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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
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HOUSE OF LORDS

OFFICIAL REPORT

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

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House of Lords

Tuesday 21 May 2019

2.30 pm

Prayers—read by the Lord Bishop of Winchester.

Death of a Member: Lord Moore of Lower Marsh Announcement

2.37 pm

The Lord Speaker (Lord Fowler): My Lords, I regret to inform the House of the death of my old friend and colleague, the noble Lord, Lord Moore of Lower Marsh, on 20 May. On behalf of the House, I extend our condolences to the noble Lord's family and to all his friends.

Schools: Free Sanitary Products Question

2.37 pm

Asked by **Baroness Burt of Solihull**

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the remarks by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 13 March (HC Deb, col 352), what steps they are taking to ensure that free sanitary products will be available in secondary schools and colleges in England from the next school year.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Baroness Williams of Trafford) (Con): My Lords, since announcing provision in secondary schools and colleges, the Department for Education has secured funding to extend the scheme to primary schools. The department is currently consulting with stakeholders and the public, private and third sectors to ensure that the scheme best meets the needs of all learners. Given the scale of the operational task and the procurement steps required, national rollout will take place on the earliest feasible date in early 2020.

Baroness Burt of Solihull (LD): My Lords, I am a little disappointed by that Answer. This is supposed to be implemented from the beginning of September, which is what the Chancellor promised. The hundreds of campaigners and tens of thousands of people who signed petitions were delighted by the Chancellor's Spring Statement, which promised free hygiene products for girls in secondary schools from this September. I have two questions for the Minister. First, will the Government please consider extending the scheme to primary schools, where many girls begin their periods? Secondly, who will be held personally to account if and when the system is not up and running by the second date mentioned by the Minister?

Baroness Williams of Trafford: The noble Baroness asks contradictory questions: she first asks why it is not happening sooner, and secondly, she assumes that it will overrun, but early 2020 is a realistic date when we can get the procurement up and running and rolled out. She also asked about primary schools, which I think I answered in my initial Answer. I know that on 16 April, the Minister for Children and Families, Nadhim Zahawi, announced the rollout of the programme for primary school children as well.

Baroness Manzoor (Con): My Lords, I welcome the action the Government are taking in both secondary and primary schools, in hospitals and, in the future, within police settings. Can my noble friend say what DfID is doing about the young girls and women who have to use home-made products such as rags, plastic and paper when they are menstruating? It would be helpful to know what contribution the Government are making in this area.

Baroness Williams of Trafford: I thank my noble friend for that question. In her prior role as Secretary of State for International Development, the Minister for Women and Equalities placed great emphasis on this issue, recognising the awful situations my noble friend describes, and moved to lead a global action campaign to end period poverty by 2030 in line with the global goals. It kick-started an allocation of up to £2 million for small and medium-sized charities working on period poverty in DfID's priority countries. It also builds on the proud record of the UK's work that is already under way to tackle period poverty globally, and the range of initiatives that different organisations are leading here at home.

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall (Lab): My Lords, does the Minister agree that puberty is a particularly sensitive time in the lives of most young people, particularly young women, and that it will be very important that this scheme is administered consistently in a sensitive way so that it does not become another layer of embarrassment for young women to have to deal with?

Baroness Williams of Trafford: I totally agree. Puberty brings with it all sorts of embarrassments and sensitivities. This scheme is an excellent way to avoid any of that. It does not matter where you come from or what your parents' income is: you will have access to the products you need so that your education will not be held back.

Lord Watts (Lab): My Lords, is it not a disgrace that many families now cannot afford to buy these products?

Baroness Williams of Trafford: It is awful if a family cannot afford to buy these products. In relation to the previous question, asked by the noble Baroness, Lady McIntosh, there are all sorts of issues around puberty and access to products. This scheme cuts across all those issues. Nobody has to be embarrassed because their parents cannot afford to pay—or, indeed, be too embarrassed to ask their parents to buy the products in the first place.

Baroness Janke (LD): My Lords, is it not an absolute disgrace that many young girls do not come to school because they are too embarrassed as they cannot afford proper equipment? Is there not a case for introducing something earlier to provide resources for those young girls who come from poor families, cannot afford the equipment and are so embarrassed that they do not come to school as a result?

Baroness Williams of Trafford: I have tried to relay that issue; I think that the noble Baroness, Lady Burt, asked her Question in the first place precisely

[**BARONESS WILLIAMS OF TRAFFORD**] to addresses these issues too. These girls are embarrassed and some of them do not come to school because they cannot access these products.

Baroness Finlay of Llandaff (CB): Will the guidance given to educational establishments on procuring sanitary towels, and possibly tampons, include some guidance about the ecological effect of disposal? Will it make sure that, rather than simply going for the cheapest option, girls also go for the least harmful products in terms of environmental destruction?

Baroness Williams of Trafford: I am glad that the noble Baroness has raised that point because one of the concerns that will be addressed in the procurement exercise is to see whether there are organisations which can in fact provide the sustainable products she has talked about on a large scale.

Baroness Gale (Lab): My Lords, I welcome the Government's initiative for ending period poverty in primary and secondary schools and, I believe, in colleges as well. Does the Minister agree that this is long overdue? It should end the problem of girls missing school while at the same time giving them a sense of dignity. Can she say whether the expert task force announced by the Department for Education is now up and running and will it report on the proposals for ending period poverty in England? Can she also say what the overall cost will be? Can she give a guarantee that the funding will be protected for the long term?

Baroness Williams of Trafford: Obviously, I cannot speak from one spending review to the next but I know that it will be a ring-fenced fund. I can tell the noble Baroness that the task force will receive £250,000 of seed funding to take forward its work on accessing period products, particularly for vulnerable groups.

Child Poverty Question

2.46 pm

Asked by **Baroness Janke**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to address the concerns raised by teachers in, and the findings of, the survey on child poverty published by the National Education Union on 14 April.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Work and Pensions (Baroness Buscombe) (Con): My Lords, the Government are committed to a sustainable solution to poverty so that we can improve children's long-term outcomes. This means a strong economy and a benefits system that supports employment and higher pay. Children in households where all the adults are working are around five times less likely to be in poverty than those in workless households. However, 13.9% of all UK working-age households are still entirely workless and we are working hard to reduce that figure.

Baroness Janke (LD): Perhaps I may ask the Minister to give her response to the experiences of teachers reported in the survey: "Children are attending school not only hungry but with no coats and holes in their shoes", and "Children are just not ready to learn. They are embarrassed and ashamed". There are many more quotes along these lines. Does she endorse the recent findings of the Social Mobility Commission that inequality will remain entrenched in the UK "from birth to work" unless the Government take urgent action?

Baroness Buscombe: My Lords, of course we take the issue of poverty very seriously, although inequality has fallen. Tackling disadvantage will always be a priority for this Government. We have already taken steps to tackle food inequality by providing free school meals and our Healthy Start vouchers. We are also investing up to £26 million in school breakfast clubs along with £9 million to provide meals and activities for thousands of disadvantaged children during the summer holidays, which is something that has not been done before. We continue to spend more than £95 billion a year on working-age welfare benefits.

Lord Bird (CB): My Lords, if we were to tackle the low-wage economy and the low social security economy that goes with it, we would lift people out of poverty. There is no way that young people can go to school and lead a full life if their parents are on, at best, between £5 and £9 an hour.

Baroness Buscombe: My Lords, we have taken strong action to support working families. We now have the national living wage and so on, but I agree entirely with the noble Lord that it is incredibly important to look closely at low pay and issues around debt. The Government are doing this, and indeed it is something that is close to my heart. Sometimes debt goes to the heart of why people are in poverty. We need to get much closer to this issue and in the coming months we will be introducing a breathing space to help people out of debt. We are also keen to ensure that children learn how to cope with money because that, as well as a low-wage economy, is often at the core of where things go wrong.

