also plays a big part in the variation in the quality of people's teeth. Interestingly, 75% of all children have no tooth decay now, but in some parts of the country—Blackburn, for example—the figure is as low as 40%.

Baroness Walmsley (LD): My Lords, does the Minister agree that a healthy diet, including milk, fruit, vegetables and enough vitamin D, is as important to the development of children's teeth as not eating too much sugar? The Healthy Start programme provides those eligible with free vitamins and vouchers to buy those healthy foods but I understand that the uptake is poor. What are the Government doing to improve the uptake of this programme and to ensure that the lessons learned by those authorities that choose universal distribution of vitamins are spread throughout the country?

Lord Prior of Brampton: My Lords, there is no question but that a low-sugar, healthy diet is good for people's teeth. The noble Baroness will have to wait until we produce the children's obesity strategy later in the summer, in which we will reveal the full strategy.

Baroness Lister of Burtersett (Lab): My Lords, I am glad that the Minister focused on the question of social deprivation. What will the government strategy do about that?

Lord Prior of Brampton: The best way of addressing social deprivation is to have a strong economy. As I am sure the noble Baroness will agree, the Government have the perfect economic strategy to address that issue.

Lord Elton (Con): My Lords, my noble friend emphasised the fact that sugar is bad for teeth and that the Government are trying to reduce the intake of sugar by private individuals. What is the effect on teeth of the substitutes that will be introduced into many products to replace sugar?

Lord Prior of Brampton: I am afraid that I cannot answer that question as I simply do not have the knowledge. I will research it and write to my noble friend.

Baroness Howarth of Breckland (CB): My Lords, this used to be picked up through schools and nurseries, where most children are seen. What happens now in education establishments, particularly academies, where children's teeth are found to be poor and action needs to be taken?

Lord Prior of Brampton: Schools clearly have an important role to play. Interestingly, in Bradford the Building Brighter Smiles programme involves not just a community-based fluoride varnishing application but also supervised tooth-brushing in schools and nurseries. I am sure that that has a very important role to play.

Baroness Jenkin of Kennington (Con): My Lords, the number one reason for primary school children to be admitted to hospital is for multiple tooth extraction as a result of poor diet and the other things that have been mentioned. These are children who generally do not drink water; they drink juice and fizzy drinks. Can my noble friend please confirm that the Government will give this a priority in the obesity strategy later this summer?

Lord Prior of Brampton: My noble friend will be aware that a part—only a part—of the obesity strategy includes a levy on fizzy drinks. That will be a levy on the manufacturer not the consumer. That is a very important part of trying to improve the diet of young children.

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath (Lab): My Lords, I should remind the House of my presidency of the British Fluoridation Society. I come back to the issue of fluoridation. The noble Lord has been rightly positive about its impact. The real problem is that the law gives responsibility to local authorities but local authority boundaries do not always fit with the way that water is produced by the water companies. Given that, does the noble Lord agree that there is a role for the Government, working in partnership with those local authorities, to give impetus to water fluoridation? Will he also pick up the point raised by his noble friend and work with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority to see whether Manchester could be brought up to the level of the health of people in the West Midlands?

Lord Prior of Brampton: My Lords, of course Public Health England has a role to play here and works with local authorities that wish to introduce fluoridisation schemes. The noble Lord is quite right that this is not always co-terminous with local water supply. Public Health England agrees entirely with the sentiments of the noble Lord. I assure him that it will work with Greater Manchester or any other local authorities considering water fluoridation.

St Helena: Airport *Question*

2.58 pm

Asked by Lord Foulkes of Cumnock

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is the reason for the delay in opening the airport on St Helena; and when it is now expected to be operational.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for International Development (Baroness Verma) (Con): My Lords, the new airport that the Government have built in St Helena will enable the country and its people to overcome the challenges of being one of the most remote island communities in the world. The St Helena airport is open and able to receive flights.

Lord Foulkes of Cumnock (Lab): My Lords, what the Minister says is not my understanding of the position, which is that because of wind shear—a problem that was not anticipated—no commercial flights have gone in and only one medevac flight, which was welcome. Can she explain why commercial aircraft are not going in? Why was the wind shear problem not anticipated? What will be done to remedy the situation? If she cannot say now that there will be regular flights, as anticipated, to make sure that the investment in the island is worthwhile, will she or her department report on that to Parliament before we go up for the Summer Recess?

Baroness Verma: My Lords, the noble Lord is right that commercial airlines are not currently running. He asked why. We have intensive work under way to identify options to enable commercial air services to start as soon as possible. We are considering a range of potential providers. The timing of the commencement of scheduled services will, of course, depend on securing the right aircraft and regulatory approvals. But, as the noble Lord is aware, in the interim we have services going to and from St Helena.

Viscount Ridley (Con): My Lords, my noble friend will be aware that many St Helenans live and work on Ascension Island, although they have no right of abode there. Given that Ascension has one of the longest runways in the world, does my noble friend consider that it is worth negotiating with the Americans to make sure that we can get commercial flights into and out of Ascension Island, which would be of great

benefit to a lot of St Helenans who live there? Is it worth revisiting the issue of right of abode on Ascension Island?

Baroness Verma: My Lords, we do work closely with the Americans. My noble friend is right: we use the airport on Ascension Island. But, if we are going to uplift the economy of St Helena, it is right and proper that we continue to work to ensure that we find a solution for St Helena. I am afraid that I will have to come back to my noble friend on the issue of residency.

Lord Shutt of Greetland (LD): My Lords, it was announced last Friday that RMS "St Helena" will do three more return trips to St Helena from Cape Town, concluding on 27 September. That means that the last voyage out of Cape Town will now be on 9 September, a mere two months away. Does the noble Baroness not think it right that both the people of St Helena and potential visitors should know where they stand in terms of travel to and from St Helena beyond two months from today? Secondly, does she agree that RMS "St Helena" should certainly not be sold until the airport issue is resolved?

Baroness Verma: I can reassure my noble friend—or rather, the noble Lord, although he is my noble friend, too—that we will continue to ensure that while the airport is not open and running there will be a service with RMS "St Helena". But, of course, the longer-term solution has to be that the airport opens and is commercially viable. We are looking at short-term options to establish coverage, perhaps with smaller aircraft. These are all things that we are discussing. But the residents of St Helena can rest assured that they will be able to go backwards and forwards from St Helena.

Lord West of Spithead (Lab): My Lords, clearly the Royal Mail Ship "St Helena" will need to run until the shambles of the airport is sorted out. It is the only British-owned ship that regularly goes through the territorial seas, the exclusive economic zone and the maritime wildlife zones of Ascension Island and St Helena. However, at the moment it does not call on Tristan da Cunha: there is no guaranteed service at all to Tristan da Cunha. Looking to the future, is there any way that the Government can ensure that the royal research ships of the British Antarctic Survey regularly call on all three of those islands on their way to the Antarctic and back again as a matter of course, which would establish a shipping timetable for carrying heavy goods and people and would also establish a regular presence in waters that belong to us?

Baroness Verma: My Lords, the noble Lord has asked a number of questions. To give due importance to each of them would need a letter. But I can assure the noble Lord that we are working very closely with the St Helena Government to make sure that the airport finds a commercial solution and that landings will be possible on the island. In the meantime, we do work with all our partners in the area.

Lord Collins of Highbury (Lab): My Lords, two years ago I asked the then Minister, the noble Baroness, Lady Northover, what risk assessment had been made in the contract for the new airport. Her response was:

“The fixed-price lump-sum contract”,
had,
“the risk transferred to the contractor”.—[*Official Report*, 9/7/14; col. 138.]

Does the Minister think this may be a reason why no assessment was done of the problem that is now causing this airport to not open?

Baroness Verma: My Lords, I must correct the noble Lord: a feasibility study was undertaken. But, as the noble Lord is aware, wind shear is an unpredictable phenomenon. It is not always possible to predict with confidence whether it would be experienced at St Helena Airport before planes attempt to land. During the project management, the UK Meteorological Office assessed the probability of wind shear as low. Many airports around the world have developed operational procedures to overcome the challenges of wind shear: London City Airport is one. We are working on it.

Unpaid Work Experience (Prohibition) Bill [HL] *First Reading*

3.06 pm

A Bill to make provision for the prohibition of unpaid work experience exceeding four weeks and for connected purposes.

The Bill was introduced by Lord Holmes of Richmond, read a first time and ordered to be printed.

Bat Habitats Regulation Bill [HL] *First Reading*

3.06 pm

A Bill to make provision to enhance the protection available for bat habitats in the non-built environment and to limit the protection for bat habitats in the built environment where the presence of bats has a significant adverse effect upon the users of buildings.

The Bill was introduced by Lord Cormack, read a first time and ordered to be printed.

Online Privacy Protection Bill [HL] *First Reading*

3.07 pm

A Bill to amend the Data Protection Act 1998 to make provision about the transparency of privacy notices.

The Bill was introduced by Lord Paddick, read a first time and ordered to be printed.

Succession to Peerages Bill [HL] *First Reading*

3.07 pm

A Bill to amend the law regarding succession to peerages and for connected purposes.

The Bill was introduced by Lord Trefgarne, read a first time and ordered to be printed.

BBC Royal Charter Bill [HL] *First Reading*

3.07 pm

A Bill to make provision about the establishment, independence, funding and governance arrangements of the British Broadcasting Corporation.

The Bill was introduced by Lord Fowler (on behalf of Lord Lester of Herne Hill), read a first time and ordered to be printed.

NHS England: Pre-exposure Prophylaxis for People at Risk of HIV *Statement*

3.08 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health (Lord Prior of Brampton) (Con): My Lords, with the leave of the House, I shall now repeat in the form of a Statement the Answer given by my honourable friend the Minister for Public Health to an Urgent Question in another place on pre-exposure prophylaxis. The Statement is as follows.

“HIV can be a devastating illness. We know that PrEP can make a difference to both those at risk of contracting HIV, and those who are already HIV positive. However, it is crucial that we have a full understanding of all the issues surrounding PrEP. As with any new intervention, PrEP must be properly assessed in relation to clinical and cost effectiveness. That is why we have today asked NICE to conduct an evidence review of Truvada for pre-exposure prophylaxis of HIV in high-risk groups.

This evidence review signifies the next step forward and will inform any subsequent decisions about commissioning. It will look at the evidence for effectiveness, safety, patient factors and resource implications. The NICE evidence summary will run alongside a pilot scheme in which we are investing up to £2 million. Public Health England is currently identifying the most effective places for the pilot to take place.

It is also important to remember that the drug used for PrEP, Truvada, is not yet licensed for this use in the UK. That is why, as well as the pilot scheme, the Government want to see an evidence review, which will help inform future commissioning decisions about PrEP.

PrEP is only one of a range of activities to tackle HIV. Our £2.4 million national HIV prevention and sexual health promotion programme also gives those

at highest risk the best advice to make safer choices about sex. The UK has world-class treatment services. The UK is already ahead in reaching two of the three UNAIDS goals of 90% diagnosed infection, 90% of those diagnosed on treatment and 90% viral suppression by 2020. In 2014, 17% of those living with HIV had undiagnosed infection but 91% of those diagnosed were on treatment, of whom 95% were virally suppressed. We are determined to continue to make real progress to meet these goals and are considering carefully the role that PrEP can play in helping us get there”.

3.10 pm

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath (Lab): I am grateful to the Minister but this decision by NHS England not to commission and fund PrEP is a matter of great regret. In the UK there are more people living with HIV than ever before. Without any need for an evidence review, it is absolutely clear, without any uncertainty whatever, that PrEP has the potential to be a game-changer. It is proven to be effective in stopping HIV transmission in almost every single case. There is no need for an evidence review. It is simply a delaying tactic because of this absolutely disgraceful decision not to fund this drug. The Minister mentioned our record in relation to other countries. It is a matter of shame that this drug is being used extensively in other countries but is being denied to NHS patients without any justification whatever.

At some point the Minister will pray in aid the cost of new drugs. On a number of occasions I have asked him this question but he will never answer it—because, I suspect, the answer is too embarrassing. He knows that he is in the middle of a five-year agreement with the branded drug industry through which, if the cost of drugs goes over the base level plus a small allowance for inflation, the department receives a refund every three months. That agreement should enable new drugs to be funded, but that money is not being used to invest in those new drugs. If he says that this cannot be done because of cost, that is simply not true. I very much hope that the Government will reconsider this decision. It is utterly indefensible.

Lord Prior of Brampton: My Lords, I am not going to proffer the argument that it is too expensive, because that is not the issue today. The issue today is that NHS England feels that it does not have the power to commission this particular drug. Whether or not it has that power may well be judicially reviewed, so I cannot comment on the outcome of that judicial review.

The PROUD study produced strong evidence of the effectiveness of Truvada as a preventive drug. The work that NICE is going to do, and the pilot scheme to look at the effectiveness of this drug—it will cost £2 million and will be funded by NHS England and PHE—will ensure that when the question whether NHS England has the power to commission this drug is resolved, there will be the evidence on which to make that decision.

Baroness Walmsley (LD): My Lords, are the Government simply delaying until Truvada comes out of patent and becomes cheaper? Can the Minister say

whether NHS England has taken into account the protection from HIV infection of the whole community that would result from a reduction in infection of high-risk groups? Can he also explain why the Government see infection prevention as a local authority responsibility in this case, given that other forms of prevention, such as vaccination, are the responsibility of the NHS nationally? This is not consistent.

Lord Prior of Brampton: As I said in response to the earlier question, this is really not about the efficacy of the drug. There is evidence that it is very efficient; that will be confirmed or otherwise by the extra work done by PHE. It is purely a question of the independent legal advice given to NHS England that it does not have the power to commission this drug.

Lord Fowler (Con): The independent advice seems extremely curious and the Minister should go into more detail, because surely we are past the stage of needing a pilot. The international evidence on PrEP is overwhelming. Is not the underlying fear here that policy on HIV has gone off the boil, in spite of the fact that prevention measures such as this are good in both human and financial terms?

Lord Prior of Brampton: All I can say in response is that NHS England has had independent legal advice that it does not have the power to commission this particular drug for this particular purpose, and for this purpose the drug itself is not yet licensed. It is not to do with any decision made on efficacy grounds for this drug; it is purely that they have received independent legal advice.

Baroness Finlay of Llandaff (CB): Can the Minister confirm that that legal advice, as I understood it on reading it through, points out that there is weak evidence that NHS England does not have the power to commission PrEP? It says that NHS England does not have the power to fund PrEP but points out that under Section 7A, the Secretary of State has the power to delegate the commissioning of PrEP. Can the Minister therefore explain why, in the face of the evidence that has come through from the PROUD study and internationally, the Secretary of State has not used Section 7A to support NHS England? Is there a dispute going on between NHS England and Public Health England, and is this a fallout from the Health and Social Care Act?

Lord Prior of Brampton: I do not think that it is a fallout from the Health and Social Care Act. It is purely that the NHS specialist commissioning committee within NHS England has received clear independent legal advice, as I understand it, saying that it does not have the power to commission this product. That position may well be challenged legally, in which case it will be resolved one way or the other.

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall (Lab): My Lords, I am sure that the Minister will be aware that for those of us who are not experts in this field but know a little about it, this is an extraordinarily puzzling thing to be

[BARONESS MCINTOSH OF HUDNALL]

confronted with. It just sounds plain daft, frankly. But will he confirm that there is very little prospect of vaccination or immunisation against HIV being developed any time in the foreseeable future and that PrEP is therefore a vital tool in preventing the spread of this infection for the next generation, and probably for subsequent generations? If this legal tangle has to be untangled, can he also say how long he anticipates that will take?

Lord Prior of Brampton: I do not know how long a judicial review will take. I guess that it will be months rather than years, but I simply cannot answer that question as I do not know the answer to it. Again, this is a legal issue, not an efficacy issue. This is a question not of the Government saying that we do not want to fund this prophylactic, but of NHS England simply saying that it has been advised it does not have the power to do so.

Baroness Howarth of Breckland (CB): My Lords, can I ask a simple social question? If there are to be trials, how will the decision be made as to who gets into a trial and who gets left out, as that could be a matter of life and death for some HIV sufferers?

Lord Prior of Brampton: My Lords, NHS England and PHE are consulting on how those trials should be constructed. Clearly, they will be focused on high-risk individuals but choosing who goes on to the trial will be up to PHE and NHS England.

Lord Paddick (LD): My Lords, there has been a lot of misunderstanding over the use of PrEP and an increase in the prevalence of other sexually transmitted infections. Will the Minister meet me, and other noble Lords who may be interested, to discuss these issues? I declare an interest as a participant in the PROUD project.

Lord Prior of Brampton: I would be very happy to meet with the noble Lord. It may be better for him to meet with my honourable friend in the other place who is responsible for public health, but either one of us will be very happy to meet with him.

Lord Scriven (LD): My Lords, the UK now has the worst HIV epidemic of any large western European country, having overtaken Spain, France and Portugal, and every day, seven men who have sex with men are diagnosed with HIV. In the light of the legal argument and of what the noble Baroness said, the Secretary of State, under the legal advice that was given to NHS England, has the power under Section 7A to delegate who gives these PrEP pills. Could the Minister please ask the Secretary of State to do that until the legal issue is resolved, so that lives are saved, rather than our arguing about who funds this and who has the legal ability to do it?

Lord Prior of Brampton: I am not briefed on Section 7A and am not sure what the powers of the Secretary of State are. After this debate, I will research that and find out what powers he has.

Genetically Modified Insects (S&T Committee Report)

Motion to Take Note

3.20 pm

Moved by The Earl of Selborne

That this House takes note of the Report from the Science and Technology Committee *Genetically modified insects* (1st Report, Session 2015–16, HL Paper 68).

The Earl of Selborne (Con): My Lords, one of the opportunities open to the Science and Technology Committee is to identify scientific, technological and environmental challenges and opportunities—existing and future—which government faces or ought to face. The genetic modification—GM—of insects is one such technology. It has the potential to contribute to global issues such as the control of infectious diseases affecting humans and animals and the control of agricultural crop pests. The potential of GM technologies should not be overstated, and a wide range of strategies is required to tackle insect-borne diseases and crop pests, but despite inevitable uncertainties at this early stage of the development of this technology, our committee concluded that,

“GM insect technologies should be afforded an opportunity to play a complementary role in helping to meet the global challenges of disease control and food security”.

The United Kingdom is a world leader in this area and hosts the only company in the world producing and distributing GM insects—Oxitec Ltd, a spin-out company from Oxford University, which was acquired last year by an American company.

I would like to acknowledge the great assistance given to the committee by our specialist adviser Professor Michael Bonsall and by our clerk, Chris Clarke, who has now moved on to other responsibilities and will be greatly missed; likewise Dr Cat Ball, our policy analyst. It is a great sadness that Lord Peston, a much-valued member of the committee, is no longer with us to participate in this debate.

While undertaking this inquiry in the autumn last year, we took the view that of the potential applications of GM insect technology, perhaps the most relevant would be to address the spread of dengue. Since then the reports of the alarming spread of the Zika virus, primarily in the Americas, have added further urgency to determining the potential of this technology. In January this year, the World Health Organization said that the virus was likely to spread throughout the Americas by the end of the year, and a month later declared that the cluster of microcephaly cases reported in Brazil was strongly associated with the Zika outbreak. I hope that during this debate my noble friend Lord Ridley will be able to update us more on Zika.

The global incidence of dengue has grown dramatically in recent decades, and about half the world’s population is now at risk, including in parts of Europe. This mosquito-borne viral infection can develop into a potentially lethal complication, particularly in Asian and Latin American countries. Other human diseases to which GM insect technology could be applied

include malaria, West Nile fever and chikungunya—all mosquito-borne viruses—and Chagas disease, for which the insect vector is a triatomine bug.

GM insect technologies build on methods developed some 60 years ago such as the sterile insect technique. These technologies represent a form of biological control in contrast to the use of chemical controls, such as insecticides, which have dominated the management of insect carriers of disease and pests historically. Insecticides will remain an essential part of the armoury to tackle insect pests and insect carriers of disease—and, indeed, they have been remarkably successful in recent years in reducing the incidence of malaria, by the use of insecticide-treated bed nets and by spraying the inside of houses during the day, when the night-flying mosquitoes are at rest. But this does not work against day-flying species of mosquitoes such as *Aedes aegypti*, which carries dengue fever and Zika. There is mounting concern at the use of broad spectrum insecticides. A better-focused approach that affects only the target species has obvious benefits compared to the release of toxic chemicals into the environment that have impacts on a range of insects and other forms of life.

In chapter 2 of our report, we try to explain—it is rather complicated—the science behind GM insect technologies, which can be grouped into either population suppression or population replacement strategies. Population suppression of the mosquito *Aedes aegypti* is being trialled by Oxitec. A population of modified so-called sterile insect males is reared in the laboratory which, while able to reproduce, have non-viable offspring. Recent advances in molecular biology provide an array of techniques for engineering gene drive mechanisms and editing genes, the result being the ability to modify insect populations rapidly. The so-called sterile males mate with the female and if enough are released the population will be suppressed. The results from field trials in Brazil, the Cayman Islands, Panama and Malaysia have been impressive, with reduction of populations of *Aedes aegypti* of over 90%.

The second strategy of population replacement requires less mass rearing than population suppression strategies and would lead to heritable constructs spreading throughout the populations. As these modifications will be persistent in the environment, there must be much more rigorous assessments of the long-term environmental impacts compared to the population suppression strategies, where no such modifications persist. In paragraph 129, we draw attention to the regulatory challenge of genetically modified organisms designed to persist in the environment. We conclude that we will need better tools for the monitoring of GM insects in the environment and that underpinning research is required in order to allow effective monitoring and tracking of these heritable traits.