Baroness Lister of Burtersett (Lab): My Lords, evidence from teachers, civil society organisations—including, just yesterday, Human Rights Watch—and children themselves on the impact of poverty, aggravated by social security cuts, on children's learning, health and well-being is shameful and heartbreaking. This impact is not captured by the official poverty statistics, so what steps will the Government take to measure the impact of their policies on the depth of child poverty in and out of work? This and other evidence suggests that their policies are pushing children further and further below the poverty line.

Baroness Buscombe: My Lords, I cannot agree with the noble Baroness that our policies are doing that; in fact, they are doing precisely the opposite. We have increased in an enormous number of ways the support—not just financial but practical—we give to children in

low-income families. Indeed, the previous Question illustrates that. On how we measure poverty, the noble Baroness is right: we should debate, and have debated, looking at how we measure poverty. That is why on 17 May the Minister for Family Support, Housing and Child Maintenance announced that new experimental statistics to measure poverty will be developed, working with the Social Metrics Commission and published by DWP in 2020. We are looking to rethink the measures of poverty.

Lord Farmer (Con): My Lords, while the survey findings are challenging, there are clearly additional factors at play—not simply a lack of money. A comment highlighted in the report and likely representative of many others is that:

“Their social and emotional needs are not being met and this is having detrimental effects on their learning and behaviour”.

We cannot assume that this is wholly due to long working hours. What are HM Government doing to ensure that parents struggling to nurture their children are given early help?

Baroness Buscombe: My Lords, I pay tribute to my noble friend Lord Farmer for the enormous amount of work he has done and continues to do so selflessly in this area. He is absolutely right: this is not just about money. The truth is that support for the family structure is critical. Parents play a critical role in giving children the experiences and skills they need to succeed. Children exposed to parental conflict can suffer long-term harm. That is why we have introduced a new Reducing Parental Conflict programme, backed by up to £30 million. This programme will encourage councils across England to integrate services and approaches that address parental conflict into their local services for families.

The Lord Bishop of Winchester: My Lords, in a recent poll of teachers in England, 46% reported that holiday hunger had increased over the last three years. In my diocese, in Southampton alone 37% of children—many of whom are in working families—are living in relative poverty; that is, below the 60% median income line. Despite what she has already said, can the Minister give assurances that the Government will commit to reviewing their policies to reverse the rise in child poverty?

Baroness Buscombe: My Lords, the right reverend Prelate referenced holidays, which is a really important issue because children are outside school protection. In 2018 the Government announced a programme of work to explore how best to ensure that disadvantaged young people can access healthy food and enriching activities over the school holidays. This included awarding contracts to seven organisations to deliver free healthy food and activities to children and families in some of the most disadvantaged areas during the 2018 holidays. This year the funding will be more than quadrupled, and we want to strengthen the programme to encourage co-ordination in local communities so that even more disadvantaged children can benefit from high-quality provision during the summer holidays.

Homelessness Question

2.54 pm

Asked by Lord McNicol of West Kilbride

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to address increases in homelessness.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and Wales Office (Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth) (Con): My Lords, tackling homelessness and rough sleeping is a key priority for the Government. The Government are already undertaking a significant programme of work, backed by £1.2 billion, to tackle homelessness. This includes supporting local authorities in the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act and increasing access to the private rented sector for families in temporary accommodation.

Lord McNicol of West Kilbride (Lab): I thank the Minister for his Answer. Can he confirm the number of children living without a home in temporary accommodation? My understanding is that it is around 120,000. If that number is correct, it is an increase of 70% since 2010. Why does he think that there has been such an increase and, more importantly, what are his Government going to do to tackle it? If we in this House would not allow our children or grandchildren to be homeless, why do we allow other people's children?

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: My Lords, the figure that I have to hand for the number of people who are homeless—as opposed to rough sleeping—is 58,660. That is the first count under the particular way we calculate figures. New figures are out this Friday, which no doubt the noble Lord will want to look at. Spending on homelessness is a key feature of tackling it, but it is not the only thing, as I think that he would acknowledge. The issue is much more complex than that. As I indicated, we are spending £1.2 billion on this. We are also spending money specifically on rough sleeping, as there is a particular issue there. However, many other things are involved, such as family breakdown, addiction issues, coming out of prison or coming out of the armed services; it is a much more complex picture than he perhaps indicated.

Baroness Greener (LD): My Lords, given that the Minister sees the private rented sector as part of the solution, does he accept that the shortfall between the local housing allowance and rent has more than doubled since the benefit freeze was introduced in 2016? Does he also accept that, as a result, and because they are in debt by more than £100 a month, people are now having to choose between food and rent? Surely simply not extending the benefit freeze is not enough, and it should be ended as soon as possible.

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: My Lords, the noble Baroness is right about the interface between benefits and housing provision; there is obviously a link between the two. We spend around £23 billion a year to help with housing costs, which is a significant amount.

[LORD BOURNE OF ABERYSTWYTH]

Perhaps I can just mention one project. She highlights the importance of private sector accommodation, which I absolutely acknowledge. As of recently, we are spending £37.8 million of government funds on a system for the 13 London boroughs that have signed up to a collaboration project called Capital Letters. The scheme gets people into private accommodation, which helps significantly.

Lord Naseby (Con): My Lords, will my noble friend bring us up to date on what is happening with new towns and green towns? The whole concept of new towns was to take pressure away from the inner-city areas, where this problem is. Have we any plans to bring forward some new towns?

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: My Lords, my noble friend is absolutely right: this is a key feature of our housing provision, not just to take pressure off London and the big conurbations but because of the need for housing generally. There is significant development in the Oxford-Cambridge arc, where we are spending a lot of money, and elsewhere as well. If I may, I will update him and ensure that a letter on the current progress of all the towns and villages is placed in the Library.

Lord Kennedy of Southwark (Lab Co-op): My Lords, I draw the attention of the House to my relevant interest as a vice-president of the Local Government Association. My noble friend Lord McNicol has raised a really important issue. What are the Government doing to tackle child homelessness, as living in insecure accommodation as a child will negatively affect their mental health, emotional well-being and schooling?

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: My Lords, the noble Lord raises a fair point. He is right about the issues around child poverty and child homelessness, which is a particular concern for the Government. That is why, in relation to welfare spending, we are keen that money is directed to those households with children, to make sure that they are able to gain a home. It remains a key priority. If I may, I will write to him on the suite of policies to tackle this across other government departments, because it is an area where we have concerns.

Lord Bird (CB): My Lords, is the Minister aware that there are an enormous number of mental health problems on the streets, and that we should see young people—and not-so-young people—on the streets as an extension of our A&E department? As soon as we try to direct some energy towards the health issues of those people, we will be able to get them off the streets.

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: My Lords, as I indicated in one of my previous answers, there is very much a link between homelessness and mental health. I am pleased that as a general provision we are looking much more seriously at mental health. We marked Mental Health Week recently. This pervades all government policy, and certainly pervades housing spending. The noble Lord will know because he serves on the rough sleeping advisory panel—I thank him for

that—that we are keen to address this issue. We have referenced this with various charities, local authorities and metro mayors—Andy Street and Andy Burnham serve on that panel—to try to get advice on some of these issues.

Baroness Lister of Burtersett (Lab): My Lords, I note the Minister's acknowledgment of the link between homelessness and benefits. Evidence of the ways in which the Government's social security policy undermines their homelessness strategy is growing. Most recently, a group of organisations including the Local Government Association, Crisis and the Chartered Institute of Housing called on the Government to restore the local housing allowance rate to at least the 30th percentile of the local rental market as a matter of urgency, because it is too low to cover private rents in most parts of the country. Will he convey that message to his colleagues in the Treasury and DWP?

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: My Lords, I regularly do so. There is spending in this area, some targeted at assistance, and that is having some success. I accept what the noble Baroness says about this area of spending, and no doubt the Chancellor will look at it in the spending review as we come out of austerity, because it is money well spent.

Family Courts: Domestic Violence

Question

3.02 pm

Tabled by **Baroness Jenkin of Kennington**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans, if any, they have for an inquiry into how family courts in England and Wales treat victims of domestic violence.

Baroness Newlove (Con): My Lords, on behalf of my noble friend Lady Jenkin of Kennington and with her permission, I beg leave to ask the Question standing in her name on the Order Paper.

The Advocate-General for Scotland (Lord Keen of Elie) (Con): My Lords, the Government have today announced the establishment of an expert panel, which will hold a public call for evidence about how the family courts protect children and victims in child contact and other child arrangements cases relating to domestic abuse and other serious offences. The panel will report within three months.

Baroness Newlove: I am very grateful to the Minister for his reply. I am delighted to hear it, having met many victims and survivors of this horrendous abuse through the family courts, but will the panel be chaired by the Government and will it be independent of the family courts? Can he reassure me that this review will be underpinned by systematic gathering of data, evidence and analysis? Otherwise, it will have to be repeated several times and for me, that means too many lessons learned because of too many lives lost under that status.

Lord Keen of Elie: My Lords, it is intended that this will be an expert panel with representatives of the third sector, the judiciary and the Ministry of Justice.

Lord Beecham (Lab): My Lords, I declare my legal interests as set out in the register. Law Society research confirms that the legal aid cuts of 2012 and the accompanying means test operate as a barrier to people in poverty—including victims of violence and abuse—claiming legal advice and representation, requiring them to represent themselves against their abusers. Will the Government ensure, via their review of the legal aid means test, that adequate support is available? Will they address the problem that in 61% of cases of domestic abuse, there are no separate facilities for waiting or for giving evidence by screen or video link?

Lord Keen of Elie: My Lords, the Government are concerned to ensure full access to justice, particularly in such delicate cases as those involving children and domestic abuse. The draft domestic abuse Bill was subject to pre-legislative scrutiny this morning and will come before the House in the foreseeable future.

Baroness Corston (Lab): My Lords, Women's Aid published research last year showing very harmful gender-stereotypical attitudes to women survivors of domestic abuse and their children in our family courts. Does the Minister think that there is a connection between that and the fact that the Government's gender strategy shows that 60% of the women in our prisons are victims of domestic violence?

Lord Keen of Elie: I am not able to identify the link that the noble Baroness refers to. We have full confidence in our family courts system and in the ability of our circuit and district judges to discharge their functions objectively and without regard to issues of gender. In order to do that in cases of the kind that we have discussed, they will always be guided by the requirement for the interests of the child to be paramount.

Baroness Burt of Solihull (LD): My Lords, perhaps I may ask about the Minister's announcement of the setting up of an expert panel. Children are often victims too, whether the damage inflicted is physical or psychological. I am worried about the fundamental presumption of the family courts that the interest of the child is to have contact with both parents, sometimes even when abuse of the parent with care is proven or alleged. However, this is tricky territory, because parental alienation can enable one parent to use the children as a weapon. Will the review, called for by 123 colleagues in the other place, work alongside the panel or is it not needed now because we have the panel?

Lord Keen of Elie: My Lords, the intention is that the expert panel should meet in June, that it should report in a very short period and that we should then be guided by its findings. That will inform us more fully as to the evidential position that should properly be considered. I emphasise that the paramount consideration in these matters is always the interests of the child. The Children Act 1989 rightly places the

child's welfare as the paramount consideration, and there is no absolute right for any parent to have contact with a child.

Baroness Chalker of Wallasey (Con): My Lords, what plans are there to train more judges for the family courts? Much of the backlog seems to indicate that we do not have adequately trained judges who specialise in the needs of persons who come before the family courts.

Lord Keen of Elie: We consider that we have a specialised group of judges operating within the family courts. Having regard to the potential for backlogs, to which the noble Baroness refers, we increased circuit and district judge sittings by 4,000 days in 2018-19 and it is our intention to allocate an additional 6,000 days in 2019-20.

Lord Mackenzie of Framwellgate (Non-Affl): My Lords, given that a very large number of homicides start with domestic violence, does the Minister agree that the criminal justice community should treat the early indicators, such as stalking activities, far more seriously?

Lord Keen of Elie: My Lords, I believe that the judiciary treat such early signs extremely seriously. Where an instance of domestic abuse comes before the courts, it is recognised that it may be just a beginning that could lead to more serious consequences.

Non-Domestic Rating (Preparation for Digital Services) Bill

First Reading

3.08 pm

The Bill was brought from the Commons, endorsed as a money Bill, and read a first time.

Procedure Committee

Motion to Agree

3.09 pm

Moved by The Senior Deputy Speaker

That the 6th Report from the Select Committee *Role of the Lord Speaker and Deputy Speakers; PNQ deadlines on morning sittings; Clocks in the Chamber and Grand Committee; Explanatory statements to amendments; Dinner and lunch break business; Oral question tabling time on Thursdays; and Procedural changes resulting from the extended parliamentary session* (HL Paper 353) be agreed to.

The Senior Deputy Speaker (Lord McFall of Alcluith): My Lords, the report covers seven areas. The first concerns the role of the Lord Speaker and Deputy Speakers. We are recommending that the Lord Speaker and his deputies take on two signposting roles: first, calling the business on the Order Paper currently called by the clerks at the Table, for example, Oral Questions, stages of Bills, secondary legislation and debates; and secondly, calling business not on the

[LORD McFALL OF ALCLUITH]

Order Paper and not currently called by anybody, for example, Private Notice Questions, Statements and Commons Urgent Question repeats.

Calling business not on the Order Paper will help make our proceedings more comprehensible to those watching on television, online or from the Galleries. It will put an end to the potential confusion over why business is sometimes interrupted with no warning by another piece of business. Giving the Lord Speaker and his deputies the role of calling business that is on the Order Paper also has several advantages. First, the occupants of the Woolsack are in a better position to see everyone in the Chamber and, secondly, it is less likely that Members will try to ignore or override the Lord Speaker.

The committee was keen to emphasise that these recommendations respect self-regulation. They are a small but helpful step in making our proceedings easier to understand. They will be subject to review in six sitting months.

The second section of our report recommends that the deadline for submitting Private Notice Questions be moved forward by 30 minutes to 9.30 am on days when the House is sitting in the morning. This will allow time to commission briefings before the House sits.

The third section of the report relates to the clocks in the Chamber and in Grand Committee. We believe that more should be done to help Members of the House stick to time limits. Therefore, the new clocks will display seconds and will change colour and flash when speaking—

Noble Lords: Oh!

The Senior Deputy Speaker: In case noble Lords did not get that, I repeat: the new clocks will flash when speaking time limits, both formal and advisory, are reached.

The fourth section of the report recommends that the trial of attaching explanatory statements to amendments should be rolled out to all Bills from the start of the next Session. We hope this will be welcome news to the many Members and others who gave positive feedback about the trial.

The fifth section relates to dinner and lunch break business. The current rules do not allow the flexibility for dinner or lunch break business to be taken around the time intended every day. These recommendations allow the House to take the business at the time expected notwithstanding the progress of other business.

The sixth section relates to Oral Question tabling time on days when the House sits in the morning, and recommends that the deadline for tabling Oral Questions on such days should be moved from 2 pm to 10.30 am. Priority will continue to be given to those who attend in person, as on other days.

The final section of our report relates to procedural changes resulting from the extended parliamentary Session. Now that the Session looks likely to extend beyond two years, we recommend that the limits per Member on the number of Oral Questions, balloted topical Oral Questions, balloted debates and topical Questions for Short Debate should be reset on 1 June,

and that the usual arrangements for Thursday debates should run from the first sitting Thursday in June to the end of the current Session. I beg to move.

Lord Grocott (Lab): My Lords, I am one of those who strongly welcome what has been said on the powers of the Lord Speaker. It is two years since we had a debate on precisely this subject; 12 people spoke in that debate and 10, in one way or another, said that it was important to enhance the role of the Lord Speaker in the operation of the procedures in this Chamber. As the Senior Deputy Speaker has already said, the main reason most people advanced this was that it is bizarre to anyone sitting in the Gallery to see a stately procession with presumably quite an important figure walking into the Chamber each day, arriving on the Woolsack and then—unless someone has died or left the House—proceeding to do absolutely nothing other than look decorative. Added to this, there is the situation, which seems absurd to me, in which in a Chamber of 800 Members, the only Member not allowed to speak during Question Time is the Speaker.