The United Kingdom has a number of leading academic research groups active in this area and, more generally, a strong bioscience sector in universities, research institutes and small and large companies. For example, there is a group at Imperial College funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, working on a different approach to Oxitec's to cause a detrimental effect to the reproductive capacity of the mosquito population. It is encouraging that there are these different approaches that derive from the new gene-editing

opportunities. We should expect, however, the United Kingdom's lead position in the development of GM insect-based control methods to be challenged by competition from the USA, China and elsewhere. We recommend in paragraph 72 that Innovate UK should provide targeted funding in this emerging technology on the grounds of economic benefit to this country and the potential benefits to global health.

The immediate beneficiaries of GM technologies that serve to control insect-borne diseases are most likely to be in low and middle-income countries. For resource-poor countries with limited regulatory capacity, GM insects may represent a problematic area of governance and regulation. We recommend in paragraph 86 that the Government, in the light of their strong commitment to international development, work through international organisations to help to address challenges of international guidance and appropriate regulatory framework.

The EU regulatory process for genetically modified organisms is deeply flawed. We set out in paragraph 91 how the regulatory process should work, from application for a commercial release, then identification of risk concern, risk assessment, risk management and finally a decision. In practice there has been political deadlock between member states and an inability to get a decision, with ever more reviews and information requested and the application stalled. Agreement was reached two years ago on allowing national derogations for commercial cultivation of GM crops, but only time will tell if this will break the gridlock, the fundamental cause being political interference once the scientific risk assessment has been completed.

Against this background of failure to implement the EU regulatory process for GM crops without political interference, there is inevitable concern that Europe will fail to realise the potential of GM insects. We heard repeatedly that there are currently no means to consider the potential benefits of GMOs within the regulatory regime. Decisions are made entirely on the basis of risk alone. A potential new GM insect technology to reduce an agricultural pest population would not be compared alongside the insecticide currently used to tackle the pest. However Sir Roland Jackson, executive chair of Sciencewise, stressed to us in his evidence that benefit is not the opposite of risk. He urged that benefits and disbenefits be considered alongside each other, and that seems to be sensible advice.

Whether the first application to release GM insects in the UK for research purposes is for research on crop protection or for the control of disease-carrying insects, there needs to be in place appropriate policy direction before such an application is made. The decision on whether to allow such a release must be made against a background of scientific risk assessment of the environmental hazards and exposure to these technologies but must also involve public dialogues, conversations and explanations of the science. These conversations and this dialogue need to take place alongside the development of the new technology.

It was to stimulate such a dialogue sooner rather than later that we recommended that the Government invest in a GM insect field trial to test fully the science of GM insects and to test whether the regulatory processes are fit for purpose as well as to stimulate

[THE EARL OF SELBORNE]

public engagement. In order to widen the debate and ensure that all aspects are given adequate consideration such a trial should be dual-approach in nature and investigate both an agricultural pest and a species of mosquito. The Government's response to this proposal was unenthusiastic to say the least. Paragraph 28 of the response states:

"The Government will keep under review the recommendation that a public dialogue should be undertaken when GM technologies are near to potential commercialisation in the United Kingdom", while paragraph 25 states that the Government are not prepared,

"to open up the existing regulatory regime for public debate".

The Government should show more confidence in the public to participate and contribute to both the regulatory framework and the policy direction.

Around the world, this technology is playing an increasing role, with UK science leading the world. If we are to avoid the damage to our economy we have suffered through failure in Europe to implement as intended our regulations for GM crops, we need to learn from this experience and we must allow the public to participate in policy formulation. I beg to move.

3.33 pm

Lord Fox (LD): My Lords, first, I apologise for being somewhat wet as a result of the external conditions—although many people think that that comes as an occupational hazard of sitting on these Benches.

I thank the chair not only for his excellent summary of the report but for his wisdom and his tolerance in putting up with me as a new member of the committee. This is the first report that I have had the pleasure of working on. I also thank and praise those who gave us such expert support. It requires a tolerant demeanour to coach someone on the differences between population suppression and population replacement. We should also thank those who gave evidence. We received a very good body of evidence, though with one exception, as some of the more vociferous external environmental groups chose not to give evidence. I am disappointed that they did not feel able to come up with some evidence.

When considering the topic at the beginning I felt that it was somewhat arcane and a narrow corridor of science. I have to admit that that view was wrong then and, now that the situation has developed, it is even more wrong. The challenges we face, some of which our chairman highlighted, show that the technology is highly relevant and absolutely on the money in addressing, or potentially addressing, some of those problems.

First, the report establishes that this technology really does have potential benefits. That is the most important thing—that it offers hope and potential benefit. As the chairman pointed out, these benefits come in two forms. In terms of agriculture, and especially as a result of climate change, biting insects will increasingly plague our herds and flocks and crops will increasingly be under attack from pests. So there are significant potential benefits for farmers in the northern hemisphere as the climate changes.

Secondly, there are potential applications in public health, which I will talk more about later. We have already heard about some of the elements of that effort. The chairman has focused on the situation with dengue. There are also hundreds of millions of cases of malaria, from which hundreds of thousands of people die. This technology might offer another avenue of support in the fight against malaria and we should not underestimate it. The committee identified dengue as one of the prime concerns—to which we later added Zika, which a fellow committee member will speak about later. We have an opportunity to use this technology in the public health arena not only to solve big global problems but perhaps to capture the public's imagination in a way that some of the technology's more agricultural applications have never been able to do.

The report also clearly identifies that the UK leads in this technology. We should always remember that we have a strong science base in this country and always cherish it. The creation of such a base does not happen by accident. One of its many outputs is the fact that we lead in this particular science. However, the fact that we lead in this science does not necessarily mean that this country and our companies will be the ones to apply it. Investment in this technology is vital and, as the chairman said, Innovate UK is one of the avenues for making it.

Perhaps one of the greatest existential challenges to implementing this technology has already been alluded to—the regulatory regime under which we are governed. The report highlights the brake on field trials created by the EU regulatory environment. The report also points to regimes in places such as Canada, where trait-based and other techniques are used to create the regulation. However, perhaps the magic bullet that some are thinking of—namely, that the European Union will cease to be the regulatory authority for science in this country—is not the magic bullet that is hoped for. Let us consider, for example, how the derogation has performed. It has given our Government an opportunity to step in. However, the evidence given in the other place does not indicate that there will be a rush to massively change our current regulatory environment, and there is no reason to assume that there will be a sudden turnaround. If an example is needed, consider the fact that some of the UK legislatures, such as the Scottish Parliament, have already made choices about what they think should happen regarding GM technology.

The challenge for scientists, those who advocate on behalf of scientists and those who wish to see a rational approach to the application of science is still the need to win the hearts and minds of the public. We have to sell this. We cannot rely on "one leap and we're free from this terrible regime". My proposition and prediction is that the regulatory environment will not change overnight if that freeing-up takes place.

There is already tremendous potential around genetic technology. Almost on a daily basis gene editing is producing news and a news flow, particularly around public health and human health. This science can start to catch the imagination of individual members of the public in a very positive way because it is a technology that can tackle genuine global health issues. Therefore,

it is the health issue rather than the agricultural issue that provides the opportunity to really sell and talk about this technology in a positive way.

This is about development. As has been stated, the majority of the people who suffer from the public health implications of insect-borne diseases are not in the northern hemisphere; they are in the southern hemisphere, and they are in poor countries where this technology can best be used or trialled to solve problems. From a commercial point of view it is not a very attractive business proposition because it is about development. In this country we have the best technology but we also have one of the most highly developed and funded overseas development machines. It seems to me that we have the opportunity to combine the two to start the process of applying this technology in a very positive way in the places where it would be most effective.

I made my maiden speech during the passage of the Bill to introduce the 0.7% foreign aid target. The major point that I made was that, in order for there to be effective projects in overseas development, you need long-term planning, and you can only really have the prospect of long-term funding, followed by planning and proper goals which you audit against, if you know that the money is coming. That was my reason for supporting that Bill. Now that we have that money, here is a project where there could be some long-term planning. In the report we talked about money from the Ross Fund, but I call on Ministers in DfID and beyond to think about how to unite with the scientists to bring this technology forward. I believe that the chief technology officer in DfID will be coming before the committee quite soon and I hope that this is something that we can discuss. This science has great potential. The UK leads in the science and in overseas development, so it is time that we put those together and got going on something that could make a big difference to the world.

3.42 pm

Lord Patel (CB): My Lords, I, too, start by thanking the noble Earl, Lord Selborne, for his masterly chairmanship of the committee. I also thank our special adviser and the clerk of the committee for all their help. I was delighted to be co-opted on to the committee, as I was not a member of the Science and Technology Committee.

Before I address the issues in the report, I should like briefly to talk on a personal level. I often visit Tanzania, the country of my birth, as I am involved in a charity that trains doctors and nurses to treat women who suffer from obstetric fistula. On a visit two years ago, I went to the northern Serengeti—some of your Lordships may have been there—to observe the great migration of wild animals. It is an incredible spectacle. A tent—albeit a luxury one—in the bush surrounded by wild animals is an ideal culture medium for the breeding of tsetse flies, which transmit the vector-borne African trypanosomiasis, or sleeping sickness, caused by a protozoa. It is different from American trypanosomiasis, which causes Chagas disease. Over three days in the bush I must have been bitten more than 100 times. My driver tried to reassure me by

saying, “You don’t have to worry until you’ve been bitten 1,000 times”. His interpretation of statistics was slightly different from mine.

Although the number of sleeping sickness cases is falling through the use of traditional methods, the current methods obviously are not working well in controlling tsetse flies—including the chemicals that are used to sterilise the flies. For these and other insect vector transmission diseases, traditional methods of control are not adequate for diseases such as those already mentioned—Chagas, malaria, dengue, Lyme disease and now Zika. The genetic modification of insects has to be an additional method of controlling these and other emerging insect-borne diseases. And rest assured, there will be other diseases on the horizon that are both insect and fly-borne.

Genome editing with engineered nucleases that act as molecular scissors is a type of genetic engineering in which DNA is inserted, deleted or replaced in the genome of an organism. Most people have heard of genes, even if it is not clear what all genes do. A gene is the name given to a section of DNA. Genes produce proteins that influence everything, including diseases. Offspring inherit genes from their parents. Genetics is the science of studying and manipulating genes. It is now more than 50 years since Watson and Crick discovered the structure of DNA—by the way, this is Crick’s centenary year.

Genetics has contributed to many important scientific developments, including: understanding and treating diseases such as cystic fibrosis; developing drugs for the treatment of cancer such as Herceptin, which is used in the treatment of breast cancer; and enabling the manufacture of human insulin to treat diabetes. With the more recent advances in gene editing, we now have the ability to manipulate genes in many different ways to treat human diseases and, in agriculture, to improve crop output. As we read recently in the media and saw on yesterday’s “Horizon” programme, we now have the ability to use gene editing techniques to grow human organs in animal chimeras.

The genetic modification of organisms is not new. It dates back to 1970. One of the early results of genetic modification was insulin production by bacteria through the insertion of human genes into bacterial DNA: producing pure insulin by synthesising the human protein. Similar technologies produce proteins of growth hormones, blood-clotting factors and others. Also, the hepatitis B and human papilloma virus, or HPV, vaccines are produced using similar techniques. Genetic modification has the potential now to develop new types of cancer vaccines in future.

In the context of today’s debate, the company Oxitec, spun out of Oxford University, has applied a technique for controlling populations of insect vectors that carry diseases. Our committee chairman, the noble Earl, Lord Selborne, mentioned in his opening remarks the control of diseases such as malaria, dengue, Chagas disease, Chikungunya and now Zika, which I am sure the noble Viscount, Lord Ridley, will address. I did threaten him that I would speak about Zika and he gave me a bad look. I am sure that he will have something to say, and that most of us read his excellent article on Zika in his *Times* column.

[LORD PATEL]

I believe that the genetic modification of insects as vectors of organisms that cause much human death and misery will become a key component of vector control to reduce, or even eliminate, risk to humans from some of these diseases. If techniques of genetic modification and gene editing to control, treat or eliminate disease are to become more acceptable to the public, then, as is addressed in chapter 5 of our report, public concerns and anxieties have to be addressed from the outset. Recent coverage of gene editing being used to treat human diseases helped raise public awareness, particularly of the benefits of such biotechnology, as did the reports in the media following the publication of our report. History shows that the genetic modification of organisms is an area of high public interest. It raises public anxiety and ethical issues, sometimes real but most of the time perceived, that need to be addressed. The mostly positive comments in the media, as I mentioned, are helpful.

It was suggested to us in our inquiry that public perception of GM insect technology is likely to be influenced by attitudes developed in response to the public debate on GM crops, often promoted through misrepresentation of the science and its effects. We therefore recommend in our report that early action should be taken to inform debate and involve the public in relation to the genetic modification of insects to control human diseases—and the methods used are both for the control of insect populations and for population replacement strategies.

It has to be said that, despite the ethical and safety concerns that were highlighted to us, we did not hear any suggestion that GM insect technology should not be explored. We recognise that the public debate that relates to the use of technology for public health initiatives should be considered separately from the debate that relates to the use of technology for agriculture. In our recommendations we see a strong role to be played by the Government in initiating such a debate, but the Government's response in this area was lukewarm. I therefore hope that the Minister will take the opportunity today to put on record a strong commitment that the Government will lead the debate in these and other areas of potential benefit from the technology, such as gene editing and the control and treatment of diseases.

While I admit a bias, I believe that the use of gene editing and genomic modification technology in prevention and treatment offers huge potential for the future of medicine.

3.52 pm

Viscount Ridley (Con): My Lords, I, too, begin by paying tribute to my noble friend Lord Selborne's chairing of this committee. The subject could not have been more topical, the science more ground breaking or the policy lessons more vital. We produced punchy recommendations which received, I am afraid, a disappointingly limp government response—I will come back to that.

I also echo my noble friend Lord Selborne's comments about Chris Clarke, Cat Ball and Mike Bonsall, who gave us tremendous support during the committee, and what he said about Lord Peston—it was a privilege

to experience his remarkable brain at close quarters and I am sorry I will not have that chance again. I also thank the noble Lord, Lord Patel, for suggesting this topic to the committee in the first place.

The terrifying discovery, about a month after our report came out, that Zika was causing birth defects rather dramatically underlined the vital timing of our inquiry. I want to focus on Zika, as has already been suggested—I did not mean to frighten off the noble Lord, Lord Patel, to whom I apologise; he could have talked about Zika if he had wanted. The noble Lord said that it is 100 years since Francis Crick was born. Tomorrow will be 100 years precisely, so, again, the timing is good.

We have an extraordinary British innovation which was by good fortune already being tested in Brazil on the very species that is a vector for Zika. Oxitec is the only company in the world currently in a position to defeat this outbreak, because we do not have a vaccine and we can use the technology. Oxitec's CEO, Hadyn Parry, testified to Congress last month and gave a very bullish account of what the company could begin to achieve. Yet the technology is being stifled by EU bureaucracy at home—I promise I will resist the invitation from the noble Lord, Lord Fox, to talk about Brexit on this occasion—so it is doing all its work in the Americas.

It is disappointing that the Department for International Development did not join in the response to our report, because, as has been said, particularly by the noble Lord, Lord Fox, this is an important area where Britain could help the developing world. We should proactively fund trials of GM insects in the UK—on agricultural pests, for example—but also in UK Overseas Territories, where we can more readily apply them to vector-borne diseases. We should fund the expansion of facilities to breed GM mosquitoes in countries such as Brazil. We should help smaller countries put in place the right sort of regulation to encourage safe use of GM insects. We should fund efforts to combat the disgraceful misinformation about this technology that has been promulgated by some irresponsible Greens. Will the Minister address the point that the £1 billion Ross Fund could carry out some of the agenda I have just listed?

It is worth going into the background of the *Aedes aegypti*, the mosquito in question, to understand how crucial GM insects will be in this battle. It is a domesticated species—that is to say, it only lives around human habitation, has done so for thousands of years and only feeds on people. So its viruses will adapt to human bodies or they will die out. Yellow fever, dengue, chikungunya and now Zika have done that—and, as the noble Lord, Lord Patel, said, there are bound to be more to come. Humanity is a sitting duck for this mosquito.

Even if we eventually get a vaccine against any new *Aedes* virus, as we did against yellow fever, we need to control the mosquito in order to prevent the next virus coming along. It is the only preventive option. As the noble Lord, Lord Selborne, said, unlike mosquitoes that carry malaria, *Aedes* is day active, so bed nets are no good, and nor is spraying the inside of houses during the day. We can continue to defeat malaria without GM insects, but that may not be true of Zika or dengue.

Brazil eradicated *Aedes aegypti* entirely between 1947 and 1958 using insecticides, but it came back and it is not possible to repeat that eradication today because of the vast expansion of urban areas and the fact that people are much less happy now to let people with fogging machines invade their private property and spray their children's toys and so on, because of a general distrust of spraying. Anyway, the best you can do with insecticides these days is probably to reduce populations by about 60%.

Oxitec's five trials in the wild, of suppressing the population by releasing males that produce offspring that cannot survive, achieved 92%, 92%, 93%, 96% and 99% reductions in population—three of them in Brazil, one in the Cayman Islands and one in Panama. There was no risk to human beings because these male mosquitoes do not bite and, by definition, of course, they cannot breed because their offspring cannot survive to adulthood. So, the trait cannot persist in the environment. The noble Lord, Lord Krebs, will discuss the ecological impacts of these insects.

Oxitec is rapidly expanding its facility in Brazil. It will be in a position to release half a billion mosquitoes this year and 3 billion next year. However, it is uphill work. Outrageous and disgraceful rumours repeated by some organisations, even over here, that the GM mosquitoes actually caused the Zika birth defects have hampered the spread of this technology. This cannot be true for three reasons. First, Zika caused birth defects elsewhere in the Pacific where Oxitec has never set foot and long before it started its trials; secondly, there is a huge geographical separation between where the trials took place and where the birth defects first showed up; and, thirdly, for the basic scientific reason that it is an RNA virus and the insert is a DNA insert.

We cannot allow this remarkable technology to slip through our fingers in this country, as happened with genetically modified crops. Twenty-five years ago the UK led the way in GM crops. The John Innes Institute and the Plant Breeding Institute were world leaders in that technology and are now ghost laboratories. The technology proved to be world conquering but we played little role in it. Global economic benefits are now reckoned to be in the order of \$150 billion, according to the latest report.

The net effect of the anti-GM protest, led by lords in white boiler suits, has been to make us more reliant than the rest of the world on chemicals, according to the PG Economics report. As Oxitec told us:

"As an applicant we believe that the European system does not work because it is just not predictable. You put an application in and you can never predict when you are going to receive a response. That is bad for innovation and it is bad for companies".

Innovate UK told the committee:

"The UK has the capability in the underpinning science and technology to benefit economically whether that deployment is within the UK, EU or elsewhere. However, where deployment is only possible in overseas markets, the UK risks losing its world-leading talent".

So it is vital that we unblock the logjam in the European Union. National derogation is supposed to help do this, but there is precious little sign that it is working. In any case, it applies only to GM crops and not to

GM insects. Perhaps I may ask the Minister if there are plans to tackle that omission. As we said in our report:

"We are concerned that a situation has arisen whereby applications are not received due to concerns over the regulatory framework, yet the regulatory framework cannot be tested nor improved until such an application materialises."

This is a Catch-22. There are no applications for GM insects in Europe because everybody knows that it is impossible to get through the bureaucracy. Yet there are obvious applications here in Europe: olive fly, diamondback moth and spotted wing drosophila are all terrific agricultural pests. Indeed, the impending threat from *Aedes albopictus*, the Asian tiger mosquito, which can carry dengue and probably Zika, will also be a concern because it is spreading through Europe very rapidly. Anyone who has been on holiday in Italy or the Balkans will have been bitten by it.

We can use this technology to combat invasive alien species. I raised in the committee and raise again now the serious point that the signal crayfish, which is devastating many rivers, including the River Blyth in my native Northumberland, cannot be controlled by chemicals or biologically and is rapidly wiping out our native white-clawed crayfish. As a matter of some urgency, we should try to fund research into ways of suppressing its population using exactly this technology. I wonder if my noble friend can respond to that suggestion—I am sorry to put him on the spot.

We have a golden opportunity to suppress the populations of major disease vectors thanks to a new and inherently safe technology, and I believe that we should grasp it.

4.01 pm

Lord Krebs (CB): My Lords, I too thank the noble Earl, Lord Selborne, for his excellent chairmanship of this inquiry, to which I was co-opted as a member of the committee. I would also like to echo the thanks given to my colleague from the University of Oxford Department of Zoology, Professor Mike Bonsall, for his wise and authoritative advice as our specialist adviser during the inquiry. I should perhaps also declare an interest in that Oxitec, about which we have already heard, was set up by another colleague in my department, Professor Luke Alphey, and eventually my department will benefit financially from the sale last year of Oxitec to Intrexon, a US company, for \$160 million.