3.15 pm

It is much to be welcomed that there has been movement in the right direction, but those who spoke in that debate had two main recommendations. First, there were the procedures recommended in today's Procedure Committee report about common-sense things such as announcing when a Statement is coming—that occurs pretty much randomly as far as anyone observing our proceedings is concerned. The other very important area, which I fear is not included in the report, is the potential development of the responsibilities of the Lord Speaker to include exercising light-touch control at Question Time.

Whatever we say about self-regulation, by custom and practice, this is currently exercised by the Government Front Bench, which is an absurd position from which to direct the Chamber. I thought the noble Lord, Lord McFall, gave this point away when he said that the reason these changes are being made is that the Lord Speaker is in a better position to see what is going on in the Chamber. Exactly the same argument applies if you are talking about the Lord Speaker exercising light control—we are not looking for a Stalinist Speaker and I think we are unlikely to get one—so that we avoid a situation in which the person currently exercising control has half of the audience sitting behind him. That is a peculiar way in which to operate; I challenge anyone to show me an assembly anywhere in the world where that happens.

This is a glass half full as far as I am concerned, and I think many others in this House share that view. It is right that we have a review in six months. I am absolutely confident and will make a bold prediction—the only one I dare make in the current political climate—that when the six months are up, no one will want to revert to the previous system. At that time, I will propose—or if I do not, I am sure someone else will—that the House extends the role of the Speaker, very gently, to take over the responsibilities currently carried out by the Government Front Bench. With that proviso, I strongly support the proposals on the powers of the Speaker.

Lord Hamilton of Epsom (Con): My Lords, to come back on the remarks from the noble Lord, Lord Grocott, I hope we have learned a few lessons from the other place. It is possible to hear much too much from the Speaker, as well as too little.

Lord Rooker (Lab): My Lords, I reinforce the second point made by my noble friend Lord Grocott. On 4 April, the Government Front Bench in this House went on strike, in so far as it abandoned the so-called light-touch control at Question Time and during debates—quite deliberately. The body language of the Whips was such that they disappeared completely. The Front Bench allowed Members to speak beyond the time limits and go way beyond the subjects that we were debating. It was on the day of Yvette Cooper's Bill. I formally complained to the Procedure Committee because nominally I was the Member in charge of the Bill. All I said was that, on days when the Government decide to abdicate their responsibility to keep good order, they should indicate as such so that the Chair can carry out those responsibilities.

I had that responsibility for two years, when my noble friend Lady Amos was Leader of the House. Upstairs, I have a copy of every single day's Order Paper. I monitored how the speeches and questions were going around the House, to see fair play operating. Sometimes I upset people, because I had to intervene. These days, nobody intervenes; we might go a fortnight before anybody from the Front Bench intervenes. This allows chaos and allows the bullies in this place to dominate Question Time. That needs to be attended to but it is not attended to in this report. We still have a situation in which 80%, or whatever it is, of the Questions are asked by 50% of the Members, simply because of the bullying. Giving the role of seeing fair play to the Speaker, or someone in the Chair, will encourage a greater diversity of Members to intervene at Question Time. Sadly, that is what is missing. However, this report is a very good thin end of the wedge; it is a wedge I intend to hit very hard.

Lord Tyler (LD): My Lords, I endorse the views of the noble Lords, Lord Rooker and Lord Grocott, because in addition to the practical points they have made there is a constitutional issue. It is absurd, in a House that holds the Executive and the Government to account, that a member of the Government decides who should do so. In addition to the problems already referred to, someone on the Government Front Bench cannot see who is standing behind him or her—that was illustrated again just a few minutes ago. But that is not the major issue, which is that our responsibility in Parliament is to hold the Executive to account. Who should decide who should do that? Surely it should be the totally independent Lord Speaker, not a member of the Government.

Lord Blunkett (Lab): My Lords, I welcome this modest change. I support what my noble friends Lord Grocott and Lord Rooker, and the noble Lord, Lord Tyler, said but, on a lighter note, and on the Senior Deputy Speaker's third point, I have never been in favour of flashing. I would like to know how I am going to tell whether the clock is flashing. I hope it will be possible for whoever is on the Woolsack not just to introduce

Statements and Private Notice Questions, but to give a gentle indication at the end of them when time is up, which will help some of us to be a little more professional in how we deliver ourselves.

Lord Empey (UUP): My Lords, I thank the committee for its work. I support the recommendations before the House, but I strongly support what previous speakers said about the Chair's role. Of course, that applies not just to the Lord Speaker but to all the others who take that position. Therefore a lot of people will quite rightly be involved.

Since I have been here I have found two things most difficult to cope with. The first is the squealing match that goes on every day when people are trying to be called to speak, which is a very undignified business. What people think about it when they look in I do not know. Today was relatively modest, with only a couple of incidents, but on some occasions it is much more brutal. It is very undignified and inefficient. The Chair could, at the very least, identify the group from which the speaker should come, even if we do not go the whole hog and identify the Member, as they do in the other place. As the noble Lord, Lord Tyler, said, physically in the Chamber a third of the House is behind the clerks and half is behind the Front Bench. Obviously the current approach does not make sense.

The other thing I would like the committee to look at if it has not already done so is how Oral Questions are identified. We have a situation where people have to sit for hours outside the Table Office. If we were to accumulate the number of person hours per annum wasted sitting there to table a Question, it would be most off-putting to a lot of Members. We would get a greater number of Members tabling Questions if we were to look at that. Personally, I would eliminate it and have ballots for all Questions, but if we were to take it in stages we could encourage more Members to participate in Oral Questions. Not everybody is prepared to sit twiddling their thumbs for an hour or an hour and a half outside the Table Office to table an Oral Question. We should look at those two items. Nevertheless, I welcome the report as far as it goes and fully support it.

The Countess of Mar (CB): My Lords, I declare my interest as a Deputy Speaker. I have been a Member of your Lordships' House for nearly 44 years and I have seen a lot of changes. I remind noble Lords who want more power for the Speaker that, apart from this, we are a self-regulating Chamber. It is up to us to discipline ourselves in the length of our questions and our answers—incidentally, this includes Ministers—to speak to the time allotted and not go beyond it, and just to behave properly like good, civilised human beings.

Baroness Hayman (CB): My Lords, I have the greatest respect for the noble Countess and she is absolutely right to encourage people to have self-discipline. But the truth, as the noble Lords, Lord Grocott and Lord Tyler, said, is that we do not have self-discipline or self-regulation at Question Time. We actually have regulation by the Government Front Bench and while I cast no aspersions, as I know the Government take great care to do that in as equitable a fashion as they can, I believe it is wrong in principle that the Executive should choose who speaks in the legislature.

[BARONESS HAYMAN]

I should have declared a past interest, although I have to say that the noble Lord, Lord Grocott, never accused me of looking decorative on the Woolsack, so I am slightly concerned about that. The House's view of self-regulation and its anxiety about the role of the Speaker has changed dramatically in the experience of three Lord Speakers. I hope the House would now feel that it was possible to create a greater role for the Lord Speaker without invoking—this was always in inverted commas—a “Commons-type Speaker” in this House. I believe we are perfectly capable of creating the light-touch Speakership that has been referred to, and I hope the Procedure Committee will look at that in the near future.

The Senior Deputy Speaker: My Lords, I thank the eight Members for their contributions and for the welcome that the report has had. I am very much aware of the aspirations of the noble Lord, Lord Grocott, and I am sure we will have further positive meetings on this issue. Whether the glass is half full or not, this is a modest step forward. Its aim was to ensure that we maintain the self-regulation of the House but also enhance the public's understanding by communicating what the House does, so that people looking in can understand what we are doing as a result. Perhaps the noble Lord's comment on the Lord Speaker will ensure that he goes back home with a spring in his step tonight, as a result of being decorative.

I would mention to the noble Lord, Lord Hamilton, that I think we would all agree that the Speakers in both Houses are entirely different personalities. We have our own, very welcome, brand of Speaker here.