We have heard a great deal already about the potential benefits of the genetic modification of insects both in agriculture and in relation to the control of insect-borne diseases in human beings. I do not wish to go over that ground—rather, I want to make a single point which was put to the committee very forcefully by Professor Chris Whitty, one of our witnesses. He pointed out that we must remember that GM insects, while they have their place, will not be a magic bullet. They may be more applicable in certain situations than in others. The ways of limiting the spread of human diseases that are transmitted by insect vectors depend on three factors. You can control the number of insect vectors around, and that is what we have heard about in terms of population suppression. You can control the longevity of the insect—how long it lives—and what is known

[LORD KREBS]

as the bite rate: how often it attacks human victims. In the case of night-flying mosquitoes that carry malaria in Africa, controlling the bite rate by distributing bed nets impregnated with insecticide is an effective strategy and may indeed be more effective than GM population suppression. However, as we heard so eloquently from the noble Viscount, Lord Ridley, and others, for day-flying mosquitoes such as *Aedes aegypti*, that transmit the Zika virus and dengue, using GM to suppress their population may be a powerful control strategy.

I am not going to go over the problems of the European regulatory regime which we have already heard much about. Instead, I want to talk about the risks associated with GM insects in the environment. Here I thank the noble Viscount, Lord Ridley, for his trailer. What exactly are the ecological risks? The important starting point is that no control strategy is risk-free: spraying with pesticides to reduce insect populations is not risk-free; vaccinating people against diseases is not risk-free; and GM insects are no exception. The sensible questions are therefore: what is the relative risk, how do the risks associated with GM insects compare with alternative strategies, how does the balance of risk stack up against benefits, and are the risks acceptable in light of the potential benefits?

We took evidence on the worries that people have about releasing genetically modified insects into the environment. Some of these are general concerns about the control of intellectual property, “playing God with nature”, and a lack of trust in scientists and, in particular, in business. More specifically, the risks that relate to scientific understanding were of three kinds: the possibility of the evolution of new and more virulent pathogens; the possibility of transfer of genes, for example, genes for sterility from the genetically modified mosquitoes or other pests released into the environment to other harmless or even beneficial insects; and the unforeseen impacts on ecological communities.

All of these are real possibilities and deserve proper scientific scrutiny on a case-by-case basis, which is one reason why we need field scale trials to gain proper understanding. Let me briefly elaborate on the question of unforeseen ecological impacts. Would drastically reducing the population density of insect vectors, particularly mosquitoes, have unforeseen ecological consequences? This is a reasonable question. We know, for example, that the decline in the song thrush population of the United Kingdom is probably partly as a consequence of the use of molluscicides that kill snails—one of the main food items of song thrushes. Are there comparable unforeseen consequences? That question is relevant, of course, whether the reduction in the insect population is brought about by genetic modification, the use of pesticides or habitat removal.

In seeking to answer this I went to my academic colleagues—experts on the ecological consequences of mosquito control, notably Professor Charles Godfray and Professor Owen Lewis. I asked the question: what is the point of mosquitoes? That is another way of asking what mosquitoes do for us, apart from transmitting diseases. One possible consequence would be that predators that live on mosquitoes and are beneficial or nice to have around would suffer if mosquitoes were removed. There is a salticid spider called *Evarcha*

culicivora that feeds on engorged mosquitoes in Africa. One possible effect would be to lose the population of salticid spiders.

Another possible consequence would be what ecologists call “competitive release”—the removal or reduction in one species leads to an increase in another species that is a competitor with the one taken away. However the view of the experts from whom I sought advice is that the ecological impacts of drastic reductions in mosquito populations are likely to be minimal. There is evidence of that because where spraying or bed nets have been used to reduce anopheles populations—the mosquito population—in Africa, there have been no detectable unforeseen ecological consequences.

The only way in which to resolve these questions definitively and reduce uncertainty is to take the bold step of carrying out carefully conducted and monitored field trials. They could either be in the UK or, as has already been said, in the British Overseas Territories, such as the Cayman Islands. There is a real case for the Government to take firm leadership and say that they will carry out field scale trials to further knowledge, reduce uncertainties, and therefore indirectly feed into the regulatory regime. If the UK wishes to be a leader rather than a follower, I urge the Minister to reconsider the Government’s position on this matter.

Let me turn briefly to the question of public perception of GM technologies; we have heard a substantial amount about this from the noble Lords, Lord Fox and Lord Patel, as well as the noble Viscount, Lord Ridley. I want to make three brief points, taking lessons from GM crops and GM medicines. First, the so-called rejection of GM foods by the public is no such thing. When GM tomato paste, clearly labelled as such, was first introduced by Sainsbury’s on to our supermarket shelves in the 1990s it sold well because it was very slightly cheaper and tasted better than the comparable conventional variety. It was only after certain campaigning groups, aided by irresponsible print media such as the *Daily Mail*, whipped up unnecessary fear with absolutely no evidence that the supermarkets retreated and declared they would not sell GM foods of any kind.

Secondly, the last time the Government tried to test public opinion on GM foods, the consultation process was hijacked by campaigning groups and the results were misleading. In the early 2000s the Government launched a consultation called GM Nation?, which included setting up a website. More than 37,000 people logged on to the website to express their views about GM foods. Those 37,000 responses were overwhelmingly negative. However, at exactly the same time, Professor Nick Pidgeon, then of the University of East Anglia, carried out a properly designed, stratified random sample survey of public opinion, which showed something quite different. It showed that the public did not object to GM foods. So when we think that the public are frightened, we really have to wonder whether that is simply a myth.

Thirdly, although the press and campaigning groups worked hard to prevent GM foods being marketed in the UK, they said nothing about GM insulin, about which we have already heard from the noble Lord, Lord Patel, and which is taken by many diabetics.

Why is that? I believe the reason is, as the noble Lord, Lord Fox, already indicated, that GM insulin has an immediate direct benefit to people in this country, while the first generation of GM crops primarily benefited producers in other countries. When I explained this to the then US Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman, his laconic response was—I will try to do the American accent—“I see what you mean, John. What we need is the tomato with the Viagra gene”.

As the noble Lord, Lord Fox, eloquently explained, the health benefits of GM insects in controlling human diseases—we have already heard from the noble Viscount, Lord Ridley, that Zika is probably on its way to Europe, transmitted by a different species of *Aedes*—give us a real opportunity to take the promotion of GM technology out to the public. Perhaps we can learn useful pointers on how to do that from the lessons we learned over GM foods.

Finally, only last week the UK was ranked fourth in the good country index by its global contribution to humanity. One of the reasons why we ranked so highly was that in science and technology we rank at the very top in the world. Promoting use of GM technology judiciously, with careful thought and study of the possible risks, is a way we can further contribute to the well-being of humanity globally.

4.12 pm

Lord Taverne (LD): My Lords, I declare an interest as the founder and subsequent chairman of the charity Sense about Science. Not only is this a very important report about GM insects; for some of the reasons mentioned, it may have an important influence on the future of genetic modification in general. The WHO has expressed increasing concern about the danger of infection by the Zika virus. The dengue epidemic spread by the same mosquito is spreading faster than Ebola, for instance, and while generally dengue is a more minor disease—not life-threatening—evidence of a link with microcephaly now seems to be strong and generally accepted. Severe dengue fever is a serious disease, though with a death rate of less than 1% with adequate treatment.

As has been mentioned, there is no vaccine against the Zika virus, and one is unlikely to be available for some years. But, as the report points out, field trials in Brazil of the release of genetically modified *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes have been extremely successful, with a success rate of as much as 96%. It is noteworthy that public opinion generally has welcomed these experiments and that the Government of Brazil have approved further trials. This suggests that any public opposition can be overcome. Moreover, the modified mosquito is a form of sterile insect technique which stops mosquitoes breeding—a biological control to which the NGOs that normally oppose GM have not so far raised any objection.

Further, there is a possibility that gene editing might be one effective way to prevent the spread of malaria. One of the most interesting passages in the report, which was complete news to me, states:

“In November 2015, scientists announced that they had successfully used GM insect technology so that a modified mosquito passes on genes conferring resistance to a pathogen ... to almost all of its offspring, not just half, as would normally be expected. This offers

the possibility of a gene resistant to the parasite that causes malaria being able to spread quickly through a wild population of mosquitoes. In early December 2015, scientists, including Professor Austin Burt who gave oral evidence to our inquiry, announced findings that could speed up the development of techniques to suppress mosquito populations to levels that would not support malaria transmission”.

So what reason can there possibly be for not supporting and promoting the maximum, fastest possible application of this key technology? Could GM insects not finally be the breakthrough for a wider acceptance of the technique? Nearly two decades ago, many of us thought that GM golden rice, which could prevent half a million children a year going blind from vitamin A deficiency in south Asia, would persuade NGOs such as Greenpeace to drop their opposition to GMOs. They did not—and they succeeded in hampering and postponing its commercial development for nearly a decade. As this report shows, in many cases they are simply not interested in any evidence that conflicts with their prejudices. However, would they stop a form of sterile insect technique and possible prevention of the spread of malaria?

There may be some real problems to overcome, as was mentioned, particularly by the noble Lord, Lord Krebs. If we can eliminate the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, what will be the effect on the ecosystem? One question that I investigated, because it had been asked, was which species might be deprived of their food. True, there are fish and other insects that eat the *Aedes* larvae, and bats, birds and geckos eat the adults—but all these predators have other things to eat. Nevertheless, no one should ignore the possible ecological effects.

Then there are the Prince Charleses. “Editing genes? Playing God with nature? Divine vengeance might visit those who usurp His role”—or is it Her role? The report mentions the hostile reaction in many EU countries to genetic modification—but not, incidentally, from the European Commission, which has published many reports based on scientific evidence that dismiss the alleged dangers to health or the environment from GM crops. But health benefits—again, as has been observed—from genetic modification are generally easier to sell than those in plant breeding. Human insulin was mentioned as an example. Due regard for the possible problems, and careful handling of the publicity about the benefits that GM insects can produce, should, at the least, undermine the opposition that still exists.

4.18 pm

Lord Cameron of Dillington (CB): My Lords, I also served on the committee that produced this report and thank the noble Earl, Lord Selborne, for his wise chairmanship and the administrative team for their excellent support. My very short intervention will merely echo the main message of the report: namely, that in the fight against disease we need more tools in our toolbox, not fewer. Of course, by this stage in a debate it is inevitable that there are repetitions of points that have been made. I hope that noble Lords will support my view that repetition is a good way to strengthen an argument.

GM insects may or may not be the most effective, or even the most cost-effective, method of controlling disease, but we should not put barriers in the way of

[LORD CAMERON OF DILLINGTON]

their development. For instance, as the noble Lord, Lord Krebs, said, during our investigation we heard from Professor Whitty, among others, that using population suppression or population replacement as a weapon against malaria might at the moment not be cost-effective. As others have said, we appear to be gradually winning the battle against *Anopheles stephensi* and *gambiae*, which could be described as night-time mosquitoes, using bed nets and wall sprays. As others have said, the targeted distribution of bed nets has so improved that in the last 15 years deaths from malaria have been reduced by some 60% and the incidence of new cases of malaria by 37%. Of course, the more you reduce malaria, the less chance there is of a mosquito picking it up and passing it on. So the economic case for spending a lot of money on GM mosquitoes to combat malaria is, at the moment, not very good—but of course that could change.

However, with dengue fever, which, as others have said, is spread by the *Aedes* mosquito, *aegypti* and others, which could be described as daytime mosquitoes, the situation is very different. You can suppress their numbers by avoiding stagnant water—but that is pretty difficult in tropical countries, which is one of the reasons why dengue fever has increased 30-fold in the last 50 years, with more than 40% of the world's population now at risk. You can use intermittent fogs of chemical sprays during an epidemic, but that could have serious wider environmental consequences, so having a well-targeted tool such as a GM mosquito for population replacement could be a more risk-free alternative—if, of course, its effects are properly tested.

For me, I think that population replacement—that is, introducing mosquitoes with a gene drive that makes them no longer act as a vector—rather than population suppression, which has the possible risk of creating an environmental vacuum, looks like being the safest alternative. But, if properly tested for full effects, either might work. Equally in agriculture, it has always seemed to me that dealing with a disease at source, if that were possible, would always be better than the widespread spraying of chemicals into the environment.

As an aside from insects, I have always thought that using GM seeds to combat pests and diseases would be so much better for the environment than using sprays, both organic and non-organic. Sprays always have a wider effect than the target crop itself. The fact that the seed, or in this case the insect, might have been arrived at through genetic modification is frankly neither here nor there. It is the product and its place and effect in the environment that is the crucial factor, not how it was arrived at. As someone said in one of our evidence sessions, to think otherwise is rather like judging a book by whether it has been produced on a word processor or a typewriter rather than judging the quality and characteristics of the book itself.

So in the EU there could be a place for GM insects in the control of, for instance, Schmallenberg virus, bluetongue disease, the olive fly or the diamondback moth et cetera. We might also be able to use GM insects in our fight against invasive species, as the noble Viscount, Lord Ridley, said—although there we probably would be talking about population suppression.

Of course, it may not work. This whole science is still in its infancy and may not produce a totally effective solution. But in terms of agriculture there is now a very thin pipeline of replacement chemicals to ensure effective crop protection and production, mostly because of the EU assessments being based on hazard rather than risk—but I will not go there today. So this new science must be given a chance.

As I said at the beginning, we need more tools in our toolbox, not fewer, and that includes the possibility of having to use this sort of technology in the UK in the future to limit the effects of some life-threatening human disease, possibly dengue fever, malaria or the Zika virus now, as they move slowly northwards. In other words, we may need this tool at some point in the future as a matter of some urgency, and unless we have tested the problems of release in advance, it might take too long to get an effective solution under way. I should at this point stress that no one is asking that any corners are cut. While we have the time, we must take all the precautionary measures possible.

It would take years, maybe even a decade or so, of trialling and testing under controlled conditions before we would be in a position to even think of using such a solution to deal with diseases of either humans or animals in the UK. We truly need to know the total effect of such actions on the wider environment. Every variation or modification must be tested to the full—but the key phrase is, “while we have time”. When we really need these advances in science, we must be ready. It is by not being prepared that the temptation to cut corners could become more alluring. That is why the UK should be helping to run at least one controlled pilot scheme, either here or in partnership with a developing country.

In their response to our report, the Government thought that our proposal for a GM insect trial was an “interesting idea” for the future. They thought that there were no GM insects ready to be trialled in the UK, but that overlooks our overseas territories. They thought that such a trial would be unlikely to make much of an impact. Depending on how you interpret the word “impact”, in many ways that might be a good thing when you consider the absurd reaction to every other GM product. HMG also believe that the current regulatory framework is already able to cater for gene-drive mechanisms. All I can say is, “prove it”. If there is no appropriate product in the pipeline, the Government should clearly announce today their intended, immediate support for one when it comes along. As I said, we need more tools in our toolbox and not fewer.

4.26 pm

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch (Lab): My Lords, I am grateful to the Science and Technology Committee, and to the noble Earl, Lord Selborne, for giving us the opportunity to debate this important issue today. The science is still very much in its infancy and we therefore have the opportunity to shape its future development before it becomes more pressing. On a personal level, I am grateful that the implications of this developing technology have been placed very firmly on my radar. I learned a great deal from the report, from reading around the subject and from the debate today. I have a great deal more to learn than some other noble Lords

who have spoken. Even from my understanding, it is clear that there is a far-reaching ethical, commercial and scientific challenge to be addressed.

I make it clear, at the outset, that we have always sought to adopt a science-led approach, based on the best available evidence, to the application of emerging technologies, including GM. This includes taking heed of the very strong ethical and precautionary stance which underpins the work of the UK's highly respected scientific community. Nevertheless, the report faces us with new dilemmas to be balanced and determined. It sets out well the public benefit which could ensue from curtailing the impact of insect-borne infectious diseases. On the face of it, the potential to genetically modify mosquitoes could play a substantial role in tackling, for example, malaria and dengue. However, I also take the point, made by a number of witnesses to the committee, that this would be only one part of an arsenal of controls already used to good effect, such as vaccine, bed nets and anti-malarial drugs.

As we have heard, since the report was published, the potential for GM intervention has come into sharper focus with the spread of Zika and the very real potential for GM insects to be used in a targeted trial. This crisis has accelerated the debate about the efficacy of releasing GM insects; this will now, inevitably, be somewhat superficial because of the timescales we are working to. However, it is understandable that the WHO, in the absence of other effective strategies to tackle the outbreak, felt it necessary to endorse the use of these emerging technologies. I take the point made by Margaret Chan, leader of the WHO, who said that the spread of Zika is the price we are now paying for having "dropped the ball" in the 1970s, when we could have made more progress in controlling disease-carrying insects. Whether we like it or not, the race to control Zika has the potential to create a crucial field trial experiment as well as helping to spark the much-needed public debate.

The report also, quite rightly, identifies the contribution GM insects could make to agricultural output. As we have heard, the GM debate has in the past been focused on the impetus for farmers and food producers to increase profits through more intensive farming and higher yields. As such, there has been little public sympathy for the proposals when weighed against the perceived risks. But clearly the challenge is now more complicated than this.

First, we are facing a huge global crisis in food availability. Global food reserves are at a 40-year low yet at the same time the growing population means that by 2050 we will face a 50% increase in the demand for food. In the UK our levels of food self-sufficiency have dropped from 80% to 62% and continue to fall. There is therefore an imperative for all Governments to ensure that everyone has access to enough safe, affordable, nutritious food. This will inevitably include harnessing new technologies to increase yields. Secondly, as the report points out, the current tactic for controlling insect pests, which can create huge agricultural losses, is an overreliance on pesticides, with all the potential health and environmental dangers that result. So could the development of GM insects prove to be a more benign application than the chemicals currently in use?

These dilemmas are not easy to reconcile, which brings me to the regulatory and ethical questions posed in the report. First, the report highlights what it sees as the failings of the EU and international protocols for the testing and release of GM insects. I understand some of those frustrations but I support the Government's response to the report in this regard. Processes are already in place internationally to manage the handling, use and transport of GM organisms, including insects. As one of the countries at the forefront of developing these technologies, we should utilise and strengthen the existing protocols—and play a greater leadership role—rather than try to circumvent them.

Secondly, the report highlights the inadequacies of the current EU regime, which is underpinned by a hostility to GM crops. But again we agree with the Government that the initial focus should be to work through existing EU structures to argue for reform and modernisation. On this basis we share their reluctance to initiate a UK GM insect trial at this stage, before there is greater public and political awareness.

Finally, I return to the ethical questions posed by the report. It makes a compelling case for a stronger benefit/disbenefit analysis to be applied to GM insect applications but seems to dwell on the benefits rather than the risks. Arguably, the reason that progress in developing these technologies is slow is precisely because scientists and regulators are all too aware of the potential risks. Of course, releasing a self-limiting GM insect into the wild, which is programmed to die, is different from releasing one designed to breed and spread throughout the ecosystem. Unlike some of the other insect controls that the report identifies, this one would be irreversible and unable to be contained in a small geographic area. One country's experiment could impact adversely on another. This is why we need a proper scientific analysis of the likely consequences of release before we can measure them against the acknowledged benefits. It is also why we need an urgent public dialogue and wider conversations with diverse interest groups, as proposed at a recent Nuffield Council on Bioethics workshop.

In these contexts, I would have liked the report to address the identified risks and analyse and respond to them, very much in the way that the noble Lord, Lord Krebs, attempted to do this afternoon. I think that that analysis is key. Nevertheless, I am grateful to the committee for putting this important issue on the agenda. I hope it is the start of a widespread debate about the potential of the next generation of genetic technologies to make a real contribution to meeting our global challenges. As such, it is worthy of a much bigger scientific and public debate, which we have initiated today. I look forward to the Minister's response.

4.34 pm

Lord Gardiner of Kimble (Con): My Lords, I am most grateful to my noble friend Lord Selborne for introducing the issue of GM insects for this debate, and to your Lordships for such thought-provoking consideration. It would be fair to say that before the preparation for this debate, I came to the matter with an entirely fresh mind. It has been an exceptional debate, so I thank my noble friend and the other members of the Science and Technology Committee

[LORD GARDINER OF KIMBLE]

for producing such a valuable report on this matter. My noble friend was absolutely right to refer to the late Lord Peston, who was of course a very influential and important member of the committee.

It is appropriate that we should reflect carefully on this emerging and potentially important area of science and technology. In responding to the debate, I will first set out the Government's overall thinking on this issue before perhaps moving to some of the specific points raised. I was very struck by what the noble Lord, Lord Krebs, said in reference to the United Kingdom and our reputation as a leader on science. That is why I am very pleased that the Government have a strong record in supporting science and technology, which was shown by the decision in the spending review to ring-fence the overall science budget at £4.7 billion in real terms over the life of this Parliament. This means that by 2019-20, total expenditure will in fact be more than £400 million higher than today.

I assure the noble Lord, Lord Fox, that the Government are supportive of the opportunities and benefits that GM technologies could bring for business, the environment and society in general. British businesses should have access to the best technology available to remain competitive and support growth. As part of our industrial strategy, we encourage GM alongside other technologies and will continue to sponsor GM research. My noble friend Lord Selborne referred to GM insect technology offering significant new options for controlling insect-borne diseases and agricultural pests. I think that a number of your Lordships mentioned more about that. We therefore want to have the right frameworks in place to encourage research and innovation in this technology as with others, building on our already excellent science base.

Through the company Oxitec, the UK is leading the world in the development of a GM insect technology and offering the prospect of a viable approach to help tackle some very serious health issues, such as the Zika virus. I must of course accord my noble friend Lord Ridley the principal credit for referring to that in the debate. I should also refer to what the noble Lord, Lord Fox, said about malaria and to what was said about the agricultural issues. I was particularly struck by the reference of the noble Baroness, Lady Jones of Whitchurch, to the demand for food around the world and that of the noble Lord, Lord Cameron of Dillington, to the potential agricultural benefits from this, which could indeed be immense. I fear that the noble Lord, Lord Patel, was realistically pessimistic as to other diseases that we could find facing us in the future and our need to have preparedness. Oxitec has previously benefited from government support to help it develop. In the last five years, the research councils and Innovate UK have provided £5.6 million of funding for research on GM insects.

My noble friend Lord Selborne summarised for the House some of the main points of the report from his committee. One of its key themes is the regulation of GM insects, the release of which into the environment is subject to the same EU rules as apply for GM crops and other forms of genetically modified organisms. Under the EU controls, regulatory decisions on the release of GM organisms for trial purposes are taken

at national level, as was referred to, whereas commercial releases have to be approved at EU level. In either case, the decision should be grounded in a science-based and case-by-case assessment of the potential impact on human health and the environment. The Government support this science-based approach and recognise that the public need to be reassured that appropriate safety checks are in place. The noble Lord, Lord Cameron of Dillington, recognised that particularly, as did the noble Baroness, Lady Jones of Whitchurch.

No applications have been made for EU approval to release a GM insect. The only experience we have had with the operation of the EU regime has been in relation to GM crop plants, where, as has been referred to already, there is a lack of consensus among member states. This has meant that although Defra-licensed GM crop trials have gone ahead in England, the EU authorisation process has been slow, which in turn has not encouraged research and innovation. Because the EU regime is untested in relation to GM insects, it is not clear whether they would be subject to the same challenges which have arisen with GM crops. However, the regulations have not prevented work on GM insects progressing to its current state.

Your Lordships' committee has suggested that the EU regime should be significantly recast, with one of the main ideas being that regulatory decisions should take account of potential benefits rather than just focus on risks in isolation. The Government accept that there is a strong case for rethinking how the EU should regulate in this area. Whatever the intellectual merits of the argument, however, we need to consider whether opening up a debate on the EU regime would deliver a positive outcome.

Because of the attitudes towards GM crops that influence the European Parliament and the policy of several member states, there is a risk that changing the current regime could result in it becoming harder to authorise a GM product than it is now. For example, requiring a consideration of potential benefits and disbenefits could add delays and burdens into the EU process, so that in practice it constitutes an additional barrier to innovation.

This is why, on balance, the Government believe that for the time being it is better to argue for the regime to operate as the existing legislation says it should rather than argue for a major revision. Within the EU, the UK Government have been a leading voice in calling for the GM regime to function more effectively. We want timely, science-based decisions to become the norm and will continue to pursue that line in discussions with our EU partners.

Another of the committee's main recommendations was that the Government should consider targeted support for work on GM insects. The example of Oxitec has shown that it is possible for a UK company to develop a world-leading status in GM insect technologies within the existing framework for government-funded support. Researchers and technology developers can apply for responsive funding, whether pursuing basic research questions or work that would support UK industry and government objectives. Taking this and competing strategic priorities into account, the research councils and Innovate UK have concluded that investment in this area should continue to be

responsive in nature rather than targeted, although they remain open to considering more directed funding should the circumstances change.

The committee also proposed that the Government should pursue one or more GM insect field trials to give impetus to the development of the technology and to test the science and regulatory processes involved. It is already open for GM insect trials to take place in England, when a company or institute wants to pursue that as part of its research and development plans. An application would need to be made to Defra for clearance, and Ministers would take a decision based on advice from an independent scientific expert committee. If the advice were that there is only a negligible or manageable risk, then there would be an expectation that the trial would be approved, consistent with the Government's science-based policy. At present, the main focus of the company Oxitec is the release of GM versions of non-UK insect species, and for the foreseeable future there would be no grounds for trialling such insects here.

The noble Lord, Lord Cameron of Dillington, has suggested that, if not in the UK, we should support trials in our overseas territories and in developing countries. A number of such trials have already taken place as a result of Oxitec engaging directly with the host authorities to secure necessary approval. In particular, the GM mosquito, which may help to combat the Zika virus and dengue fever, has previously been released in the Cayman Islands, Brazil, Panama and Malaysia, and Oxitec is about to begin a further project to control mosquitoes in an area of Grand Cayman.

I reflected on what the noble Lord, Lord Krebs, said about Professors Godfray and Lewis, and the effect on the ecosystem. A number of your Lordships referred to it and I think that we will continue to reflect. Clearly, one of the important issues about all that we are seeking to do is to have a clear understanding of any of this work on the ecosystem.

It has been shown that the regulatory process for trials of GM organisms can function effectively in the UK, and an insect trial here would be unlikely to have any bearing on how the system might operate at EU level for approving the commercial release of GM insects. For the time being, therefore, the Government do not believe there is a strong case for proactively investing in GM insect trials, but this position will be kept under review. A further key theme raised by the committee's report is the need to consider suitable public engagement on GM insect technologies. My noble friend Lord Selborne, and the noble Lord, Lord Patel, noted in particular the recommendation that public dialogue should be instigated in conjunction with the recommended field trials in the UK.

I was struck by what the noble Lord, Lord Taverne, said about Brazil, and perhaps how the public have reflected positively, given what is happening in their country. For any new technology, public engagement is likely to be the most productive when specific applications of the technology in the UK are in prospect, so that people can consider in concrete terms what it might mean for them, thereby avoiding the risk of an abstract and perhaps theoretical debate, which may be somewhat meaningless.

The EU controls require Defra to consult the public before reaching a decision on a GM trial application,

and for relevant information to be made publicly available to underpin that process. A similar requirement would also apply in relation to an application for EU approval to release a GM insect commercially, with the European Commission responsible for inviting public comments. The scope of these engagement processes is constrained by the deadlines specified for reaching decisions on applications, and by taking as a given the overall terms of the existing regulatory regime. This in itself would make it difficult for the Government to initiate the more open form of public dialogue which the committee has in mind. Moreover, as I noted previously, the Government believe that they have to take a cautious approach on the idea of changing the EU regime, and support its core principle of science-based decision-making.

The committee also recommended that a broader programme of public engagement should take place when GM insects are close to commercial release in the United Kingdom. As things stand, this prospect is several years away at least, but the Government will keep this recommendation under review.

Noble Lords made a number of points. The noble Lord, Lord Patel, raised the issue of gene editing. At present, the European Commission is due to issue a paper later this year on whether organisms produced by gene editing and other new breeding techniques are subject to the GM regulatory controls. The Government are seeking an outcome on this issue at EU level that is science-based and proportionate and takes account of any safety considerations.

My noble friend Lord Ridley referred to invasive and non-native species—and I know he knows me well enough to know that I am fairly ferocious in my desire to deal with invasive non-native species. The Government are open to the use of GM technologies, subject to a science-based risk assessment affirming that there are no safety concerns. Potential applications of the technology have to be considered on a case-by-case basis but, in principle, if GM could help us to address problems with non-native species, that is something that we would be happy to explore.

My noble friend Lord Ridley also referred to the Ross Fund. The Department for International Development leads on applications for that fund. My department will bring to its attention for its consideration the proposal that the fund could be used to support the development and use of GM insect technologies in developing countries.

I remembered that there was something in my brief about GM olive flies. In answer to the noble Lord, Lord Cameron of Dillington, Oxitec withdrew its application for a trial in Spain relating to GM olive flies, but we understand that it intends to make a fresh application in due course involving a more recently developed and promising strain of GM olive fly.

This has been an exceptional debate. As so often happens in your Lordships' House, I have learned a great deal. It is clear that our future well-being and prosperity depend on continued advances in science and technology. With our world-class science base, the United Kingdom also has a role in helping to develop the technologies that can address global challenges—we have heard about many of them today—for agricultural or health purposes. That will be enormously important in our long-term quest for global food security and

[LORD GARDINER OF KIMBLE]

freedom from disease. Tackling these complex issues demands a range of different policy responses: one is having the right conditions in place to support new technologies, such as GM insects, which could be beneficial. The Government are firmly committed to that objective. The committee's report has helped us to focus on how best to achieve it. The committee's work has been immensely valuable and will be used as a quarry and a resource. I express my thanks to all members of the committee, including those who did not participate in the debate, for a very interesting piece of work.

4.51 pm

The Earl of Selborne: My Lords, it remains for me to thank all who participated in this debate, which has been of great interest. I thank the Minister for his response. He assures us that he will be using our report as a quarry and a resource but, alas, not too soon because he thinks that immediacy, so far as the United Kingdom is concerned, is some years ahead. Yet I detected a slight contradiction in his answer. He recognised that when dealing with alien species, for example, there might be relevance in the United Kingdom. Certainly in Europe the olive fly in Spain might well be addressed with the next application. If we do not get the GM regulatory regime in Europe to work, that will fail again. The Government's attitude that we should not reopen this issue because the debate might go the wrong way is not giving enough credit to the public of this country and the wider public. Of course there are many people who rightly have great suspicion and wish to have an absolute assurance that the risks are being properly assessed and that the benefits and the disbenefits—by which I mean the effects on society or the ecological impacts we have heard about—are being quantified.

No control policy is risk-free, but I suspect that this technology will be much more relevant in a shorter time than may have been apparent from the Minister's response. Defra should therefore continue to look at the possibility that there might well be an application for field trials in this country, certainly in Europe, as there has already been in our overseas territories. I hope that this report and debate have helped to encourage a wider debate about these issues which are of great interest to the wider public, remembering, of course, that we are custodians of a science the benefits of which are most likely to impact on countries without the resources we have. We have a responsibility to humanity and to feeding the world. This technology is not a silver bullet. We must not overstate its benefits, but we should not ignore them either.

Motion agreed.

EU Foreign and Security Strategy (EUC Report)

Motion to Take Note

4.54 pm

Moved by Lord Tugendhat

That this House takes note of the Report from the European Union Committee *Europe in the world: Towards a more effective EU foreign and security strategy* (8th Report, Session 2015–16, HL Paper 97).

Lord Tugendhat (Con): My Lords, I begin with thanks, in particular to my colleagues for their commitment and constructiveness, and to our excellent committee clerk Eva George, Roshani Palamakumbura, Will Jones and our specialist adviser Dr Kai Oppermann. We were extremely well served by all of them. On behalf of the committee I express my gratitude to them. I am also grateful to the Government and to the EU high representative and vice-president of the European Commission, Federica Mogherini, for their responses to our report, both of which we have had an opportunity to consider. Finally, I welcome the fact that so many of my colleagues are in the Chamber today and that a number will speak, as will a number of noble Lords who were not on the committee, which demonstrates the interest that the report has generated.

Inevitably, our work took place under the shadow of the referendum, and the referendum looms over our proceedings today. However, I stress that our inquiry was not taken for any reason connected with the referendum but because the high representative had stated some time ago that she was preparing a new EU strategy on foreign and security policy, to be published in late June. Our aim was to feed into and to influence that process. This exercise—the one we have been involved in but also the other work the EU Select Committee does—sets an example to parliaments throughout the European Union on how national parliaments can influence EU policy if they set out to study it and to make an input in due time. Our report today will have an impact, or will be seen to do so, on what Mrs Mogherini proposes at the end of June. Indeed, I am encouraged to learn from her response to our report that in a number of respects her thinking is very much in line with ours and, as I will make clear during the course of my speech, she has given other indications of the extent to which she and we have been thinking on similar lines.

At the beginning of our report we emphasised that foreign policy is the responsibility of the member states and that it should remain so. I was pleased to see that in a speech Mrs Mogherini gave in April at the European Union Institute for Security Studies she made exactly the same point. We want the European Union to provide the member states with an overarching framework within which they can act collectively and more effectively than in the past. This does not necessarily mean that all of them will work together all the time. Experience has shown that ad hoc groups acting on behalf of the Union as a whole can be the most effective means of achieving rapid and decisive action. One of a number of examples of that is of course the E3+3 on Iran. However, if one has an ad hoc group, the challenge is to ensure that the European Union has the means to ensure that the policies and actions of that group become and remain accepted by all the member states. To achieve this, we believe that the high representative should always be involved. In their response to our report the Government argue that that should not necessarily be a prerequisite. We think that the Government are mistaken because, although foreign policy is a member state responsibility, it is often executed by European Union institutions and by means of European Union instruments. The sanctions on Iran and Russia are obvious examples but one could

also take examples from the fields of development and trade. So in our view it will be less difficult to achieve and maintain unity, and therefore to maintain effectiveness in the implementation of policies, if the high representative is always present on these ad hoc groups.

That brings me to the issue of Britain's participation. Obviously, if we were to decide to leave the European Union, it would create a major upheaval in our relationships with our partners in NATO and in a number of other institutions, and it is hard to believe that foreign policy would be unaffected by that. Indeed, the fact that a number of previous NATO Secretaries-General and a number of former United States Secretaries of State have made their views known about how much they would regret Britain leaving the EU is perhaps an indication of that. However, even if the upheaval were less than I fear it might be and it were handled with the maximum good will on all sides, which naturally I hope it would be, Britain's departure from the European Union would put us at one remove from the execution process. No doubt we would still be able to align our actions with those of the European Union but this would be less effective and more time-consuming than being part of the EU process in the first place. Therefore, we conclude that British withdrawal from the European Union would both limit the United Kingdom's influence in foreign affairs and reduce that of the European Union.

Here, I should like to mention an exchange that I witnessed at an EU parliamentary conference in The Hague in April. Representatives of all the member state parliaments, as well as of the European Parliament, were there. One delegate—I do not know from which country she came—asked one of Mrs Mogherini's top officials whether it would not be easier to reach agreement on foreign policy matters if Britain left the EU. The official replied, "Yes, it probably would be easier but the agreement would be worth an awful lot less than if Britain remained in the EU". She emphasised that Britain is one of the most global member states of the EU and that the exercise of producing an EU foreign and strategic policy would be worth a good deal less if we were not part of it. I thought that that was a very apt reply and that it very much reflected the reality of the situation.

We also conclude that the most direct challenges to the security and stability of the European Union, to its member states and to the citizens of those member states originate in our neighbourhood, and that that is where the European Union's efforts should be concentrated. I note that in a recent speech Mrs Mogherini made a similar point. In our report we call in particular for relations with Turkey to be put on to a new and sustainable footing. We believe that its application for membership having been left on the back burner for goodness knows how many years has led to disarray in the relationship between Turkey and the EU, and that it is now very important that that relationship should be rebuilt on the basis of first principles.

We do not envisage Turkey becoming a member of the EU; rather, we were thinking in terms of a close association. In the light of some of the things that are being said in the referendum campaign, it is important to emphasise that any decision for Turkey to enter the

EU would require unanimity by all member states, that all member states would have a veto, and that a number of member states have made it clear in the past that they would exercise such a veto. None the less, we feel that a stable and clearly understood relationship between the EU and Turkey should be an important objective.

We have something to say too on relations with our other neighbours. So far as the Eastern Partnership countries are concerned we argue that, in the absence of a realistic timetable for entry into the Union, the European Union needs to define its objectives and interests and to communicate those as clearly as possible to the countries concerned. Most people will agree that when one looks at the political and economic state of those countries and the nature of their relationships with Russia, it is difficult to imagine them joining the EU for a very long time. However, at the same time, it is important that we have a clearly defined relationship with them, that our objectives and interests are stated, and that we avoid raising unrealistic expectations in those countries about what we are prepared to do and willing to deliver.

We believe that it is important for the European Union to continue to stand up to Russia's breaches of international law, but at the same time make it clear that our quarrel is not with the Russian people but with the Russian leadership and that we remain open to dialogue and co-operation in areas of common interest. In this context, we also talk of the need to strengthen EU and NATO deterrents in the Baltic states and the Black Sea.

It is against this background that we call for better co-operation between the European Union and NATO. We want a closer cultural convergence between the two organisations. We address this recommendation to member states of both organisations—they are, to a great extent, the same—as much as to the organisations themselves, as individual member states' foreign policy and defence postures can often diverge somewhat between what they say and do in an EU context and what they say and do in a NATO context.

Finally, I return to the Middle East. All of us are aware of the huge challenge of the migrant crisis, which has become more serious and more difficult since we completed our report. The migrant crisis was not part of our report's purview, but the crisis itself emphasises our recommendation that the EU should focus its attention on the linked issues in the Middle East of economic reform and good governance, and on the political, judicial and security sectors of those countries, and seek to assist in whatever way it can in their development.

That is a brief summary of what the committee has proposed. I am grateful to the Government and the high representative for their responses. I look forward to what my colleagues and others have to say. I beg to move.

5.09 pm

Lord Anderson of Swansea (Lab): I join the high representative and Mr Lidington, the Minister, in paying tribute to the noble Lord, Lord Tugendhat, and the members of his committee. I invite your Lordships to

[LORD ANDERSON OF SWANSEA]

imagine the headline: “Boris says EU will abolish the Foreign Office”. This is not far from similarly wild claims made by Brexit supporters. Their vision of an EU leviathan rolling over all our hallowed institutions, even in areas that are traditionally the preserve of the nation state—internal security and external relations—is far from the truth.

It is not surprising that, even at a time of globalisation, these areas of internal security and external relations are least touched by the European Union. Yet at a time of unprecedented movement of peoples, of international terrorism and of concern about climate change, it is increasingly difficult to draw a neat distinction between domestic and foreign affairs. Thus, co-operation with our EU partners is ever more necessary and best carried forward with common institutions. The questions posed in this thorough report are: how effective is that co-operation now and how best can it be improved?

I shall make three brief reflections. First, the core of our external relations is now and will remain our national foreign service, our national International Development department, our national intelligence and security services, and our national defence pooled through NATO. But there is a clear need to strengthen our joint impact overseas by working closely with our EU partners, including in the defence field and the European Defence Agency.

Within the EU, different sizes, geography and historic experience make some foreign services pre-eminent. Even if ad hoc groups are appropriate—coalitions of the willing—there must be mechanisms for consulting other EU countries. I recall in 1963 a telegram from our ambassador in Paris about a conversation with President de Gaulle. De Gaulle had said, “There are only two nations in Europe worthy of the name: France and the United Kingdom, and perhaps”—he said possibly as an afterthought—“the Dutch”. Certainly, France and the UK provide about two-thirds of the EU’s spend on research, but we should welcome Germany playing an increasing political and defence role commensurate with its immense economic strength. Let us remember that all countries within the European Union bring something special, something unique, to the table: Spain and Portugal, relations with Latin America; the Baltics and other eastern European countries, relations with Russia; Austria and Slovenia, relations with the Balkans; France, relations with west Africa; and ourselves, the Commonwealth, which at the previous CHOGM built an important consensus on climate change in advance of the historic Paris conference. We should also know ourselves. Europe should surely give priority to our neighbourhood, where our interests are most engaged—countries to the east of the European Union and countries to the south.

The report is right in drawing attention to Russia and Turkey. Over Russia, the European Union achieved a remarkable common policy on sanctions in response to Russia’s aggression in the Crimea and eastern Ukraine. Over Turkey, we have a long and protracted exercise in ambiguity and delusion, when surely we need honesty in our relationships. We need to forge a special strategic partnership with that important country—as the noble Lord, Lord Tugendhat, said, a close association. However, pace Ms Mordaunt, there is no serious prospect of

Turkey becoming a full EU member within a reasonable period, even though, as Mr Lidington stated in his letter of 15 April, there is,

“strong future potential in co-operation with Turkey”.

Again, we should remember that all European Union instruments, including the prospect of membership, succeeded in building a closer working relationship between Serbia and Kosovo. I give much credit to the noble Baroness, Lady Ashton, for her role in that new rapport, still much to be developed.

Secondly, whatever doubts may be expressed about the EU’s role in international affairs, the key fact is that the European Union already has an interface globally, with its responsibilities for trade and in the fields of energy and development policies—which might have had a higher profile in this report. Of course, it needs personnel to carry out these responsibilities.

Two questions arise. Is there sufficient co-ordination between all the relevant EU institutions, including the European External Action Service and the Commission, to maximise the impact—a problem of co-ordination not unknown in Whitehall in seeking to bring together the Foreign Office, DfID and the MoD? Again, how do we encourage more UK nationals, including FCO secondments, to join the EEAS and the Commission generally? Clearly, this is not encouraged by the Government’s past uncertain commitment to the European Union.

We need a debate about the nature of the EU contribution to international affairs. The old United States jibe was, “We”—that is, the US—“do the cooking, Europe will do the washing up”. Hard power is sometimes necessary. The US now presses us to play a greater role. We shall need to learn the lessons of past interventions—yes Iraq, yes Libya. We and France provide much of the hard power but the emphasis will often be on soft power across the spectrum—including sanctions, if we define sanctions still as soft power. We must recognise the difficulties of intelligence sharing, given the traditional open culture of the European Union and the understandable hesitations about sharing our intelligence.

The EU contribution will often be the spreading of our values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Our model and influence may be further harmed by the current policies in Poland and Hungary, and by some of the necessary alliances with certain dictators in west Africa in relation to the migrant crisis.

It is puzzling that the report makes no reference to the Council of Europe, which is the pre-eminent human rights body in Europe and to which the European Union often subcontracts its work on human rights and governance. The Venice Commission, for example, provides helpful advice on both the formation and building of constitutions across the east of Europe and to countries such as Tunisia.

The conclusion is that our strategy must be to concentrate as Europeans on our neighbourhood and on what we do best. Our interests as Europeans can best be furthered by working together. As the report rightly says:

“When the Union speaks with one voice and wields its entire arsenal of foreign policy instruments, it can be an uncommon and exceptional actor”.