The noble Lord, Lord Rooker, wrote me a letter which came too late to discuss it at the last Procedure Committee meeting, which led to this report. But at the committee's next meeting it will be on the agenda. I know he wishes the Lord Speaker to be the custodian of the *Companion*, so there is no doubt where he is coming from on that.

Given his comment, I will certainly meet the noble Lord, Lord Blunkett, before we take this issue forward. The clocks will start flashing in mid-June but the time for having the new procedure will be in July. That gives us a couple of weeks to test it so that on the first day of July, when it is in operation, we are certain that it will work. I thank noble Lords for their contributions and we will continue this discussion.

Motion agreed.

British Steel Statement

3.28 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Lord Henley) (Con): My Lords, with the leave of the House, I shall now repeat in the form of a Statement the Answer given earlier today in another place to an Urgent Question, which asked my right honourable friend the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy whether he will make a Statement on the discussions he has held with British Steel regarding its future. The Statement is as follows:

“As the business department, my department is in regular conversation with a wide range of companies, including those in the steel industry. As the House will be aware, on 24 April the Government entered into a commercial arrangement with British Steel, valued at £120 million, relating to the company's obligations under the EU Emissions Trading Scheme. The Secretary of State updated the House on this agreement in an Oral Statement on 1 May—the first available opportunity after market-sensitive elements of the resulting transaction were concluded. The commercial agreement reached with British Steel ensured that the company was able to meet its 2018 EU ETS obligations under a deed of forfeiture. It also ensured that the company did not incur EU ETS non-compliance fines, coupled with 2018 ETS liabilities, which would have equated to a financial pressure of over £600 million on the company, a sum which would have put the company under significant financial strain.

The speculation regarding the future of British Steel will no doubt be creating uncertainty for those employed by the company. As shown through the ETS agreement, the Government have been willing to act. We have been in ongoing discussions with the company and I am sure the House will understand that we cannot comment in detail at this stage. We will, however, update the House when there is more information available. I can, however, reassure the House that, subject to strict legal bounds, the Government will leave no stone unturned in their support of the steel industry. Yesterday I signed up to the UK steel charter. We want to acknowledge and support this initiative from industry and the charter is one element of that. We have been also been encouraging the UK steel sector to strengthen its engagement with all existing and potential domestic steel consumers, maximising opportunities to benefit from the £3.8 billion a year by 2030 high market-value opportunities that we have identified.

We recognise that global economic conditions continue to be challenging for the industry, which is why the Government are working with the sector, unions and the devolved Administrations to support a sustainable, productive and modern UK steel sector”.

My Lords, that concludes the Statement.

3.30 pm

Lord Stevenson of Balmacara (Lab): My Lords, I am grateful to the Minister for repeating the Answer given in the other place, although it was curious because it did not seem to address any of the points that could bear on the Question which the Secretary of State was asked.

British Steel is our second biggest steel maker and one of only two integrated steel-making sites in the UK. As the only UK steel plant which produces rails used in our tracks, it provides almost all those procured by Network Rail, as well as supplying ScotRail, TfL and Translink in Northern Ireland. It also exports a large volume of products across Europe. Given these facts, your Lordships might well have expected the department to have a very detailed knowledge of the workings of British Steel, which I assume is at the heart of our industrial strategy. For instance, as we heard only last week, and in the Statement, it put £120 million into

the company as part of the ETS bailout. Is that money now at risk? Are we to believe that if the company goes into administration tomorrow—as it may do—the money will not actually come back to taxpayers, as was stated? Did the Minister agree with the company's acquisition of a company based in France, for £42 million, only last week? These things do not suggest a company in trouble, yet we hear today that it needs between £30 million and £75 million to survive.

In order to get some answers, I will ask some specific questions. How much is the company actually asking for? Press reports today range between £30 million and £75 million. What is the figure? What is the current status of the negotiations? There are rumours circulating in the press that the discussions have stalled. Have they? If the company does go into administration tomorrow, what plans do the Government have to support the 4,000 or so people employed directly and the 20,000 or so in the supply chain?

Lord Henley: My Lords, I do not think I can take the noble Lord very far on this. His first question was whether the ETS £120 million was at risk. I assure him that that is not the case. That was made clear by the various guarantees that my right honourable friend announced when he made the Statement on 1 May this year. I did offer to repeat that Statement in the House but that was declined. That money is secure. The noble Lord asked a number of other questions about how much British Steel was asking for and what our further plans were. As my honourable friend made clear in the Statement, it would be wrong at this stage to say much more, because detailed discussions with the company have been going on and will continue. As my honourable friend made clear, we will update the House as soon as possible and bring further information to another place and this House when it is appropriate.

Lord Fox (LD): My Lords, I thank the Minister for repeating the Statement. Like the noble Lord, Lord Stevenson, I am disappointed by the absence of any actual information. Clearly, there is no point in pressing on those issues, since the Minister either does not know or will not say, but in the Statement the Government say that they are working to strengthen engagement with customers. The steel industry has stated that the uncertainty surrounding Brexit is causing real problems with its customers. The Statement also says that the Government will leave no stone unturned, so perhaps the Minister can stand up and say that he agrees with the Chancellor of the Exchequer that a no-deal Brexit would be catastrophic, both for the steel industry and for the rest of British manufacturing.

Lord Henley: My Lords, the noble Lord says that I either do not know or will not say. The fact is that it is not appropriate to say anything at the moment. That is very important and, as my honourable friend made clear in another place, he or my right honourable friend the Secretary of State will come before another place at the appropriate moment and let the House know what is necessary to know at that stage. He went on to make various remarks about Brexit. I appreciate his concerns about the element of uncertainty that is affecting a number of people. All I can recommend is

that all parties rally round and support the Prime Minister's deal, get that deal through another place and let us get on with life.

The Lord Bishop of Winchester: My Lords, among the 4,500 British Steel jobs at risk are many apprenticeship trainees and students enrolled on degree apprenticeships. What action will the Government take to ensure that these apprentices will not lose their training or have their training disrupted, but will be able to continue their training elsewhere in another steel-based firm, or have an equivalent apprenticeship in another place?

Lord Henley: My Lords, the right reverend Prelate is quite right to draw attention to the uncertainty facing apprentices in the steelworks at Scunthorpe and the other places where British Steel is based, but also to draw attention to the concerns of all those who are employed by British Steel and the uncertainty they face. I can offer him an assurance that my right honourable friend will be talking to government colleagues in other departments to make sure that all appropriate help and support can be given by the Government, particularly, as the right reverend Prelate drew attention to, to those who are in the middle of apprenticeships with British Steel. It is right to remember at this stage that we have an economy that is providing virtually full employment. We have seen employment grow to levels that we have not seen for a very long time, we have seen unemployment continue to fall and we want to continue that process.

Lord Carlile of Berriew (CB): My Lords, I ask my question as the father-in-law of somebody employed in the steelworks at Scunthorpe. Does the Minister accept that there is a sense of panic and despair among the ordinary population of Scunthorpe, a town totally dominated by the steel industry? Will he confirm that discussions with the Government are going on hour by hour to try to secure an outcome? Will the Government bear in mind that what is being asked for at the moment is simply bridging finance to get through a crisis period, not something more permanent than that?

Lord Henley: I am very grateful to the noble Lord for bringing to the attention of the House his concerns and those of his family. Obviously, we all have Scunthorpe in our minds at the moment because a very large number of jobs in one area are at risk. The Government are active and will continue to be active in doing all we can to offer whatever appropriate help it is possible to offer, but the noble Lord will appreciate that at this stage it would not be appropriate for me to go much further. I repeat that my right honourable friend has made it clear he will come before the House to make a further Statement.

Lord Davies of Stamford (Lab): The Minister has refused to answer a whole raft of questions this afternoon on the grounds that discussions are continuing with the company concerned. That may be a perfectly good excuse so far as matters related purely to gifts or subsidies to British Steel are concerned, but it is not a reason for the noble Lord to avoid answering questions on a fundamental government policy. I ask him again—

[LORD DAVIES OF STAMFORD]
and I hope for an answer this time—whether he believes that leaving the European Union, and leaving the customs area of the European Union, is conducive to the future prosperity of the steel industry in this country.