5.18 pm

Baroness Suttie (LD): My Lords, as a relatively new member of the EU Sub-Committee on External Affairs, this is the first inquiry I have been involved with. I have found it an extremely positive experience. As the noble Lord, Lord Tugendhat, has already said, the report is an excellent example of the role that national Parliaments can play in producing considered and timely reports on matters of key importance to the EU. I am sure that I speak for all members of the sub-committee when I pay tribute to the highly effective chairing of our committee by the noble Lord, Lord Tugendhat. His excellent and eloquent speech today illustrates why we will miss him so much from our committee.

In exactly three weeks' time Mrs Mogherini will present her global strategy on foreign and security policy to the European Council in Brussels. This will take place just days after the result of the EU referendum. It will not, as certain elements of our media would have us believe, produce a secret blueprint for a European Army. As this report clearly sets out, foreign and security policy is and should remain the domain of member states.

Since the last EU foreign policy strategy review by Javier Solana in 2003, the world has changed substantially. We now face immense global challenges of population movement, civil wars on our borders and the environmental impact of global warming on a scale that 13 years ago even the most pessimistic would have been unlikely to forecast. During this timeframe we have also faced a financial crisis, economic recession and austerity measures, combined with a growing dislike of and lack of trust in the established elites shown by electorates across the European Union. It is against this backdrop that Mrs Mogherini has been producing her report.

The new global strategy should provide a framework for more effectively prioritising the EU's foreign policy and security objectives. It should look to areas where EU member states working together can add value. It should acknowledge the great potential that the EU offers through effective trade policy and its offer to third countries of access to a single market of 500 million consumers. It should look at ways to improve its working with other international organisations such as NATO and the United Nations, and with our partners such as the United States.

It should acknowledge that one of the most effective assets is through the combined use of resources, the potential to provide training, capacity building and the effective use of soft power which should complement the hard power and military capacity of NATO. As the Select Committee's report states, new ways of working more effectively together in ad hoc groups of countries should be encouraged and supported where experience, language and shared history make it sensible to do so. But first and foremost, the new global strategy should produce an effective response to the challenges and threats on our borders which are now having a direct effect on all member states, not just the United Kingdom.

In this excessively polarised EU referendum campaign, where exaggerated views are expressed in the most black and white terms, it is the debate in the area of

foreign and security policy where I personally have found myself becoming most irritated. The idea peddled by the leave campaign that somehow, if we remove ourselves from the European Union, we will also be able to remove ourselves from these global crises and challenges on our borders is frankly absurd. It is also wholly dishonest to the British people. Faced with such challenges, it is dishonest to suggest that if we pull up the drawbridge everything will be okay, and that Britain in splendid isolation will somehow be better equipped to deal with these global challenges on our own.

Our geographical position as a European country is an indisputable fact, no matter what the outcome of the referendum. We will continue to be affected by the war in Syria, instability in Africa and the mass movement of people northwards as a result of economic poverty or environmental disaster. Faced with such challenges, it seems only logical to work with our European partners to try to find effective joint responses to the difficult and rapidly changing events which are facing us all. I fear that if we do not work to find effective solutions together, the rise of populism and nationalism across the EU could threaten the very peace that the EU has so successfully helped to achieve on our continent. But producing joint responses will require genuine leadership and an honest debate with our populations about the realities of the scale of the problems that we are facing.

That is not to say that the European foreign and security policy has been without its flaws. As someone who studied and lived in the Soviet Union in the late 1980s and early 1990s at the time of its collapse, and who used to spend so much time there in the heady and optimistic days of the end of the Cold War, I feel deeply saddened by the missed opportunity of the eastern neighbourhood policy. I believe that we also significantly misread the Arab spring and have witnessed a badly co-ordinated follow-up response. Equally, we are currently in danger of badly mishandling relations with Turkey. We now find ourselves faced with an increasingly autocratic Erdogan and Putin, and a highly complex proxy war in Syria.

But there have been successes, too, as the report clearly sets out, notably in the deal struck with Iran and the united EU-wide approach to sanctions against Russia. However, I believe that it is in the UK's own interest to learn from past mistakes and to help lead and shape the future CFSP. After the fall of the Berlin Wall it was the UK that led the way towards EU enlargement by providing a process which led to the rule of law and democracy for our central and eastern European partners. Nobody should deny that the path is still quite bumpy in some of these countries, but within the framework of the EU it is much easier to maintain leverage. We sometimes forget now what the enlargement process has achieved: the rule of law, improved environmental standards, and democracy in countries which, when I was at university, were all still closed communist dictatorships.

The referendum debate's focus has been extremely Brito-centric. Much has been done to play on voters' fears of an increasingly scary and interdependent world. We have, however, concentrated rather less on the impact that our decision will have on our 27 member state partners. There can be little doubt that an EU foreign

[BARONESS SUTTIE]

and security policy would be significantly diminished if the UK were to vote to leave. Such an outcome would risk destabilising the remaining 27 member states. Instability on the continent of Europe will have a direct impact on our security as well as our economy. The history of the last century shows that just because we are an island we are in no way immune to what happens to our near European neighbours.

In the last 15 years we have lost clout and influence in EU institutions. When I arrived to work in the European Parliament 20 years ago, in 1996, everyone spoke French, but a great many of the senior staff in those institutions were British. Indeed, at times it seemed like we were running the place, from the Secretary-General of the European Parliament to many of the most influential DGs in the Commission. Now everyone communicates in English—but, as the noble Lord, Lord Anderson, has already said, we are significantly underrepresented in the EU institutions, including in the External Action Service. Can the Minister confirm that if we do vote to remain in the European Union, the Government will draw up a strategy to improve the UK's high-level representation in the EU institutions, including further efforts to improve the teaching of foreign languages, which is undoubtedly, in my view, one of the things that holds us back?

In concluding, I sincerely hope that common sense will prevail and that the Government can go to the European Council summit on 28 June from a position of strength. From that position of strength, I hope that the UK will take a lead in proposing a more effective European foreign and security policy. The scale of the problems facing our neighbours in Syria, Libya and north Africa require ambitious, forward-looking proposals. Building on the very positive lead of the London Donors Conference, I would argue that once peace is eventually negotiated in Syria, the UK should take a lead once more and promote serious investment in the MENA region—perhaps a new Marshall plan for north Africa and the Middle East. It will take courageous leadership that puts country ahead of party. It will require a similar depth of vision to that we successfully showed after the collapse of the Berlin Wall.

5.27 pm

Lord Stirrup (CB): My Lords, as a member of the sub-committee that conducted this inquiry, I am delighted that we have the opportunity today to debate this report. As we do so, though, it is perhaps worth pausing, just for a moment, to reflect on why the EU's strategic review of its foreign and security policy is so important to us. After all—some might argue—if the people of this country vote on 23 June to separate themselves from the Union then that review will be of no more than academic interest to us.

As the noble Baroness, Lady Suttie, has observed, nothing could be further from the truth. We acceded to the EU in 1973, yet more than 400 years earlier, in the 16th century, we were busily engaged in maintaining a balance of power in Europe, making use of alliances with such partners as Portugal, the Ottoman Empire and the Netherlands. During the 18th century we engaged in the stately quadrille, in which we, Austria, France and Russia moved through a series of changing

alliances designed to provide security within Europe. After the Napoleonic Wars came the Concert of Europe, then the Triple Entente. The failure of the League of Nations in the 20th century led eventually to the Anglo-French guarantee to Poland; and in the aftermath of the Second World War, we moved on to NATO and then the EU.

The plain fact is that, for most of the past millennium, the security of these islands has been bound inextricably to the security of the rest of the continent, and that will continue to be the case whatever the outcome of the referendum on 23 June. Whether we are inside or outside the Union, the EU's foreign and security policy will have huge implications for us in the UK. We have, and will continue to have, a critical stake in its success or failure.

So what can the EU do now and in the years ahead to improve the effectiveness of its policies in these areas? In the limited time available to me, I should like to point to three areas—already touched upon by the noble Lord, Lord Tugendhat, in his excellent speech—where it might focus its efforts. First, it must recognise that its strategy must link ends, ways and means in a coherent and achievable fashion. There is a common saying which holds that you cannot will the end if you do not will the means. This is certainly true, but it can be expressed in another form: you cannot will the end if you do not possess the means.

When we talk of “means” in this sense, we refer essentially to power: the power to persuade others to change their minds and/or their courses of action. That power can take many forms. Moral authority, economic weight, diplomatic skill, military force—these are all dimensions of power, but many of the sources of such power, and the authority to wield them, reside within individual states, not with the authorities of the EU. In many ways, therefore, the EU as an institution acts as an organising, co-ordinating and focusing instrument for such power, rather than its source. This does not mean that the Union is powerless, far from it, but it means that for its foreign and security policy to be effective, the EU must recognise and account for the limitations inherent in the means by which that power is generated.

However and wherever it is generated, though, most elements of that power will depend upon a framework of economic strength. Delivering that strength is not the remit of those working on the foreign and security policy, but their efforts will be largely in vain if the EU and its members cannot restore their economic vigour. Riches cannot by themselves guarantee security, but poverty can pretty much ensure its absence. That holds, of course, for individual states just as much as for the continent more widely.

My second proposition concerns the need for prioritisation, as set out in the report. Not long ago there was perhaps a sense that security within the immediate environs of the EU could be taken broadly for granted—that while we might not have seen the end of history on the global stage, we had witnessed it within Europe and the EU could therefore focus its attention and spread its benison further afield. That dangerous illusion has been dispelled. The threats to the security of our continent and to the members of the EU are serious and growing. The EU needs to act

strategically to counter them. Of course the Union has wider interests and should not ignore them, but its priority must be its own members and the European neighbourhood, not grandiose schemes for global security.

My final point concerns the worrying disconnect within the EU between hard and soft power. The EU's strengths lie very much with the latter, but power cannot sensibly be divided up into discrete parcels. Clausewitz maintained that war was the continuation of policy—or politics—by other means. The nature and measure of the power appropriate to the conduct of international affairs will vary not just between, but within situations. So while the EU may not, and indeed should not, be the principal instrument for the exercise of hard power, it should nevertheless be able to co-ordinate its own activities effectively with the application of such power.

As the report makes clear, the Berlin Plus arrangements, which were to provide for such co-ordination by linking NATO and EU activities, have proved ineffective. This is a dangerous situation. There are many dimensions of power that are unavailable to NATO and the same is true of the EU. Together they can supply the continent with the spectrum of power necessary for our security, but if they cannot do it seamlessly and coherently, then we are in danger. The two institutions must find a solution to this dilemma.

There are, of course, several other very useful recommendations in the report, and I hope that the EU will give them all the serious consideration that they deserve. I sense that throughout the continent there is a growing realisation that we need to pay much more attention to our security, and that this may at last be beginning to be reflected in the appropriate budgets. It is still too little, but it is at least a beginning. The UK has rightly given a lead to our partners in this regard. We need to continue to give such a lead in that and all other areas of this crucial debate.

5.34 pm

Lord Selsdon (Con): My Lords, I have on the wall of my office a large chart that was given to me by the Ministry of Transport when I tried single-handedly and with no support to save the shipbuilding industry. It shows the position of His Majesty's ships and at harbour in the year of my birth. It is quite an amazing chart because we were totally global. I have been brought up always to believe as a Scot, when my family went off and helped to colonise Australia and things of that sort because we earned more money abroad, that we are a global nation. However, other people do not feel that. It is not a question of the Commonwealth.

At the moment, we look at defence and fear. The biggest single fear, I gather, is immigration or migration. This seems to worry people more than it worries me because we have been a nation that built ourselves on immigrants and things worldwide. I play with this chart regularly, I take it out and with the new technology I look first at what is the British Empire. You look not just at the land but at the 200 nautical mile exclusion zone. I have raised this before in your Lordships' House. You find that the United Kingdom, with the Commonwealth, effectively has approximately 21% of that exclusion zone. You then look at who are the other people with power over the sea. The next one,

not surprisingly, is France with its own dependent territories and things. France and the United Kingdom together have some 25% or 26%. Now, this is totally irrelevant information to other people but to me it is a form of hidden power.

Then I found other things from time to time. I did not know that my grandfather when Postmaster-General laid the underground cables from America across the world, or that those are the only secure methods of communication that exist today because everything that goes through the airwaves can be hacked into or picked up. We look at the pattern of our trade. When I came here, I was told that I had better go and learn about things where things were going to happen. Lord Shackleton put me on the East European Trade Council and, with a lot of people, I was dragged off to places where I did not know where I was, and came back. Afterwards, I got to go to Ukraine, Albania where we looked at chrome, and the whole of east Europe. I found it fascinating.

Then I was told that I ought to know something about Africa and read that book, *The Scramble for Africa*. I took a look again at that and spent time repeating this to your Lordships' House. Why did we go to Africa in the beginning and what were the resources that they had? Where have those resources that were underground and in other places disappeared to? I did not know that Ghana was about gold. Then I found that my great-uncle was Stafford Cripps and that his daughter—my cousin—Peggy married Joe Appiah, who was known as “Veranda Joe”. I had not realised that when the King of Ghana went to the Middle East to visit Mecca, he took with him so much gold that the price of gold collapsed for 50 years. These are all historical things but our knowledge of other people's countries these days is very limited.

First, take our great fear. As I mentioned, the fear of the nation is migration or immigration. That must be addressed because, with all the queues of people hanging out waiting to get into the United Kingdom, it may have an impact for some time to come. We must look at where we go ourselves. We must accept that we are and always will be a global nation. By “global”, I mean every single country in the world. We have one of the strongest economies. We do not seem to have any fear; we have a good defence operation—it is pretty good, but sometimes people seem to be frightened of goodness knows what. I live in the very happy hope that having been here for 52 years I may have a few years longer.

However, there needs to be some decision-making as to where, who and how we develop overseas countries to our own benefit. We do not have the resources here now. It is amazing that having been such a great steel country we should rely on individual foreigners to save our manufacturing of iron and steel. I have great hope for the future. I have enjoyed this place. As somebody said, “You're jolly lucky. You have been drip-fed by geriatrics who know what they are taking about, and now you have become one”.

5.39 pm

Lord McConnell of Glenscorrodale (Lab): My Lords, I am not a member of the European Union Committee but I am delighted to speak in this debate. I congratulate

[LORD MCCONNELL OF GLENSCORRODALE]
the committee, and the noble Lord, Lord Tugendhat, on producing, as ever, a balanced and clear introduction to the debate. The committee's report covers a wide range of issues and is already having an impact, as we see from the responses from both the Government and the head of the European External Action Service.

I want to expand on some of the issues covered in the report and perhaps touch on one or two that are not there. Later this month, I will vote to remain in the European Union, primarily because I believe that it is a force for good in the world, and potentially can be an even more powerful one. I believe very strongly in the soft power of the European Union. The noble and gallant Lord, Lord Stirrup, made a number of very valid points analysing the nature of power and the way it can be used. I do not believe that the European Union is there to exert military power; that is a role for other international organisations. Given our history, economic strength and our adherence, largely, to the democratic rule of law and human rights, the European Union exerts soft power in the world today which is strong and can ensure change elsewhere and within our own borders. Therefore, I believe very strongly that the aim of the European Union's foreign and security policy should be visionary. It should be about creating a cleaner, more peaceful and more equal world. That should be the stated aim of this policy, not something cobbled together by a cosy consensus that is meek or weak and does not provide leadership to the peoples of Europe when they look around the world. This new foreign and security policy for the European Union should be ambitious and visionary. It should be about the rest of the 21st century, not these years right now.

The European Union is a force for good that can help tackle security threats such as nuclear, cyber and violent extremism by intervening throughout the world to prevent conflict, not just by responding militarily. The European Union can challenge climate change and produce a cleaner environment for future generations through introducing international rules and ensuring adherence to them. It can help to tackle inequality throughout the world—not just economic inequality but inequality of rights. In helping to tackle instability and our historic shame that we are partly responsible for inequality throughout the world, the European Union can be a force for good.

In an interdependent world we look to the European Union for solidarity on these issues, for a voice elsewhere in the world and for action throughout the world focused mostly on the immediate neighbourhood, as the committee rightly recommends, but perhaps also including sub-Saharan Africa, an area where we have particular responsibilities. We look to that voice to ensure the adoption and implementation of sustainable development goals—not just the adoption of strong climate change agreements but their implementation too, and not just action on conflict today but long-term action to prevent conflict and extremism in the future, using our soft power to shape the world, not just to react to world events.

I shall comment briefly on four issues that may be slightly underplayed in the committee's report. The first is development. We cannot divorce diplomacy

and defence—the elements on which the report focuses—from development. Diplomacy, defence and development have to go hand in hand. Therefore, the European Union taking a lead on spending 0.7% of GNI on development aid is as important as its taking a lead on spending 2% on defence, which is highlighted in the report. Both should have been highlighted. Our European history gives us a duty to maintain a long-term commitment to development in countries where we were partly responsible for the exploitation that led to their conditions in the first place. Because of our democratic institutions and elements such as the independent rule of law, the European Union can play a real role internationally, particularly in our immediate neighbourhood and in sub-Saharan Africa, in capacity building, institution building and economic development.

Secondly, there is a role for the European Union in encouraging the capacity of other continents and regions to build institutions that help them act in solidarity, in their own neighbourhood and internationally. The European Union's relationship with the African Union should be much stronger. It is already viewed as strong, but the long-term strategy for the European Union should surely be to help build an African Union which can take the kind of action we ourselves take in supporting African states in their capacity building and conflict prevention. An EU/AU long-term vision would send a very strong signal that we see aid as a short-term investment and capacity building as the long-term investment in people helping themselves. Elsewhere in the world, in ASEAN, in south-east Asia and elsewhere, people look to the European Union as a model. They look to our regional solidarity as a way of working together. The EU has a role to play in encouraging that.

Thirdly, the vision for enlargement has gone way off the tracks. In the 1980s and 1990s, it was clear where the next steps were going to be and how important enlargement was—not for the European Union as an institution, a building, an organisation or a group of people, but for the continent. I was in Poland in 2000, speaking as External Affairs Minister for the then new Scottish Government, to a class of 16 and 17 year-olds. They had a light and a sparkle in their eyes at the prospect of joining the European Union. When they spoke to me, they viewed it as re-joining the mainstream of Europe. That light is not there in too many countries on the border of the European Union today. The European Union should have a much clearer long-term aim on enlargement that sets out the steps we want to take and our priorities.

Finally, there is an issue with the missions. It is not referred to often enough that the noble Baroness, Lady Ashton, has done a remarkable and significant job in bringing together the European Union missions at country level around the world. As we know only too well, it is sometimes a difficult task to get diplomats, development workers and others to work together in this country, even when they have the best of intentions. However, in many cases, the European Union missions throughout the world are not yet coherently linked up with the individual embassies of the European Union member states. There is still a job to be done in clarifying the role of the EU missions in individual countries and how they complement and work with the embassies of the individual member states.

In this Chamber, we talk a lot about public disillusion with the European Union and its institutions. The noble Baroness, Lady Suttie, has already talked about the rise of nationalism and anti-European feeling. If the European Union took a global lead with a vision such as this for foreign and security policy, people would believe in the institution more. It is not just about the nuts and bolts of their everyday lives: if they feel as if the institution is doing something to help create a better world, that will help in a small way to reduce the anti-European feeling which is developing in far too many places.

5.49 pm

The Earl of Oxford and Asquith (LD): My Lords, I echo and wholly endorse the comments of my noble friend Lady Suttie about the quality of the chairmanship of the sub-committee by the noble Lord, Lord Tugendhat. I will pick up on the section of the report that alludes to a new Helsinki dialogue in relation to Russia and to European security. This issue will be with all of us in Europe for the long term, irrespective of whether or not the United Kingdom remains a member of the European Union.

As many of us will recall, the Helsinki Final Act came into being in a period of very high tension with the Soviet Union and was built on a structure that required considerable concessions and constant dialogue between the parties. As the report states, our Government believe that there is no need to invent new structures and new treaties to address our current problems with Russia. That is perfectly understandable. The Helsinki Final Act is not in fact a treaty and there is little likelihood that we today could greatly improve on the framework our forebears achieved in 1975.

I suggest that the real issue at stake here is not one of structure or treaty but rather one of intent and purpose. Helsinki responded to a need for reassessment and a change of outlook. The current parallel is that today, however you look at it, there is very little resembling a European security strategy with regard to the tensions we are experiencing with Russia. I know it will be objected—indeed, it has been—that, on the contrary, through its sanctions on Russia the EU has demonstrated a united foreign and security policy. It is striking how repeatedly one is referred to the unity of the EU's sanctions regime as a self-evident definition of its success. But, as the report concludes, “sanctions are an instrument of policy, not a strategy”, and unity is not in itself proof of a policy's success. Only its consequences and outcomes will demonstrate whether or not it has worked.

Today it is not my purpose to question the efficacy of the sanctions against Russia. Realistically, some of them will probably remain, although I suspect that they may eventually prove to have turned to the greater advantage of the Russians. One is told that the Russian economy is buckling as a result of the measures we have taken, but if you look at the figures relating to the profitability of their companies, the government budget, their balance of payments, unemployment and so on, the Russian economy is doing surprisingly well, or better than we thought.