Lord Henley: My Lords, the most important thing is to get my right honourable friend the Prime Minister's deal through, and for the noble Lord and others to sign up to it, to get the certainty that we need. This relates not just to the steel industry but to all parts of the economy, and we will continue to work for that.

Baroness Altmann (Con): My Lords, will my noble friend relay from these Benches the deep concern that if we proceed on a no-deal Brexit basis, this may be just the beginning of the demise of a significantly successful manufacturing industry in this country? The money that has been spent on planning for no deal could be considered in the context of the bridging loan that is required to save these precious jobs in Scunthorpe.

Lord Henley: My Lords, I do not think I can take my noble friend further than I have already done when commenting on Brexit and the desirability of getting my right honourable friend's deal through.

Kew Gardens (Leases) (No. 3) Bill [HL]

Committee

3.41 pm

Clause 1: Power to grant a lease in respect of land at Kew Gardens

Amendment 1

Moved by Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbotts

1: Clause 1, page 1, line 4, at end insert—

“() The Secretary of State may not grant a lease for more than 31 years under subsection (1) unless he or she has consulted the Charity Commission on the compliance of the proposed lease with the functions of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, under section 24 of the National Heritage Act 1983 and with sections 117 to 123 of the Charities Act 2011 (restrictions on dispositions of land) and the results of that consultation have been published.”

Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbotts (Con): My Lords, with this amendment, we leave the harsh atmosphere of steel manufacture for the gentler world of Kew Gardens, and what better day to do so than the first day of the Chelsea Flower Show?

I will begin by making it clear what my amendment is not about. It is not an attack on the Bill itself, which I think has an excellent purpose in encouraging Kew, like all semi-public bodies, to make best use of its assets. It is not an attack on the institution itself. I explained at Second Reading that, though I am no plantsman, I am aware of Kew's worldwide reputation, and it is part of our soft-power armoury. It is not an attack on the trustees—good men and women true—who, I am sure, are doing their best. It is not an attack on the Minister, who has given several passionate speeches

in favour of Kew during the earlier stage of this Bill; and nor, indeed, is it an attack on his officials in the Box, who have been more than kind to us, and who have written, had meetings and helped those of us with an interest in this topic as much as could reasonably be expected.

But the French have a phrase—the French always have a phrase—“*autres temps, autres mœurs*”. For those of you who cannot understand my execrable French, it means “other times, other customs”. All of us who are involved and who have an interest in this Bill will eventually move on, and we cannot be certain that those who come after us will be as well motivated as today's participants and protagonists. Therefore, we need to ensure that the keys to the castle are safely guarded for ever against two broad types of possible events. The first I could describe broadly as conspiracy—that is to say, in the future, a determined effort to misapply Kew's assets, maybe in response to some shift in national government policy. The second type—in my view a more likely outcome, but I hope I am not using unparliamentary language—is a cock-up: that is, an administrative failing or oversight that is not caught in time.

This is the essence of my amendment. The Bill's intention is to open up considerable financial returns by extending the maximum term of a lease from 31 years to 150 years. The Explanatory Notes focus on seven houses on Kew Green that are owned by the Crown and are said to be surplus to Kew's requirements. Before we go any further, I would be grateful if the Minister could explain whether there are any other assets to which the Bill might apply in future that are currently hidden from view. In other words, is this a one-shot deal after which nothing else can happen, or, when the Bill is passed, might we suddenly find that a series of other assets is revealed?

My direct concerns are twofold. As I said, the Bill increases the financial resources available to Kew. Noble Lords will be familiar with the crime thriller book or film in which the grizzled detective with 25 years' experience tells his naive new recruit to “follow the money”. That has been a feature of some charities' behaviour in recent years—a tendency to overlook and downplay the fact that, as a charity, it has a stated public benefit objective and instead to be dazzled by access to funding. That is my first concern.

My second concern is potential inflexibility. Extending leases is of course financially very attractive. However, once the lease is signed, the asset is effectively gone, at least for 150 years. At Second Reading, a number of noble Lords, including the noble Baroness, Lady Kramer, drew attention to places where Kew's service performance offering might be improved. So we need to be sure that any new arrangements balance the search for funding today with the constraints on Kew's future operations and its overall performance in future. I would feel happier if we had a clear regulatory structure and lines of authority.

I will not repeat what I said at Second Reading. Suffice it to say that the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew is a charity—but a charity with a difference. It is what is known as an “exempt charity”: that is, it can access all the benefits of a registered charity, on tax and so forth,

but it does not—indeed, cannot—register with the Charity Commission, which therefore has no sight of, and no ability to watch, what is happening in the charity. Instead, an exempt charity has what is called a “principal regulator”, which in Kew’s case is Defra—the Minister’s department. However, “principal regulator” is a misnomer. The principal regulator’s sole task is to ensure compliance with charity law. When the principal regulator discovers malfeasance, it can do nothing about it. It has no enforcement power but has to pass the case on to the Charity Commission to take whatever actions are necessary. As I said at Second Reading, its role will be closer to that of a traffic policeman than that of a regulator. On top of this already somewhat confused situation, we have the provisions of the National Heritage Act 1983, which has a whole section devoted to Kew and gives the Minister very wide powers indeed, but which nowhere mentions the need for an exempt charity to comply with the provisions of the Charities Act, despite the Minister having the very wide powers to direct the board.

My noble friend Lord Eccles has been good enough to put his name to this amendment. I am delighted that he has done this, because as a past chairman of Kew he can speak with far greater authority than I can. I think he intends to focus on the part of the ministerial brief on power, so I will say no more about it now.

What is the department’s answer to this regulatory model? Its *deus ex machina* is the existence of a memorandum of understanding signed in 2010 between the department and the Charity Commission, in which—as I understand it; I have not seen it so cannot be certain what it says—the department binds itself to observing the principles of charity law in connection with Kew. I do not doubt that this represents an effective tactical bridge, but strategically it is very weak because an MoU is capable of being swept away at the stroke of a ministerial pen.

My amendment aims to reinforce that potentially weak bridge. It does so by binding the existing MoU into the Bill, requiring the Secretary of State in statute, before he grants any lease extensions, to consult the Charity Commission and to publish the results of that consultation. Some, perhaps including my noble friend, may argue that this is bureaucratic, to which I reply that Kew’s worldwide reputation is too valuable to take chances with. The need for these consultations will be infrequent—perhaps only one will be needed if my noble friend gives the answer that only seven properties will ever fall under the provisions of this Bill.

About quarter of an hour ago, the noble Lord, Lord McFall, moved a series of changes to the procedure rules of your Lordships’ House. One of them permits short explanatory statements to amendments. I thought I might be able to add one to this amendment, so I went to the Public Bill Office to ask whether I could. I was told, “Not yet, you are jumping the gun. You have to wait until the House has passed it”. If I were able to table a short explanatory statement summarising what I am trying to achieve, it would read as follows: “to clarify and strengthen the lines of responsibility for ensuring compliance with charity law for the trustees of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Defra, the relevant government department, and the Charity Commission”. I beg to move.

Viscount Eccles (Con): My Lords, I have put my name to my noble friend’s amendment and will concentrate briefly on what I would describe as a gamekeeper and poacher situation. Because Defra and Kew together determine the interpretation of the general functions of Kew, which are set out in Section 24, they can come to a mutual definition of what is within its charitable purposes. My noble friend is asking whether there should be another arbiter of these matters.

At Second Reading, my noble friend Lord Selborne, who was for a while the chairman of the trustees of Kew, raised a question which had arisen in the 19th century when the Hookers were the directors. Kew is a very complicated institution, make no mistake about that; because of its history, science and complex estate, and because it is a public garden that is open all the time, it juggles choices. The question that arises out of Section 24 is how you make those choices and how you interpret that section. My answer is that Section 24 and the scheme of the Act are quite clear: Kew is primarily a scientific institution. It has six general functions, five of which are concentrated on the science. Indeed, the first two of those functions encourage Kew to study not only plants but related subjects, and to go out and proselytise about the information which it has put together in the most amazing way. The sixth function is the public parks function, which is quite cautiously phrased and, to be honest, pretty discretionary as compared with the science of Kew.