My point is that at the height of the Cold War, when politically Europe was in a state of much insecurity, when there were indeed also embargoes and sanctions on the Soviet bloc and COMECON, at the same time a constant dialogue was maintained through the sophisticated use of various instruments to ensure that the dangers of escalation were recognised and contained. What should concern us today is that there is hardly that level of dialogue now.

The argument, understandably, is that Russia has breached the principles of European security and that the consequence must be political, diplomatic and economic isolation. There is no doubt that Russia has breached those principles, but the USSR also violated the principles of the Helsinki Final Act. We Europeans objected very strongly, but we maintained the motivation to engage, recognising that that was the sensible means to manage tensions. Today, tomorrow—who knows? Perhaps we may need to become more confrontational with Russia, but we should not deceive ourselves in the meantime. You cannot for long run a disconnected relationship—saying, as it were, to the Russians, “We shall co-operate with you over Iran. We may share joint objectives against ISIL. But, by the way, we shall do our best to destroy your economic and commercial infrastructure”. As a model of strategy, that does not work.

There is a strategic framework that we Europeans can negotiate with Russia over the longer term to address the many problems that lie between us, but for this to happen we have to be honest on two fundamental issues. To depend on a policy of isolation, economic sanctions, the belief that Russia will implode and the hope that Putin and his court will disappear is wishful thinking, and the US seems now to have recognised that that is the case. But while the US can and will act independently, if we in Europe are to enter into a longer-term engagement with Russia than our current attitude enjoins, we shall need to consider some different instruments from the ones we are presently using. The Russians and Americans will not do that for us.

Russia in Europe is a recurrent theme in our continent's history and, by the same token, it has regularly had to be reassessed. This report is to be welcomed for its recognition of the need for a genuinely strategic European approach.

5.55 pm

The Earl of Sandwich (CB): My Lords, it is consoling, in the midst of this unnecessary and divisive referendum, that there is at least one devoted group carefully considering the future of EU foreign and security policy. I was not surprised to read in the report that, according to one former EU ambassador, Mr Pierini, the UK's own foreign policy had hardly been mentioned since the referendum debate began, and that other witnesses thought that the UK had simply taken a back seat. I may not be alone in thinking that, perhaps for that reason, the UK has been rather ignored in the report. Apart from minor references under other headings there is only one page given to our own foreign policy, ending with the rather bald conclusion that we are an important player and that Brexit would limit our influence. I regard that as a serious understatement. I know that these reports are intended to reflect and

[THE EARL OF SANDWICH]

analyse EU affairs and that they are, rightly, highly respected for that in Europe. But we are after all living in the UK and the committee has missed an important opportunity. It can scarcely plead that the referendum has been a distraction in this House, although the campaign has clearly been a negative factor as far as our EU partners are concerned.

My participation today is partly inspired by nostalgia for my previous membership of this sub-committee and reflects a degree of envy of the experience of colleagues in preparing this report. At this point, I thank our friend and colleague the noble Lord, Lord Tugendhat, for all his chairing over many months and years, with these splendid results. The committee has again received the wisdom of a panoply of diplomats and experts, at a time when the UK was hardly flavour of the month in Brussels. It is refreshing to see business as usual when even the principle of retaining your Lordships' EU sub-committees must be temporarily in the balance until, as most of us expect, the majority of our population decides wisely in favour of our EU membership.

Much of the scene-setting of the report, whose general direction I applaud, is a series of statements of the obvious: that the EU has to have a strategy; that it must state key priorities; and that it should focus on the "wider neighbourhood". This presumably means out of the meadow and into the jungle. Given the width and depth of the strategic review, I was pleased to read Professor Tripp's advice that its architects should proceed country by country. It is important to recognise that there are quite a few situations beyond the control or even the influence of the EU. Syria is paramount in this list because, while Europe is on the receiving end of mass migration, it has almost no power to deal with the causes behind it.

The EU has not been a provider of security to Syria and it has a limited role in the Vienna process. It is therefore well outside the EU's sphere of political influence—and that is where it should stay, although the many powers entrusted with the problem, including the Security Council itself, have made hardly any progress. Given their historic role in the region, it is surprising that some member states have not taken more initiative within the EU—perhaps, as the report says, because of the rule of unanimity. The report rightly urges member states to be more proactive with ad hoc agreements and to make more use of the TEU provisions. The noble Baroness, Lady Suttie, emphasised that. The noble Lord, Lord Tugendhat, also mentioned the importance of the presence of the high representative. The noble and gallant Lord, Lord Stirrup, used the rather splendid phrase "focusing instrument" in respect of what the EU should actually do.

When it comes to refugees, the EU already has a strong interest in preventing further migration out of Syria. In the first instance, it supported the first waves of refugees entering Turkey. Less successfully, it has attempted to stem the flow into Europe itself, including migrants from further afield. The report is unimpressed by the latest flawed agreement with Turkey. The action plan takes little account of the EU's guiding principles, for example, and refolement is in any case against international law.

There is no mention in the report of the Khartoum process, which, as the Minister well knows, is a major new EU initiative to curb migration in north Africa and the Horn of Africa, chaired by the United Kingdom. This is an important new priority for the Foreign Office and for DfID. The noble Lord, Lord McConnell, reminded us that the EU should continue to strengthen institutions in Africa—as it has already with the African Union, through its splendid base in Addis Ababa.

The other major priority of course for the EU is Russia and the eastern neighbourhood. It is a pity that the ENP review, of the neighbourhood partnership, is unconnected with the strategic review. I have said in previous debates that the EU must make greater effort to understand the Kremlin. This is easily said, but it should be a vital part of our security strategy. Our earlier report on Russia and Ukraine regretted that the EU and the UK cut both staff and skills during those years of optimism and neglect described by the noble Baroness. Most people now accept that the end of the Cold War also meant false assumptions about Russia, and we quite simply took our eye off the ball. We should now make up for this deficit or we will do little but complain about Russian aggression.

The EU surely needs to "understand ... long-standing Russian resentments", in the words of the report, which also recommends that the EU should follow a dual-track policy, be more open to dialogue and put forward a more positive agenda. The noble Earl, Lord Oxford and Asquith, gave us very good advice on the right strategic framework. The Normandy format, which achieved the Minsk agreement—without the help of the UK—need not bypass the EU but should reinforce the EU's agenda. Like the noble Lord, Lord Anderson, I welcome Germany's growing involvement in EU foreign policy, of which this is another example.

I was disappointed to read General Shirreff's evidence on dwindling EU-NATO co-operation, and I would like to hear from the Minister whether this is true. I cannot help feeling that the EU should be allowed a much stronger role in NATO operations, where, through more cultural co-operation, as the report says, they can have a combined impact on the eastern neighbourhood.

Elsewhere, there have been the foreign policy advances already mentioned. Our very own noble Baroness, Lady Ashton, and her advisers can be content with one of the EU's greatest milestones in the agreement with Iran—but only as far as it goes, and it still has much further to go—while not forgetting that the US of course played the leading hand.

The Serbia-Kosovo agreement was also facilitated by the EEAS. The Bosnia-Herzegovina initiative was important and ended a stalemate in that region. I would also include the CSDP projects, although in terms of security they are further down the line and rank as development projects. The noble Lord, Lord McConnell, covered those very well. The report could have dealt with them at more length.

This summer sees the end of term for a number of major EU CSDP projects. I am especially anxious about EULEX, the rule of law project in Kosovo, which is one of the flagships of enlargement. It has already been reviewed and reduced in

size, but it is surely critical to the rapprochement with Serbia, and I hope that the Minister will confirm that it will continue.

All in all it has been a useful report, flagging up some of the glaring deficiencies in EU security—and I have not even mentioned terrorism. But I agree with the noble Lord, Lord McConnell, who would like to have seen a more substantial and visionary report, with a global outlook—one which showed that the UK was providing active ingredients that are necessary to the EU and will remain so after this unnecessary referendum.

6.05 pm

Lord Horam (Con): My Lords, the noble Earl, Lord Sandwich, who has just concluded his remarks, mentioned a previous report from the sub-committee on the European Union and Russia. He was on the committee at the time and I was not, so I can honestly say that it was a superb report and a great credit to the chairman, my noble friend Lord Tugendhat. I pay tribute to him, too, for his work during that period. It is such a pity that he has to resign from the chairmanship under our rather brutal rules in the House of Lords.

Having said that, I want to say more about Russia, following up from what the noble Earls, Lord Sandwich and Lord Oxford and Asquith, said. In our report, we say:

“The High Representative should devote particular attention to the issue of EU policy on Russia”.

As has been said, we are advocating a dual-track policy—being tough when necessary but being prepared to talk and have a dialogue when we can find space for that. I shall confine my remarks to Russia, although confining is rather an odd word to use in that context, given that Russia is such a huge issue and a huge country.

I have always been a huge admirer of the Russian people and Russia. One should always remember the Great Patriotic War, as they call it, when no fewer than 28 million Soviet citizens died during the course of that struggle, which was so fundamental to the defeat of Hitler. That leaves aside the great Russian cultural history—their opera, ballet and literature. I have recently seen “Boris Godunov” at the Royal Opera House and, like others, watched “War and Peace” on TV. One thrills at what Russia has contributed to the world; it is a country that has been, and always will be, in the front rank of nations.

However, Russia appears to be run today by the lineal descendants of the KGB. President Putin is a former KGB man, and many of the people at the top of the Government have a security background. Their interest appears to be in power politics and, most of all, in remaining in power themselves. As a consequence of that, they have taken to bullying their immediate neighbours fairly outrageously. In her excellent book *Beyond Crimea*, which has just been published, Agnia Grigas points out the sophistication and thought that has gone into many of the battery of weapons that they have used on their immediate neighbours. For example, they have exploited the 30 million Russians who were left outside Russia itself when the Soviet Union collapsed and are now all over Ukraine,

Kazakhstan and so on. In the second city of Estonia, Narva, which is on the border of Russia, 80% of people are Russian speakers. Equally, they have conducted information warfare through their control of television—they control all four major TV channels in Russia—and put a message across that is deeply hostile to the West and portrays us as weak and ineffectual. The contradiction between those two points of view does not seem to have struck them; it is what they consistently say. All that appeals to Russia’s sense of itself as a continuing empire, under the tsars and in the Soviet Union, and its sense of insecurity and what has happened since the end of the Cold War. I can quite understand why that has left President Putin with a great deal of popularity. As has been said, that is unlikely to change in the immediate future.

How do we respond? First, we have had sanctions. The effect is unclear. In addition, we need a big information effort. In January last year, Britain, Denmark, Estonia and Lithuania called on the European Union to create an information alternative to Russian propaganda. That is tremendously important in the views of people in eastern Europe and should be put into action forthwith.

Outside the European Union, we have to recognise that the Baltic countries are the Achilles heel of NATO. They need to be reinforced militarily. At the moment the Anaconda wargames are going on in Poland. I welcome that. The Poles point out that there is constant activity on the other side of the border. We occasionally do it, but we should be alive to the situation there. We should support Ukraine, which is not part of NATO, with training and equipment as far as it possible to do so in its rather desperate situation. We have to hope and expect that many of these countries—Ukraine, Estonia and so forth—will reform themselves, encourage the inclusiveness of Russian speakers as well as native speakers and become less corrupt and more like a truly western country.

If we respond in this co-ordinated and coherent way, I am not pessimistic about the future—although I agree that the future may be a long time off. Russia must wonder whether it can sustain all the foreign and military policies which it has embarked on. I noticed what the noble Earl, Lord Oxford and Asquith, said about the possible effects of sanctions, but other estimates suggest that Russia has lost out to the tune of \$140 billion a year as a result of the combination of the reduction in the oil price and economic sanctions. I noticed an article in the *Times* the other day which suggested that ordinary people in Russia were suffering from economic sanctions, whatever the elite may be doing. Dmitry Medvedev, the Prime Minister, was heckled by a pensioner who had not had her pension increased for two years in a row. He said: “There’s no money”—a familiar cry to Conservatives:

“‘When we find the money, we’ll make the adjustment’, a ruffled Mr Medvedev added, before shouting over the woman’s protests: ‘You hang on in there. Best wishes! Cheers! Take care!’

A pizza restaurant in St Petersburg swiftly put a poster in its window advertising: ‘Sale! Margarita pizza for members for parliament and government officials—price €100 ... If you don’t have the money, just hang on in there! Be well and good luck!’ ... internet wags soon followed, with images including an empty toilet roll holder above a sign reading: ‘No paper. But hang on in there. Best wishes, cheers, take care’”.

[LORD HORAM]

They have not lost their sense of humour in Russia, but I wonder whether ordinary people are suffering rather more than we know.

Secondly, Russian tactics do not always work as well as it hopes. Russia may have gained, temporarily, Luhansk and Donetsk, and the Crimea possibly even permanently, but it has lost Ukraine. There is nationalist sentiment there of an order that was not apparent in previous years. The 30 million Russian speakers outside the borders of Russia are, according to the evidence, clearly becoming cynical about how they are used by Russia rather than feeling that it has their true interests at heart. If we look at the true interests of the Russian people and of Russia itself, surely they are better served by Russia being the ally of the West rather than being for ever palpably hostile and accusing us of being hostile when clearly we are not. Russia would be better off economically if it was an ally of the West and would be more able to deal with the real problems which we all face, such as Islamic extremism and, particularly in Russia's case, Chinese expansion. Surely that common interest that underlies it must become apparent in our globalised world, where knowledge and information eventually can get through, but I stress that we need to make an effort to ensure that it does.

Finally, I refer my noble friend Lady Anelay, who will wind up this debate, to the remarks made recently by Mr Sikorski, a former Polish Foreign Secretary, that if Britain wants to play to its strengths—foreign policy and defence policy—it has a role to play in these matters on the eastern borders of the European Union. I hope that it will be able to play that role—obviously, we await the result of the referendum—and that it will do so.

6.15 pm

Lord Desai (Lab): My Lords, I thank the noble Lord, Lord Tugendhat, for his committee's excellent report. Its title is "Towards a more effective EU foreign and security strategy", and I will concentrate on just how we can get a more effective strategy.

Given that the EU, despite its size, total income and so on, has 28 separate foreign policies, which the 28 member states are entitled to have, the question is: what can the EU, as a sort of weak confederation, do to have an effective security strategy? One almost feels like quoting Dr Johnson who, in another context, mentioned a dog standing on its hind legs: it is not that it is done well—the remarkable thing is that it is done at all.

I note one great success the EU has had: the policy on Iran. It is a significant achievement of the office of the high representative—which was of course lately occupied by my noble friend Lady Ashton—that somehow, the EU ended up playing a much more pivotal role in the delicate negotiations than anyone expected. If we ask why that was so, it is because while the EU is a large collection of countries, it is non-threatening as far as Iran is concerned. Iran does not trust the US, the UK or Russia to have its interests at heart, but it somehow thought that the EU being there was a guarantee of fair play in the process. Perhaps one of the things the EU ought to reflect on is how to exploit that advantage—being large but having a low profile—because it is convenient and helpful at certain times.

While that was a success, it did not work that well as regards Syria. Let us look at the Syria process. Of course, the EU was a late joiner in that process; it should have been there right at the beginning when the conference was being organised. As I have told noble Lords before, my own preference is that the conference should be not only on Syria but on all the interconnected Middle Eastern problems. The EU could have taken a much bigger lead in that process than it has, and perhaps there may yet be time for it to play a more significant role.

The third issue is the refugee and migrants problem. Here, there has been a substantial failure on the part of the EU because there is nobody who corresponds to a high representative on refugee policy. Individual countries have tried to take the initiative, especially Germany, as we saw eventually in the negotiations with Turkey. But there are a lot of differences among member countries as to whether the initiative taken by Germany in dealing with Turkey was a success. That tells us that there is a possibility of achieving good results if there is a single high representative who can be trusted by member countries to represent their interests. At the same time, the high representative has to act early enough and strategically enough. If that had been the case with the Syrian process, there would have been more success.

It is clear that there is no agreement—not even a weak agreement—among the 28 countries on the best policy on admitting refugees. The refugee problem has been confused with the problem of migrants. The refugees come from Syria and the Middle East, and the migrants come from north Africa, and they have a completely different motivation. The refugees are involuntarily displaced, whereas migrants come voluntarily, and somehow we have not been able to make a distinction between which ones to be nice to and which ones not to be nice to. The lesson that I take from reading the report is that, if there is better co-ordination among the 28 member countries and if there is someone like a high representative to speak for a united policy, the chances of success will be greater; otherwise, there is bound to be failure.

That leads me to make a suggestion. In relation to the eurozone, there is a council—the eurogroup—headed by a president, Mr Dijsselbloem, which formulates economic policy on the euro. I do not see why there should not be a similar group underpinning the high representative to help properly to represent the policies of the various countries. Maybe thought should also be given to having a high commissioner for refugees. Such a role will be needed because the refugee problem will not go away any time soon.

Having said that, the report is very welcome because it raises these questions. Whether we are a member of the European Union or not, the report will continue to be relevant not just to the rest of the world but to us as well.

6.22 pm

Viscount Waverley (CB): My Lords, I too congratulate the committee. The key recommendations of the report are clear, pragmatic and sensible. I have little doubt that many of our partners would prefer the UK to

continue to be a foreign policy and strategy leader of the pack and not an enforced go-it-alone wolf. While respecting the will of the people in the upcoming referendum, regionalism is the long-term future of the world. It is in the UK's national interest to be a team player. Possibly next time consideration could be given to some key issues: the Palestinian question, for example, needs urgent closure, and the Iran-Saudi relationship remains ominous and an eye needs to be kept on it.

I endorse the need for urgent reassessment of EU foreign and security priorities, taking account of the risks facing and threatening the Union, together with resource availability. It makes sense that the new EU strategy arising from this should take a comprehensive view of EU foreign policy instruments—in particular, of how the Commission's resources and instruments can support the Union's foreign policy objectives.

It is right to recognise that the member states are the driving force in EU foreign policy. In this, however, the European External Action Service must play a more decisive and proactive co-ordinating role in improving cross-EU co-ordination and helping align Commission instruments with member state priorities. HMG should be considering how we increase the number of UK personnel in senior EEAS positions in order to influence the changes that we would like to see—a point made by many in this afternoon's debate. The challenges will, of course, be considerable given the existing relative weakness of EU foreign and security policy co-ordination.

I note the proposal to establish ad-hoc groups to consider and agree rapid, decisive and ambitious action by member states, which could then become the wider EU position. It is my understanding that the EU has been using working groups on different areas of foreign and security policy for many years. It would be interesting to know how these ad-hoc groups will differ from these and how they might be constituted.

I have listened carefully to remarks this afternoon regarding Russia; it is a complex question. I believe that EU member states need to be more proactive in their approach towards Russia. The Russian temperament should be usefully understood. I remember well a senior committee gentleman, answerable to the Kremlin, who told me that he would travel with me anywhere in the world on one condition—that I pay respect to his opinion.

Apart from being seemingly disengaged, there has been too little forward strategic analysis of Russian policy and future actions towards, for example, Ukraine and the Middle East. While endorsing the proposed dual-track EU member state policy towards Russia, to which I would add those in its sphere such as central Asian and certain south Caucasus states and beyond, we need deeper analysis of the longer-term impact of sanctions on Russian government revenue and the Russian economy, especially given the separate impact of potential sustained low oil prices. The unintended consequences of the oil price are leaving a heavy mark on many producers, with social programmes being cut and rises in unemployment. These consequences could become grave and affect us adversely at home.

Definitions of areas of shared interest where there might be scope for EU-Russia co-operation and dialogue need to be thought through. Productive dialogue is

certainly possible, but we need to respect Russia's culture and its past 100-year history and, importantly, let it be known that its view is sought and will be treated with respect. Only in that way can we have an impact on Russia's thinking and actions. While we may not always agree, Russia, above all, almost demands that respect.

Given EU disunity on Turkey's potential long-term accession, an urgent overall review of the relationship with Turkey, from fundamentals, is required. Turkey is an important partner for the EU on a range of key issues including regional security, counter-terrorism and trade. There is possible scope for a twin-track approach, focusing on the one hand on implementing and maintaining the EU-Turkey refugee action plan, and, on the other, on how to arrest the erosion of Turkish democracy.

Syria is arguably the source of the biggest threat. In promoting a more central EU role in the resolution of the regional crisis, HMG should explain more clearly what they are doing to help alleviate the humanitarian crisis and their other actions in the area. In doing so, HMG should encourage other member states to refocus on increasing their assistance to the area, and indeed to security sector reform in Tunisia and Libya.

The report rightly points out the need for the EU to prioritise its help in our southern neighbourhood, based on key security threats. The challenges in north Africa will need much greater EU effort if some of the underlying causes are to be addressed. In specialised sectors such as this, we need to focus on developing a collective, agreed EU policy programme. It is worth underlining that the UK is ideally placed, given our experience in Africa and the Middle East—especially compared with other member states, with the exception of France—and the expectations arising from it.

It is right that improving EU-NATO co-operation and co-ordination should be central to the new strategy. This should ensure greater synergy between the two bodies while ensuring that the EU has no role in territorial defence—again, as said elsewhere today. That will in turn ensure minimal duplication and more effective use of valuable resources.

The challenges are huge. Many of the report's proposals and recommendations are medium/long term. If the upcoming referendum result is indeed for the UK to remain, I hope that HMG will take a major lead in promoting a more strategic and targeted EU foreign and security policy and give departments of state the resources to do so.

6.31 pm

Lord Soley (Lab): My Lords, not for the first time, I find myself hoping that the committee report chaired by the noble Lord, Lord Tugendhat, receives wide circulation, because it deserves detailed reading.