I hesitate to say that the Hooker controversy has arisen again, certainly not as it was in the 19th century. However, there is a need for Defra and Kew to come to a mutual interpretation of these functions and to publicise that interpretation so that both Parliament and the public can see clearly how they are being interpreted at the time. That would inform Defra and Kew in any discussion they might have with the Charity Commission under my noble friend’s amendment. I feel strongly that that needs to happen, so I strongly support the amendment.

Baroness Bakewell of Hardington Mandeville (LD): My Lords, I agree that it is important to have safeguards, and, as the noble Viscount, Lord Eccles, said, scientific research is one of the six major functions at Kew. However, it needs funding, and this amendment is unnecessarily restrictive. The trustees’ implementation of the MoU, when implementing the leases, must ensure that the ethos of the trust and that of the Charity Commission is adhered to, and there needs to be trust that they can do that. If an asset needs significant investment on a 31-year lease, which these seven houses probably do, it is not an asset but a liability, because there is no long-term plan for the asset. A longer lease of no more than 150 years will allow the leasee to invest in the property and allow for proper management of that asset.

I will listen to the Minister’s response with interest, but at this moment I do not feel obliged to support the amendment.

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch (Lab): My Lords, we have considerable sympathy with the points made by the noble Lord, Lord Hodgson, and the noble Viscount, Lord Eccles. We have also tabled amendments which

[BARONESS JONES OF WHITCHURCH]

are another way of trying to address the same issue. Our concern is that this short Bill puts too much individual power into the Secretary of State's hands, and we need to make sure that the right checks and balances are in place so that that power is used wisely. We seek to have an external body, such as UNESCO, to oversee the powers being allocated, with the Secretary of State unable to influence what UNESCO is doing. However, I appreciate that the noble Lords are coming at this from a different direction.

The point of the noble Lord, Lord Hodgson, was well made: it is not about now but about the future, about other times and places when other players will be in post, and we need to make sure that they exercise their responsibility wisely. Whatever statements were made about the current Secretary of State, this is about future Secretaries of State and indeed future members of the board, and the need to make sure that they have the correct relationship.

This is also about different circumstances. The noble Viscount, Lord Eccles, said that people juggle with choices, and that is absolutely right. They will always be under pressure and there will always be a shortage of money, so we need to make sure that the financial demands on the shoulders of the individuals concerned do not lead them to make short-term choices which would damage Kew in any way. I therefore have considerable sympathy with the amendment; I am interested to know how the Minister will respond to this and thank the noble Lord for raising this issue.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Lord Gardiner of Kimble) (Con): My Lords, I am most grateful to noble Lords, particularly my noble friends. The amendment seeks to apply consultation by the Charity Commission to the actions of Defra and RBG Kew, which, I should say, is a charity specifically exempt from direct regulation by the Charity Commission under Section 22 of and Schedule 3 to the Charities Act 2011.

I say this with passion: there is very little difference between what we are trying to achieve in protecting Kew when granting these leases and what we are trying to achieve for future generations, whoever has responsibility for these matters. The Bill does not affect any of the high protections already afforded to Kew; it is about changing a figure of 31 to 150. All the protections will continue to apply. I absolutely understand my noble friend Lord Hodgson's point, and that of my noble friend Lord Eccles, who has great experience in this field; their intention clearly is not to attack the Bill or Kew—quite the reverse. It is in everyone's interest to look after Kew.

I need to set out something by way of legal advice on the amendment; I received the advice from senior departmental government lawyers and counsel.

4 pm

Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbotts: Before my noble friend leaves behind the issue of the leases, can he let the Committee know whether other assets could be leased, or are we talking just about seven properties on Kew Green?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: I was coming to that. Let me be clear: Kew will focus on the seven residential properties on Kew Green. Kew has no immediate plans beyond the proposals for those properties. Obviously, the Bill does not stop future plans for any other property on the non-core estate, but Kew wants to ensure that the seven residential properties on Kew Green do not continue in their current unsatisfactory condition. The Bill is about maintenance of the non-core estate, and the whole basis of what we are doing is to enable those parts of the non-core estate not required by Kew—

Viscount Eccles: I am sorry to interrupt my noble friend. He has used the phrase “non-core” three times. How does he define that? Until you define your attitude to the six general functions in some detail, you cannot come to a judgment on what is core and what is not. Some properties on Kew Green are occupied by the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. Some of them, such as Cambridge Cottage, are historic. If I may say so, we must not get carried away with the idea that what is core and what is non-core is obvious. It is not at all obvious at Kew, which is a very complicated institution. What is core and non-core changes with fashion. Now, Extinction Rebellion is changing things too.

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: It would be more helpful if I could develop my arguments. It is important that I set out the legal point. My noble friend Lord Eccles is right that I should perhaps get a better legal definition of “non-core”. I am trying to explain, in what I would call lay language, that Kew has recognised that these properties on Kew Green are not required for the fulfilment of its functions, as set out in the National Heritage Act. Here, we are seeking to enable Kew to use the additional income to meet the challenges that I know my noble friend Lord Eccles had to resolve when he was chairman, as will the current and future chairs. I like his point, which is how in these difficult times we can invest more proactively in Kew.

Baroness Kramer (LD): My Lords—

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: I would like to make some progress.

Baroness Kramer: Perhaps I may just ask the Minister a question purely for clarification. I am not the slightest bit fussed about the seven houses on Kew Green as they are all under conservation orders and the local council will certainly be able to prevent any inappropriate development. We can also count on the fact that, no matter what the political colour of the council, the residents will make sure that that happens. What I am trying to understand is what else might be non-core. Does that include the parking area, or is it part of the non-core estate? Is that where we should be focusing our general concern?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: As I say, it goes back to those areas. I want to pin down this point. This is absolutely not about suddenly cherry-picking: “That looks like a nice site; that would be quite lucrative”. It is about enabling longer leases to ensure that there is more money for Kew to do these things. Part of the issue, shall

we say, is accessibility for the public, whether that be parking or other general facilities. Yes, such things are part of enabling scientific endeavour, but they also enable the nation to appreciate what Kew does by way of visiting the gardens.

Lord Campbell-Savours (Lab): My Lords, could non-core—

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: I am sorry, but would it not be easier for me to develop the argument, because much of this will I hope be covered? I think that that would be more constructive.

I want to go back to the advice I have received, because my response to my noble friends and the amendment hinges on that. These leases of the land at Kew are not regulated by the Charities Act 2011 as the land is Crown land, so in its current form the amendment is not an appropriate safeguard. Kew Gardens is land held by the monarch in the right of the Crown and is Crown land currently managed by the board of trustees and Defra. The board was established under Section 23 of the National Heritage Act 1983. While that Act gave the board a power to purchase land and other powers to deal with land that it purchased, it did not transfer title of the land at Kew Gardens to the board, nor did it give the board any powers of management over the land at Kew.

In granting leases on the land at Kew Gardens, the Secretary of State will act as the freeholder on behalf of the Crown. The Bill does not create the power to grant a lease, merely to make a longer one. Since title is not held by the charity RBG Kew, these leases will not be regulated directly through charity law. It is not the intention of the Charities Act 2011 that the Charity Commission will be consulted on the management of Crown land as it relates only to the disposal of property that is in the title of a charity, which the Crown land at Kew is not. As I say, having taken counsel's advice, it is important that I say this.

The Secretary of State, in exercising his powers of management of the land at Kew, balances the freedoms to manage Crown land free of any restrictions. Parliament's intention was that the land should now be occupied by Kew for use in furtherance of its general functions under Section 24 of the National Heritage Act. However, in reality proposals will be initiated by Kew and in making the decision to support the grant of a lease, the trustees would act in the best interests of Kew, in line with the National Heritage Act and pursuant to the framework agreement between Kew and Defra. That agreement was laid before both Houses of Parliament last year, and I will circulate the framework document to my noble friend Lord Eccles and indeed to all noble Lords who have spoken in this debate.