I want to focus my brief comments today on Russia and the EU, as a number of other Members have—to some extent, my comments will follow those made by the noble Earl, Lord Oxford and Asquith. It is a crucial relationship. It is very easy in view of current headlines and fears of terrorism to see the Middle East and Libya as the real danger spots. They are, they will remain so for a while and are a big challenge for the European Union, but if I was asked to identify a

[LORD SOLEY]

threat to the longer-term peace of Europe, I would look at the relationship between Russia and the European Union.

I do not think that President Putin wants the old Soviet Union back again—a number of things that he has said reinforce my view—but he has a clear view about spheres of interest which we no longer share. We in the western world do not follow the spheres-of-influence argument in the way that we used to, but Russia does. It is also important to remember at this time that, much as we are rightly concerned about President Putin and his Government, President Putin is not the Russian people. The Russian people are in a way much more divided than we realise. I make a lot of use of Russia Today—RT, as it is called. It is a very effective propaganda channel—in fact, the letters RT are what it is headlined as; it does not have the word Russia anywhere in it. If you know the background, you will realise that it is a sophisticated propaganda operation, but you would not recognise that unless you knew it, which I think is one reason why it is very successful at communicating with people worldwide. It has a very large following and has been running for only a few years, so we should not underestimate it.

As I have said previously in this House, we must recognise Russian history: an appalling 20th century, two world wars, millions dead, famines under a particularly brutal dictatorship with many more millions dead and then ending in the catastrophic collapse of the Soviet Union, bringing Russia a feeling of loss and disrespect—as one other Member recently recognised. We have to deal with that now. I hope that President Putin is the bridge that the Russian people need to walk over to travel from the old Stalinist/communist system to a more democratic-rule-of-law approach, but I may be being overly optimistic.

I was struck and slightly worried by paragraph 140, I think, where the committee quotes General Sir Richard Sherriff, who raised the concern—it was just a thought—that British and German troops would not necessarily fight for the freedom of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. If he thought that, people in the Kremlin will have thought it too. As the Minister will know, I have expressed concern over a number of years that we often misread President Putin and underestimate his skill at manipulating situations to his advantage. He has got a frozen conflict in the Ukraine and we cannot rule out the possibility that there will be frozen conflicts in other countries of the former Soviet Union where there is a large Russian population. That is why I have concern about the peace prospects between the European Union and Russia.

I thought the most hopeful sign since the report is the reference made by the Foreign Affairs Committee to the report of Federica Mogherini, the high representative, on how we deal with Russia. In that report I felt we might be moving from a position where we impose sanctions. We had to impose sanctions—there was no other sensible alternative, frankly—but the report makes it clear, and I agree, that sanctions cannot be a strategy. They must be short term—which might mean many years—but you do not talk about getting rid of them. You talk about an exchange mechanism in any negotiation with Russia.

There was discussion in the report about the Helsinki accord. There have been signals from the Russians that if we move on the accord and into discussions with them, some progress may be made. However, in my view, for what it is worth, we should not lift sanctions without clear moves by President Putin, particularly on the Ukraine and his activities in east Europe. That is important.

On the five recommendations listed by Federica Mogherini and endorsed by the Foreign Affairs Council, recommendation V concerns the need to engage in people-to-people contact and to support Russian civil society. As I have suggested already, the Russian people are not President Putin. They are much more divergent in their views and many of them feel a strong identity with Europe. Many, particularly the younger professional people linked into the global network of communications, are more inclined to identify with west European attitudes and values. We should encourage that.

I wrote to Federica Mogherini recently saying that I hoped that recommendation V would ride up the agenda. Although we have to have a strong response to the Ukraine through sanctions and the military exercises that are rightly being conducted in Poland at the moment, at the same time we have to reach out to Russian society. We should not underestimate the possibilities there.

There are number of areas where Russia needs our contribution and co-operation. For example, I was recently on a committee on the Arctic and there is clear evidence that the Russians do not want a military confrontation there. Also, there is clear evidence that Russian science on Arctic matters generally is very good and that it is anxious to work with us. There are areas in science and education where we might be able to do more in exchanges which help the people of Russia to understand that we are not against Russia but against certain policies of its current Government. Given that that is recognised on some Russian websites which seek a link to us, we ought to be upfront in trying to work with them. I hope that through the European Union we can put some resources into recommendation V of the high representative into creating a greater form of dialogue. It is not as if things have not been happening because they have, and a number of operations are in place already. However, we could do much more. One thing I would have liked to see in the report is a couple of paragraphs looking at what more we could do in addition to what is already being done.

I know that the current Russian Government would not necessarily encourage it, but if we could start having more exchanges of Russian people that would be immensely valuable in building up person-to-person links, as suggested by the high representative. It would underpin a more peaceful process. If we do not have a more sophisticated strategy, sooner or later the sanctions issue will fail and Russia will maintain the frozen conflict in Ukraine, which it might then move on into other areas. If Russia did that, I would be deeply worried. That is why it is so important that the European Union should push this right to the top of its foreign policy objectives.

6.40 pm

Lord Balfé (Con): My Lords, I join many speakers in thanking the chairman for his wise chairmanship. He will get two sets of thanks because he will be back

with another final report next week. My experience of the chairman goes right back to 1979, when I was part of the group that overturned the European Parliament budget, so ably introduced by the then budget commissioner, Christopher Tugendhat. I also welcome my noble friend Lady Morris, a distinguished contributor to our party's foreign policy and who I know will be a good successor.

I want to make a few points of administration first and then a few points about Russia. A number of speakers, including the noble Lord, Lord Desai, mentioned 28 policies. Of course there are not 28 foreign policies, there are three or four foreign policies and then 20 to 24 followers of foreign policies. There are some major actors, but we must realise that most of the countries of the European Union see in the development of a common foreign and security policy an opportunity for them to maximise an influence which for many of them is pitifully small at the moment. It is small because they do not have the resources. They do not have the embassies, the money or the staff.

We as a big player may be driving policies forward, but for many other countries our influence rests not only on being in the European Union—which seems to be more or less a consensus—but on acting within the European Union in such a way that we become one of the three or four major countries that other nations want to support and move forward with. That can and has been done, and we have been a very successful actor in that. However, it helps to recognise that the work done by Commissioner Mogherini and, before her, Commissioner Ashton has been both distinguished and for our benefit. It is something that we can build on. We can maximise our direction by working strongly within the CFSP strategy.

My next point picks up on a comment made by the noble Baroness, Lady Suttie, on the very important issue of staff. The atmosphere that Britain has projected in recent years is not one that has made young and able people want to go and work in the European Union. They look at the hostility to the EU that has come out of this country over the past few years—I will not put a dividing number on it—and say, “No; I might not have a career in a few years’ time”. I was talking today to a friend in Brussels who said of some members of the British Labour Party there that, “Quite a few of them are looking to take out Belgian nationality”. We have got ourselves into a mess. We have a situation, confirmed this week, whereby the President of the European Parliament is a German, the Secretary-General of the European Parliament is a German and the new Deputy Secretary-General, appointed just this week, is also a German. For the first time in the history of the European Parliament, all three of the top posts are in the hands of one country. I am not saying it is a country that is hostile to us, but I do not think it is good that we have withdrawn to the extent that we have from involvement and from encouraging our brightest and our best.

The final policy point I want to make is this: I am surprised at the lack of interaction between this Parliament—I include both Houses—and our democratically elected Members of the European Parliament. We send them there; we give them a mandate; our parties put forward manifestos; we knock on doors to get

them into the European Parliament; and then we forget them. We have to involve them more. In particular, I mention two names—Charles Tannock from my party and Richard Howitt from the Labour Party—who are widely and deeply respected Members of the European Parliament. They have influence well beyond being “the Brits”, but they are seldom seen or counselled. In fact if you want to bring them into the building the first thing you have to do is get them through the door.

I remember Caroline Jackson, a Conservative Member of the European Parliament, chair of the Environment Committee of the European Parliament and a leading figure in the European Parliament, who said to me, “Well Richard, I have far more rights as Robert Jackson MP's wife than I do as chairman of the committee in the European Parliament”. I just mention that. We have to sort it out.

I want to say just a few words on Russia. We have somehow to get a dialogue going again. We are in a situation not dissimilar to where we were before Helsinki. Relations are bad, there are many things that we want and many things that the Russians want. One thing we should be looking at is getting them back into some sort of relationship with the Council of Europe. The situation makes no sense. Okay, they have been suspended, but there is no strategy for how they get back, except that we say they have to withdraw from Ukraine. They are not going to do that. We have to work out a strategy for dealing with them.

Many of the surrounding countries have been mentioned. I shall not go through them all but will mention one or two. The Baltic states are a key point, but they themselves must also realise that a fairer treatment of the Russian minorities is needed. They have to get to a position whereby the Russian minorities in those three Baltic states say, “Aren't we lucky we live here?”, not “Oh God, we can't vote”. I was in Latvia last year and the Russian party in the Latvian Parliament is basically a social democratic party. It is excluded from government by all of the other parties from the far right to the far left. The only thing they have in common is that they are Latvian parties and will not do a deal with the Russians.

That is not the way to run a democracy. The Baltic states, in return for our support—I believe that we can give them support—must learn to play the proper democratic game of involvement. They have to give their Russian population a reason for wanting to be there. They are now addressing the NATO concerns of 2% defence expenditure. I am afraid that one of the points that comes out of this report is the idiocy of this division that we are somehow a European Sub-Committee but we cannot look at defence. Defence, NATO and the EU are so intertwined that it is very difficult to say, “Well, you can't look at troop movements but you can look at cybersecurity”. So, one of the challenges for our new Madam Chairman will be to work out somehow how we can slightly expand the terms of reference.

My final comments are on Turkey. The words “strategic disarray” were mentioned, and that is absolutely right. Turkey is in crisis. It has 3 million refugees on its hands and its Government are not sure whether they believe in democracy, to put it bluntly. Or, they are not sure how much they believe in democracy—let us put

[LORD BALFE]

it that way. It has elections—it has fair elections—but it also has a structure of government that has a very weak opposition where there has effectively been one-party rule for the last 12 years. I have always said that once you are in power for 10 years you go mad. We have plenty of British precedents for that. I hope that we will manage to find an accommodation with Turkey that keeps it onside. I would much rather have our boundaries in Turkey than a bit closer to home. Turkey is another big challenge for us and I hope it is one we can rise to.

6.50 pm

Lord Judd (Lab): My Lords, it is always good to listen to the noble Lord, Lord Balfe. He and I have been friends for many years. I find myself in so much agreement with so many of the wise things he says. It is terribly sad that he left our party. It was a serious loss.

Lord Balfe: I am not coming back.

Lord Judd: I read this report and thought, “That’s a good report”. I then read it again and said to myself, “That is a very good report—a particularly great report and of great significance”. The House owes a very real tribute to the noble Lord, Lord Tugendhat, and his colleagues.

It has been delightful to sit and listen to this intelligent debate about the realities of the world when we are surrounded by this introspective, vicious, unimaginative, vindictive debate on whether we stay in Europe. That depresses me beyond measure. One of the things that depresses me most about that debate—others have referred to this—is that whether we like it or not the first reality of life, from the day we are born, is that we are locked into a global community. We cannot escape that. History and succeeding generations will judge us by the success we make of handling that reality. We will not solve the issues or meet the challenges by running away. From that standpoint, the debate about our future in Europe, or so much of it so far, has been disastrous.

That interdependence is obviously there in economics, on issues of the climate, and on migration. On migration, we have to keep remembering that what we face today is probably child’s play compared with what we will have to face as the impact of climate change begins to accelerate. We are all told that that interdependence is there in trade, but it is also there very clearly in security. When I was on the EU home affairs sub-committee we listened to witnesses on the issue of our future if we were to withdraw from the Community and certainly from the European Convention on Human Rights. We could not find a witness—it was almost impossible to find one—who was working in the sphere with real responsibility on behalf of us all who did not say that it would be madness to leave, because all these issues demand co-operation. How will we handle them better if we are on our own? The question was put about the fact that we know—it is true, in many respects—that our intelligence services, for example, are not matched by the quality of intelligence services in much of Europe.

I was impressed that these people, working in the heart of the issue on our behalf, were all saying, “Surely that is a challenge to us to strengthen them”. It is not a challenge not to join them, because you are only as strong as your weakest link. In this realm, where everything is so closely interlinked, if there are weak links our job is to strengthen them. I do not like putting it in melodramatic language but I really mean this as a grandfather: I am afraid that we are betraying our younger generation in much of this debate about being in or out of Europe.

All of us in this House have been shocked, grieved and deeply troubled by the sight of drowning refugees and especially deeply hurt and worried by the sight of drowning children. The words of John Donne echo in my ears all the time:

“never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee”.

The biggest challenge in this dreadful story is: where is our own sense of values? The world has seen a Europe led by Britain preoccupied with keeping people out, instead of a Europe led by Britain saying, “These are the issues of the future. These are the issues we must face. How do we work together in finding lasting strategic solutions?”.

Of course, I read carefully what the report said about concentrating on our immediate neighbouring region. There is no shortage of issues there. Turkey will be immensely important. We simply must work out a sensible future with Turkey. Personally, I feel that having offered Turkey membership, the impact of withdrawing that offer could be horrific. Turkey is the meeting point of Islamic and Christian civilisations. Surely it is essential to work with Turkey and find the way forward. In the Middle East, all the issues we face are still profoundly, in emotion and attitude, part of the ongoing story of the Israel/Arab issue. That is unresolved. It always seems that if we are real friends of Israel—I regard myself as such—we have a huge job in Europe to point out in absolutely categorical, unapologetic terms what her policies do towards aggravating the situation. Collectively in Europe, we must do everything we can to bring pressure on Israel to behave in a way that will make a secure future for her children possible rather than to pursue her current policies, which provoke nothing but insecurity and danger for her future generations.

There are also the issues of north Africa, of Syria and of Libya. In Europe, as we—I still hope—face the future together, we must learn to snap out of this attitude of trying to find management solutions for crises of this kind. You cannot simply manage a solution in this area. The confidence of the people in what solutions you offer as management programmes is just not there. You must build confidence with the people. Whatever happens as a way forward in both Libya and Syria, there has to be a future which rests on local realities and comprises real reconciliation and real understanding between the very different historical links in the historical traditions and associations in both communities.

Russia has been talked about a lot. For four years I was the rapporteur to the Council of Europe during the ghastly conflict in Chechnya. I visited the conflict area 11 times and met the most senior Ministers in Russia, the FSB and the rest nine times. I came to see

that Chechnya could not be approached as just Chechnya because Chechnya was symptomatic of the issues in Russia. The same underlying arrogance, whatever its cause, led to the ghastly things that happened in London. We cannot forget that. We had Russian agents trailing radioactive poison across our capital, quite apart from the brutality and horror of the murder itself. We have to work at finding ways forward with Russia but let us be realistic about what we are up against and look at our own responsibility for the missed opportunities with Russia after the fall of totalitarian communism, and at the failure to build a positive political programme towards Russia—even perhaps the willingness to consider a joint security pact for the future.

One feels anxious to say much more following such an excellent report. However, I confine myself to the following. I honestly believe that many of the challenges and difficulties that we face stem from the crisis within our own value system. What is it that we really believe in? We talk about western civilisation and our values but what are those values? We must have a real debate with Europe on reinventing and strengthening our concept of responsibility, particularly humanitarian responsibility, and on how we believe that we can build a strong society. Of course, human rights will be absolutely central to that debate.

I again thank the committee for having produced such a thoughtful and encouraging report. I pray that we get it right on 23 June. But when we have got it right on 23 June, there will be one hell of a challenge. The first part of that challenge is to belong to the Community to which we have reasserted our membership, because it is by belonging, and being seen to belong, that we begin to influence events. If we are seen as the awkward, reluctant customers all the time, what kind of influence will we ever have?

7.03 pm

Baroness Ludford (LD): My Lords, I hate to intrude on the love fest between the noble Lords, Lord Balfe and Lord Judd, but I very much agree with the former on British officials in EU institutions and with the latter that we are locked into the global community and cannot solve our problems by running away.

I, too, am very grateful to the External Affairs Sub-Committee and its outgoing chairman, the noble Lord, Lord Tugendhat, for a very interesting and useful report. I congratulate the noble Baroness, Lady Morris of Bolton, on taking over the chairmanship and look forward to future reports.

Like others, I start from the position that Brexit would weaken both Britain and the European Union and thus agree strongly with the paragraph in the report which states:

“The UK is an important player in international affairs, and the EU has the potential to enhance UK influence. A UK exit would significantly limit the UK’s international reach, not least by removing the UK’s influence over, and access to, the Commission’s instruments of foreign policy. It would also diminish the foreign policy of the EU”.

To borrow a phrase from the Prime Minister, Brexit would “put a bomb” underneath what Professor Richard Whitman, of Kent University and Chatham House, described as the,

“50 year-old strategy, pursued by successive British Governments, to structure its political and economic engagement with Europe through the politics, policies and institutions of the European Union”.

I emphasise: “through” the EU. Watching and trying to influence the EU from the outside would absorb a lot of the attention of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, instead of using the EU framework as a springboard for and magnifier of our influence in tackling substantive neighbourhood and global problems. The noble and gallant Lord, Lord Stirrup, mentioned the effect of being on the outside.

My second opening thought is that the best platform the EU and its member states can create for making a success internationally is to be a success domestically, and in particular economically—reversing what the high representative, Mrs Mogherini, called the EU’s “declining economic dynamism”. As the noble and gallant Lord, Lord Stirrup, said, our foreign influence needs the restoration of our economic vigour. It is much harder to have a coherent and effective refugee and migration policy if it is contested at home by people who resent migrants as they see them taking their jobs. So let us create more jobs. It makes the EU less credible in negotiating trade deals if its market is not as enticing to potential trade partners as it could be.

I agree with the report’s recommendations that a large part of the EU’s focus should be on enlargement and the eastern neighbourhood. I share the regret that the review of the European neighbourhood policy has, apparently, not been co-ordinated with this exercise. I also agree that the EU needs to be clearer about what the end game is. We have seen in the referendum campaign the mischief that can be made out of the fact that Turkey is a “candidate country”. This has allowed Boris Johnson and Vote Leave to assert that “Turkey is joining the EU” when everyone, including Mr Johnson—who very recently expressed firm support for Turkish accession—knows that Turkey is not joining for a very long time, if at all.

On Russia, I have listened to various noble Lords who are far more expert than me and I find I agree with every one of them in turn. My conclusion is that, whatever the EU decides on its long-term policy, there must be agreement and coherence in its position. My noble friend Lord Oxford made a suggestion for a longer-term policy of engagement with Russia. I also agree with the noble Lord, Lord Judd, that we need to be realistic about what we are up against. I find a curious contrast between the UK taking a lead in the policy of sanctions—which is starting to be questioned by the German Foreign Minister—and our inexplicable absence from the process of the Minsk agreement. Perhaps the noble Baroness will explain why we were not involved in that process.

On Ukraine, I was a little surprised at the comment in the report that Russian opposition to the deep and comprehensive free trade agreement with Ukraine was, “a salutary lesson on the need for caution in the use of these tools”.

Personally, I do not accept that Russia should have any kind of veto over an EU association agreement with Ukraine. Maybe the remark was more about the way it was handled on both the EU and Ukraine sides.

[BARONESS LUDFORD]

Of course, extraordinarily we have recently had a Dutch referendum which rejected the Ukraine agreement. I have a feeling that they were voting not actually on the Ukraine agreement but just to give a kick to politicians and the EU.

I will spend some time on the comment:

“The EU is a weak military actor”.

Of course it is—I do not think that anyone ever sees it as a major purveyor of hard military power—but the important comment was that,

“EU-NATO co-operation was not functioning”.

During the referendum campaign we have heard the assertion that the EU is irrelevant to security. NATO leaders have countered that assertion by saying that the EU is an essential partner in delivering European security. The weakness is that member states are seen to be unable to underpin their own and EU foreign policy with an ability to use legitimate force, which undermines the EU, so the EU and NATO must “work together more effectively”.

We have heard ludicrous assertions about the creation of a European army, including a recent article in the *Times* by one of Boris Johnson’s successors in Brussels, but what the EU leaders are talking about is co-operation and co-ordination. That is made very clear in the conclusions of the Foreign Affairs Committee in May last year and the conclusions of the European Council in June last year. I rather liked the comment by Sir Robert Cooper, the former head of foreign policy at the European Council, that,

“while he was not in favour of a European army, he was in ‘favour of a European rifle’”,

and that the EU ought to do more to harmonise specifications and joint military procurement because there are huge inefficiencies, with outdated equipment and facilities that cannot be used in tandem.

There are also operational inefficiencies. The report stated:

“A NATO exercise to bring one brigade from Portugal to the Baltics took 21 days in order to facilitate all the customs and regulations and a further 10 days to find the trains to transport the tanks”.

Thanks to Twitter, during the debate I came across a new article in *Foreign Affairs*, the journal of the American Council on Foreign Relations, talking about how in some new member states,

“bridges and railroads are simply not suitable for large troop movements”,

and that getting permission for those movements for exercises is very frustrating. It calls for a military Schengen for NATO. Apparently, Poland requires 15 days’ notice to give clearance for troop movements. Presumably it would not do so if—God forbid—there was actually a war. But it seems to me that the EU can surely help by supporting NATO in the construction of the infrastructure and in trying to iron out the red tape. That is a good example of the possibility for convergence.

We also know that the European arms industry is very fragmented and subject to national procurement priorities and markets. Not so long ago we had the failure of the merger between Airbus and BAE. Each

country wants its national champion but that does not bode well for obtaining best value for defence budgets and structuring our procurement and defence industry collaboration to deliver more efficiencies through joint capabilities.

The report rightly states that the EU has limited ability to act as a “global security provider” but it does have the ability to support NATO. Mrs Mogherini, in her response, also legitimately points out that the EU must take some responsibility for managing “global commons”, and particularly for delivering and supporting rules-based global governance. That is all part of security as well.

In finishing, I want to mention some things which the EU has as tools, including its values and its promotion of the European Convention on Human Rights in respect of Russia, even though that is obviously not an EU instrument. There are also all the anti-trust, trade development and humanitarian aid policies. I do not think that the report mentioned the US trade and investment partnership, TTIP, but it ought to be a priority for the European Union to stand up to some of the demonisation of that. Building our economy through science, research and innovation could also help restore Europe’s global influence. There are so many areas where European policies—not classic diplomatic policies—can strengthen the potential of the EU on the international stage.

I agree with the report that the high representative should be involved with ad hoc groups and it is disappointing that the Government do not agree. As the report brings out, even if the EU works through ad hoc groups, the key is to bring together the varied ways and means without being too tidy or precious about how it all works, as long as there is co-ordination and not contradiction. We are never going to have a very neat expression of the EU’s common foreign and security policy—but a lot can be done to make sure that it all pulls in the same direction.

7.16 pm

Lord Collins of Highbury (Lab): My Lords, I too thank the EU External Affairs Sub-Committee for its excellent report. I also thank the noble Lord, Lord Tugendhat, not only for chairing the committee so ably but for such an excellent introduction to today’s debate.

One thing which struck me when listening to the contribution of the noble Lord, Lord Balfe, was that we often fail to recognise just how much change there has been in Europe. I remember 1973 quite well, not just in terms of our accession to the European Union but because I used to work for Jack Jones. He spent a lifetime fighting fascism and dictatorship, and he fought in the Spanish Civil War on behalf of the International Brigade. In 1973, Franco was still in power and garrotting people who he disliked or who opposed his control of Spain. But we have changed substantially since then: I spent the weekend in Spain with my husband, celebrating the marriage of a gay couple. Can we imagine that ever happening in 1973 under Franco? Do we think that this has happened by accident? It has not. It has happened by engagement—by communities coming together and sharing the values that we cherish. If we

are to stop the world from going back, the worst thing that this country could possibly do is to turn its back on Europe and vote to leave on 23 June.

The report that we have received is a valuable contribution to the debate on how the EU can use the review process to set rigorous priorities and improve its decision-making. We live in an increasingly unsafe world with threats including global terrorism, international criminality, people trafficking and international slavery—and interreligious wars on a scale that we have not seen since the 16th century. The idea that we should try to tackle these in isolation is just incredible.

The fact is that our communities here will be impacted harder and our citizens' lives challenged if we try to tackle it in isolation. We have to be part of that community. The report recognises of course that foreign policy is for member states, but a coherent UK foreign and security strategy, as we heard in the previous debate, has to be founded on the shared values and interests we have with our European neighbours on peace and security. That is what we are about and why it is so important not only to reflect on the changes in eastern Europe with those member countries coming in but to realise what has been achieved in Spain and Portugal.

Membership of the EU, like our membership of NATO and the United Nations, amplifies the UK's influence on the world; it does not diminish it. As we have heard from every Member of this House in the debate today, that contribution is invaluable and ensures that other member countries of the European Union can share our experience and our values and build on democracy, which is vital.

We have a moral and practical interest as a nation in preventing conflict, stopping terrorism, supporting the poorest in the world and halting climate change, as we have heard from noble Lords in the debate. The EU has a wide range of tools at its disposal, including security, diplomatic, economic and humanitarian tools. Our participation in the EU brings benefits to both the members of the EU and the United Kingdom.

The transformation and rise of ISIL/Daesh illustrates just how quickly change happens in the most dangerous and volatile parts of the world, and how quickly and significantly this can impact on us here in Britain. It is clear from the report on the common foreign and security policy that we can act mid-strategy to shift the emphasis and resources quickly to these emerging threats. Pushing back on radicalisation is a Europe-wide issue, and working together will be far more effective.

Since we joined the European Union, British foreign policy has had two key pillars. The first is exercising a leading role in Europe, and the second is being the principal ally of the United States. I believe that it is worth repeating what President Obama made clear: leaving the EU would have an impact on not just one but both of these pillars. Successful, effective EU action can help to protect our country and to play a complementary role to NATO in providing security, as we have heard in this debate.

As we have heard, the ability of the European Union to respond to threats as they emerge, through its common foreign and security policy, has been vital; for example, with the sanctions against Russia following the illegal annexation of Crimea. European co-operation

of course had a vital part in securing the nuclear deal with Iran. As my noble friend Lord Anderson amplified from the report, when the EU speaks with one voice and utilises all its foreign policy instruments, it can be an incredibly powerful force for peace and security—and of course a powerful force for democracy, too.

The committee, rightly, insists that setting EU priorities is linked to a frank reappraisal of the Union's international role. As my noble friend Lord McConnell said, the EU has global interests—economic, climate change and development—and we must therefore have a global vision and a policy to support that vision.

A key recommendation of the committee was, of course—noble Lords have focused on this in the debate—on the need for the EU to,

“focus on formulating a foreign and security policy for the wider neighbourhood”,

and, in particular, to reassess urgently its policies towards Russia and Turkey. On Russia, as we have heard, the recommendation is for the EU and member states to,

“pursue a dual-track policy to Russia: this should encompass a coherent and credible response to Russian breaches of international law, while keeping open the potential for co-operation and dialogue on areas of shared interest”.

Of course, the Government in their response made it clear that they had taken a “unified approach” with the EU,

“and shown Russia that its illegal actions will not be tolerated”.

I read this morning a short survey from the European Leadership Network, from individuals, politicians and others, covering 20 countries. It was quite an important survey; the overwhelming view was that those sanctions should be held to and that we should not back down. When you express a clear view to a country like Russia, you have to be determined to see it through. However, there was also a very strong view expressed in that survey, which we have heard in today's debate, that the judgment that the EU and Russia are predetermined to part ways was very much a minority one. We have shared interests and shared threats and, as my noble friend Lord Soley, said, we have a lot of common history with the people of Russia. It is important that we focus on our relationship with the people of Russia and do not simply see Putin as the genuine voice of those people. We need to ensure that we can develop a relationship.

The Government's view, given in their written response, is that, as a consequence of Russian actions in Ukraine, Syria and elsewhere,

“Russia will not for the foreseeable future be a potential strategic partner for the EU”.

While that may be the case, does not the Minister accept that, with the same global threats that we face, it might be possible to find an acceptable way in which to avoid clashes over policy through some form of dialogue?

On Turkey, the report suggests:

“The EU has not demonstrated a credible commitment to Turkey's accession, nor has it defined an alternative relationship”.

Turkey, as a member of NATO, remains a crucial partner for the EU on a range of critical issues, beyond migration—including counterterrorism and

[LORD COLLINS OF HIGHBURY]

security within the region. Of course, as the report highlighted and reminded us, Turkey's accession process started in 1987. There remains a significant amount of detailed work to do before Turkey is ready to join the EU, not least over the issue of Cyprus. But there is clearly a problem with saying on the one hand that the accession process remains the most effective mechanism for continuing reform while on the other that we do not see Turkey's membership being on the cards for many years. That simply undermines the process of reform; it supports those people who have been saying, "Don't trust the West—don't believe in the West". As we have heard in this debate, the most important thing to do is to understand why so many people in Turkey look to the West, and not only that but have been working there, contributing to the European Union's economic growth. Certainly, that has been true in Germany.

We cannot turn our back. The way that the EU and Turkey have been able to co-operate to tackle the migration crisis and the steps taken to reinvigorate relationships illustrate that there is potential. The important thing the report has highlighted is that the EU needs to do more than make vague promises. We need a better road map for progress. We need to reward good behaviour and work together so that the reform process is not seen as something distant but as something we are working on together now.

One of the things the noble Lord, Lord Tugendhat, focused on in his introduction was improving the execution of EU foreign policy. There has been the welcome development of ad hoc groups which offer member states a useful format for rapid and decisive action. As the Government accept this view and acknowledge the value of the high representative in the process, as confirmed in the letter we have seen, why are they so reticent about this being a prerequisite for all such action? Surely it is vital to ensuring that the EU acts in a coherent fashion. As my noble friend Lord McConnell said, if we are to have the international security and stability that we seek, development, defence and diplomacy have to go together. There is no doubt that our foreign policy will and must remain a matter for our Government but, like our national security strategy, the foreign policy of the EU has to use all the tools available to it covering trade, climate change and development and, as noble Lords have said, utilising the most effective tool we have—soft power. All those tools must be focused on protecting and promoting our common interests and values. The EU also needs to demonstrate this joined-up, comprehensive approach if we are to maintain the peace we have enjoyed for so long.

7.32 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Baroness Anelay of St Johns) (Con): My Lords, it gives me great pleasure to close this debate on the report *Europe in the World: Towards a More Effective EU Foreign and Security Strategy*. Like others today, I record my appreciation for the EU sub-committee's comprehensive work under the leadership of its chairman, my noble friend Lord Tugendhat. This report is a welcome and valuable contribution to the debate on the future of EU foreign and security policy.

I shall first set out what the Government think about the EU strategy review before commenting on some of the key conclusions of the committee's report. The Government welcomed the proposal put forward at the European Council in June last year to review the 2003 European security strategy because the world has moved on since then. The foreign policy challenges in the near neighbourhood pose even greater threats to the EU's security and prosperity than was the case just 10 years ago.

Given these serious threats, we believe that a properly coherent approach to EU external action has never been more important. That seemed to be a theme that ran through so many speeches today. The EU's collective action is relevant to many of the UK's foreign policy objectives, and as a large member state with global interests and membership of many key international organisations and groupings, the UK is in a strong position to influence EU common action. It was not too surprising that some noble Lords expressed some disappointment about the number of UK citizens working in the EU institutions and the fact that perhaps that number is falling. I refer to comments made by my noble friend Lord Balfe, the noble Baroness, Lady Suttie, and the noble Viscount, Lord Waverley. In answer to their questions I can say that in 2013 the Government set up an EU staffing unit with the express purpose of increasing the number of British nationals who work in the EU institutions. This has resulted in an increase in UK-seconded national experts being sent to work in the EU.

The UK is well represented among the member states that send staff to work in the European External Action Service. However, we very much agree with what noble Lords have said today. More remains to be done, particularly in raising the success rate of UK candidates at the EU entry competition for permanent staff—the concours. I was grateful to the clerks of the House, who during the course of the debate assisted me by providing the following information: "The House of Lords Committee Office currently has one seconded national expert working for the European Parliament; another member of the Committee Office staff has just been successful in securing a seconded national expert post". Therefore, that is progress made, but clearly more progress has to be made.

The strategy review is also timely, because such an approach could usefully complement the United Kingdom's recent strategic defence and security review. The paper entitled *The European Union in a Changing Global Environment*, published by High Representative Mogherini last June, set the context for a revised Europe Global Strategy and described the challenges that EU foreign policy needs to address. Naturally, we were pleased that the high representative recognised the need to consult member states throughout this process. We have been working closely with the strategy team in Brussels to feed in our views.

An important comparative advantage for the EU in foreign policy, set out a moment ago by the noble Lord, Lord Collins, is the EU's ability to combine with its diplomatic and security tools a wide range of policy instruments: political, economic, development, and humanitarian—he is right. With tools ranging from military missions to development aid, the EU

can flex its approach as situations evolve. But it is vital that these tools work together properly. We think the EU needs to improve further its ability to combine its foreign policy instruments—and its institutions—more effectively. The strategy could help to deliver those improvements. We believe that the strategy review should focus on making EU external policy more coherent, flexible and accountable. We see it as an opportunity to achieve improvements across the full range of the EU's external tools. For example, the contribution of development assistance to building stability and peace should be better reflected.

There could be better co-ordination between Council activity and Commission-administered programmes to ensure a better articulation of the respective roles and interventions. In particular, we encourage stronger links between the Council-led foreign policy work and the Commission-run trade and energy work, where interests and objectives can sometimes overlap. There could also be stronger links between internal and external security. We agree with the report that:

“Terrorism affects both the internal and the external security of the Union”.

Several noble Lords referred to that matter. A joined-up approach is essential to counter and tackle the threats we face. This should be delivered through strengthened partnerships and complementarity with other international actors, including of course NATO, the UN and the OSCE, which the report alludes to; I will answer one or two points made by noble Lords on that in a moment. Finally, we also believe that the EU could do more in the field of strategic communications, and we would like to see this reflected in the strategy.

The Government agree with many of the specific conclusions of the EU Committee report, as my right honourable friend the Minister for Europe made clear in his formal written response. We absolutely agree that member states drive the whole issue of EU foreign policy—it is a national competence. We support the committee's call for the EU to use the strategy review as an opportunity to set rigorous priorities and improve the execution of its foreign policy decisions.

We also agree that the new strategy should aim to achieve better co-operation between the EU and NATO. We hope that this can further encourage member states to move closer to the target of 2% of GDP dedicated to defence spending. NATO has remained the bedrock of our national defence and that of the Euro-Atlantic area for almost 70 years.

The Government remain convinced that the EU does not have a role in territorial defence, because doing so would simply duplicate what NATO already does and would place further strain on finite resources across Europe. We therefore agree that it is important to foster closer co-operation and co-ordination between the EU and NATO. I particularly mark the concerns expressed by the noble and gallant Lord, Lord Stirrup, the noble Earl, Lord Sandwich, and other noble Lords on these matters.

I was asked in particular by the noble Earl about reports of shrinking EU-NATO relations. In 2015 we resolved to frame a national security strategy to foster closer co-ordination between the EU and NATO. This will include areas such as cyber and countering hybrid

threats, as well as work to develop security capacity in other states. We will form across Whitehall a joint Euro-Atlantic security policy unit to bring together diplomatic and defence expertise on this. Noble Lords were right to express their concerns.

We believe that the strategy could also usefully promote the co-ordination of missions undertaken under the common security and defence policy and the work of other actors so that EU efforts support a coherent international effort from the outset. The Government believe, for example, that the European Union could play a helpful role in bolstering the efficiency and impact of UN engagement.

Several noble Lords mentioned Turkey and the issue of enlargement. It is certainly a fact that Turkey has strong hopes of membership of the EU. The Government support Turkey's EU accession process, which remains the most effective mechanism for continuing reform in that country. The noble Lord, Lord Collins, and others were right to point out that, with progress, one also has to offer hope to people as they work through a difficult process of opening and closing chapters. But it is a matter of fact that achieving the reforms that are necessary for Turkey to join the EU will be a lengthy process—we cannot get round that. The Prime Minister has told the House of Commons that we do not believe Turkish membership will be on the cards for many years. It is a matter of recognising the practical details of the progress that it needs to make, particularly in human rights and economic conversions.

The UK strongly welcomes the plan agreed between the EU and Turkey to end irregular migration from Turkey to the EU. For the first time, we have a plan that breaks the business model of the people smugglers by breaking the link between getting in a boat and getting settlement in Europe.

I turn briefly to the *Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy*, to which several noble Lords referred. It was published in November last year. It was a good outcome for the UK. It maintained the idea of a single overarching policy but emphasised differentiation, stability, partnership and ownership. In particular, we welcome the greater flexibility that it offers to enable co-operation on shared interests with those partners not looking to conclude association agreements. The EU remains united in its commitment to the interests of our eastern partners.

Many noble Lords—my noble friends Lord Horam and Lord Balfé, the noble Lords, Lord Anderson, Lord Judd and Lord Soley, and the noble Earl, Lord Oxford and Asquith, to take just a few—referred to Russian foreign policy. Concern about the direction of Russian foreign policy has generated useful debate in this House, not just today but on previous occasions when we have had the chance to go into more detail. However, the Government do not agree with the committee's assertion that the US is leading the West's relations with Russia. This is an oversimplification, given that it is clear that the EU has been at the very forefront of the response to Russian actions in Ukraine.

The noble Baroness, Lady Ludford, asked me to comment on the Normandy format: it works, and it is not something that works by excluding the UK.

[BARONESS ANELAY OF ST JOHNS]

The flexibility of being able to feed in our influence and technical expertise made the system work. It also means that we have as much interest in ensuring that the agreements of Minsk I and II are adhered to before there are any reductions in sanctions. We were warned by other Peers to be careful about the removal of sanctions because Russia is very adept at exploiting differences in views across the EU. We have taken a unified approach and shown Russia that its illegal actions in the way it has behaved in Ukraine will not be tolerated, including by taking the step of sanctioning a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council.

Several noble Lords referred to the fact that it is important to think about the Russian Government and not lump in the Russian people with them. I appreciate that. Russia's actions in Ukraine, Syria and elsewhere clearly expose the gulf between the values and interests of the Russian Government and those of the EU. That means that Russia will not, for the foreseeable future, be a potential strategic partner for the EU. However, it may not be business as usual, but it has to be business. There is dialogue at the United Nations and the Human Rights Council.

The Government agree with the committee that fragile states in the southern neighbourhood should be addressed in the strategy. The strategic challenges posed by many countries in north Africa require a step change in the EU response, and the EU must act to address the underlying causes, as well as the symptoms, fuelling migration, radicalisation and extremism. We agree that reform in the political, judicial and security sectors in these countries will be vital.

Turning to the committee's conclusions about north Africa, the Government agree that the EU can play a useful role in Tunisia and Libya in both short-term and long-term security sector reform work. With the establishment of a Government of National Accord in Libya, the possibility for a greater EU role exists. We continue our discussions with other member states and the External Action Service.

The Government agree with the committee that the EU has a direct interest in resolving the Syrian conflict, which is now in its sixth year. The International Syria Support Group has played a vital role in restarting political negotiations between the Syrian parties, with the aim of fully implementing the cessation of hostilities, ensuring all required humanitarian access is granted, and strongly supporting the efforts of de Mistura, the United Nations special envoy, to bring about a political transition in line with UN Security Council Resolution 2254. It was a privilege to be able to make that point to him when I met him over the Easter Recess. The EU, along with the UK, France, Germany and Italy, has provided support within the ISSG process to help the UN special envoy as he aims to reconvene talks in Geneva. The UN has a mandate to facilitate talks between the Syrian parties but the solution must be Syrian-led. At the Supporting Syria and the Region conference in London earlier this year, significant support was pledged by the international community for supporting Syria after the conflict. We should not forget the pledge of €2.39 billion made by the European Union Commission.

Finally, turning to the EU's institutional arrangements, the Government agree that ad hoc groups can be a useful format for rapid, decisive and ambitious action by member states, which can then become the wider EU position. Noble Lords referred to our divergence from the view of the committee on the role of the high representative. There is no doubt about the value of her role and that of her predecessor, and the inclusion of the high representative in ad hoc groups can certainly help gain the widest possible support among member states, but we do not believe that it is essential in every single case; it is not a prerequisite. Member states should remain free to form and work in ad hoc groups without the high representative should circumstances so require, depending on the view of the European Council. Flexibility is too valuable to lose.

The role of the External Action Service should continue to evolve. The Government agree that the strategy should encourage the External Action Service to draw together the EU's security, political and development activities for preventing and resolving conflict. It should encourage an External Action Service that works in concert with the other EU institutions, particularly the Commission, and is capable of intervening at any stage of the conflict cycle, bringing together the full range of EU instruments.

I conclude by once again welcoming the report. As I have shown, the Government agree with many of its conclusions. The noble Lord, Lord McConnell, reminded the House that one of the great strengths of the External Action Service is its ability to combine its many tools across a wide range of policy areas, tackling political, economic, development, and humanitarian challenges, and improving our security and prosperity as it does so. The noble Lord reminded us that it is a good idea to be visionary, not meek or weak—I like that. That is why this review is so important, and it is why we have worked closely with the team conducting it. We will continue to work hard to ensure that the new strategy reflects our views. We shall not be meek or weak.

7.52 pm

Lord Tugendhat: My Lords, I want to thank everybody who contributed to this very thoughtful debate and say how grateful I am for some of the remarks made about the committee and my chairmanship of it. When I listened to a number of the contributions, I realised what a long agenda of possible subjects the committee has in front of it. I am sure that my successor was listening equally attentively, and I will follow with interest the path she takes in response to much of what was said today.

I thank the Minister for her thoughtful and encouraging reply. I take this opportunity, through her, to thank the officials in the Foreign Office, who were uniformly helpful, not only on this report but on the various other reports with which I was involved. I express my appreciation to them.

Many points were made that I would like to take up, but the hour is late and it would be doing the House a disservice were I to do so. I will confine myself to the point made by the noble Lord, Lord McConnell, who talked about his wish that the EU

would set an example to other parts of the world on how sovereign states can work together in a post-modern world. That is what the EU used to do. It was an exemplar, an example that people tried to follow. As a result of the mismanagement of the eurozone crisis and a number of internal issues—of which, I am sorry to say, the British problem has been an important one—the European Union has lost that position. I nurse the hope, as I think many other noble Lords do,

that if we vote decisively to remain within the European Union, it will be seen as a vote of confidence in the institution and will give renewed confidence to the EU and to the rest of the world in the ability of the EU to fulfil its objectives.

Motion agreed.

House adjourned at 7.54 pm.

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