Lord Campbell-Savours: Could I just clarify something? Does non-core land include land on which planning permission can be secured to build new residential developments?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: All land within Kew and the Crown land, including non-core land—I used that unofficial language, shall we say, to describe the sorts of properties for which Kew recognises that it would

wish to avail itself of this legislation—is subject to many protections. I digress slightly from these leases, but for instance if Kew, in its scientific endeavour, wanted to build a new science block or something to enable it to be ever more proactive, as my noble friend Lord Eccles said, given that this is a world heritage site with many listed buildings it would have to be in sympathy with all that. I perhaps wish I had not described it as “non-core land”, but it was a genuine attempt to distinguish between the estate—where all the functions of the National Heritage Act are undertaken, and those functions are set out in statute—and land and property, such as the seven residential buildings, that Kew does not feel it requires for its core functions and that would clearly require the protections I will unfold not only in this amendment but in others. All land that is going to be subject to this legislation has many protections.

Lord Campbell-Savours: I understand that, but I want to press this. Could a developer, to put it bluntly, build a block of flats on the non-core land, subject to the protections?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: No. On the land under question, one of the seven residential buildings is not listed and all the rest are. On a later amendment I will go into some detail on the conditions that there would be on the leases, because that is probably where I can explain it better. In the leases there are standard conditions and those that recognise the world heritage site, the listed nature and all those things, so any proposal by anyone would have to go through all those hoops. If the noble Lord is asking me what would happen if someone came along and said, “I would like to build some modern flats in the place of those listed buildings”, I cannot see—I am happy to put this on record—the local authority agreeing to it, anyone saying that this was the proper function, or the Secretary of State granting a lease.

Lord Campbell-Savours: But he could.

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: The protections are available for ever to ensure that this would not be the case.

Lord Campbell-Savours: But it cannot be ruled out.

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: I think it can be ruled out, because the protections are absolutely, fully in place for the land at Kew, whether the seven residential properties—

Lord Campbell-Savours: Forget those.

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: I am not forgetting those, because they are the areas being dealt with. I am going to make more progress; I am happy to continue these considerations outside Committee.

One thing is clear: if a lease was at odds with anything, the Secretary of State would decline to grant it in the first place. With this in mind, and on the advice of departmental lawyers, the Secretary of State would not grant a lease that was in any way contrary to Kew's objectives as set out in the National Heritage Act 1983, the governance document of Kew Gardens dated July 2017, and the Kew framework document

[LORD GARDINER OF KIMBLE]
dated June 2018, since this would risk placing the board in breach of its own statutory obligations and the framework and governance documents. For example, no lease of any land or building could ever restrict public access to the plants, collections and other facilities at Kew as this would be contrary to Section 24 of the National Heritage Act 1983.

4.15 pm

The Secretary of State is accountable to Parliament for the activities and performance of Kew. Under the National Heritage Act 1983, a ministerial direction can provide a further mechanism as regards the management of Kew in any manner the Secretary of State chooses, from time to time. This could, if necessary, enable the Secretary of State to manage Kew's activities with respect to leases of this kind.

I am very interested in the debate that has ensued and happy, with lawyers, to have any meetings that any of your Lordships would find helpful. This amendment would involve the Secretary of State making considerations under the Charities Act that are not relevant to Crown land. Given the legal situation surrounding Kew leases, there are sufficient safeguards in place to protect Kew.

I have an answer now on what we mean by non-core land—I now regret going out on my own and describing it in that way. There is no legal definition of “non-core”. Kew is Crown land and comprises the entire estate within and around the gardens and Kew Green. “Non-core” is how we describe an asset that is not delivering Kew's functions under the National Heritage Act 1983. Protections will apply in law regardless of the term used.

I will look again at some of the key points raised, but I want to emphasise that the whole purpose of this legislation, in moving from the figure of 31 to 150, is to release funds for Kew to do what we all want it to do: supply solutions to many of the issues facing our ecosystems. It is science that I will always put first. I have problems with the amendment because of the legal situation, and although I am very happy to continue discussions with my noble friends to provide reassurance, I hope my noble friend will feel able to withdraw his amendment at this time.

Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbotts: My Lords, my noble friend the Minister has been extremely courteous and accepted interventions from all sides of the House, which is very good of him. He may be regretting the briefing he provided for us before Second Reading, at which he was unwise enough to say, “I hope some of you are going to take an interest in this Bill and we get enough speakers”. He may have put his head into the lion's mouth there.

I thank my noble friend Lord Eccles, who brings a wealth of experience and insight to this and brought out the difficult balances that are to be struck—no one is suggesting that what we are trying to tackle is easy. To the noble Baroness, Lady Bakewell, I say that of course we understand that Kew needs the money; but we need to make sure there are appropriate checks and balances and that we are not chasing the money too much. I am grateful to the noble Baroness, Lady Jones, for her general support.

My noble friend made three important points. First, he said that the focus is on seven residential properties but there are no immediate plans to go beyond that. That is a careful set of words. Secondly, he was very careful and courteous also in dealing with the “core” and “non-core” point, brought up by my noble friend Lord Eccles.

Finally, as I understand it, the legal advice is that this amendment does not have effect because the Crown land has no link with a charity and therefore with the Charity Commission. I am therefore not quite sure why the department needs to sign an MoU to ensure compliance with charity law because if it was just—

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: This is because the MoU relates to the plants, collections and functions, not to the land.

Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbotts: That is very helpful. So the MoU is narrowly drawn in that sense. I am grateful for that. I want to make sure that somewhere in this legislation we know how big a set of opportunities we are offering Kew and make sure that there are no unnecessary opportunities for side deals which may release funds for Kew in the short term in a way that does not deal with its long-term objectives, which we all support. We will carry on the discussion. In the meantime, I beg leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment 1 withdrawn.

Amendment 2

Moved by Lord Whitty

2: Clause 1, page 1, line 4, at end insert—

“() Leases granted or extended under this Act shall be subject to the condition that activities on or in the land or buildings leased will contribute to, be supportive of, or be compatible with the core botanical, scientific, environmental, educational and amenity activities of the Royal Botanic Gardens, its World Heritage status and its charitable objectives.”

Lord Whitty (Lab): My Lords, I will try to be brief, but I am afraid I will revert to many of the points which were touched on under the amendment moved by the noble Lord, Lord Hodgson, and I am not entirely sure that the Minister has entirely convinced me.

There is a central point. I am all for simplicity of legislation, but the Minister keeps referring to the seven cottages on Kew Green and the wish to extend the existing leases. Everybody understands that, and I do not think there has been any great dissent in the Committee about the desirability of so doing, but the Bill refers to,

“the power to grant a lease in respect of land for a period of up to 150 years”.

That to me means all land. The Crown can and does give leases. The specifics on the two royal estates which make up Kew add complexity to the issue, but as it stands we could have 150-year leases on any of the land that Kew covers. There is no distinction in the drafting of the Bill between core and non-core land. I appreciate the Minister's assertions that this one of

the most protected pieces of land in the nation. I accept that there are all sorts of protections built into the current situation. I also deeply appreciate the Minister and his staff and the staff of Kew meeting me and discussing this at some length, but I come back to the text of the Bill. There is no difference between us on the objectives, but for the first time 150-year leases could be granted under this Bill, without restriction, on any piece of land which the botanical gardens now cover.

I understand all the protections that are built in, but I go along with the French of the noble Lord, Lord Hodgson. Times change. Secretaries of State change. The arrangements for the Charity Commission will change. It may be that the implications of being a world heritage site change. It may even be possible that the political control of the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames changes dramatically—that is slightly less likely. Kew Gardens need to be protected against change. In so far as this Act will continue to be the basis on which leases are granted for 150 years over an unlimited period forward, we have to have rather more protections here.

The regulatory structure that the noble Lord, Lord Hodgson, has identified is complex. Therefore, it is almost certain that departmental structures and memoranda of understanding will change over the next 150 years and beyond, and rightly so in many respects. However, we are dealing with the Bill as it stands. As I said, I do not object to Kew's ability to raise money. In many respects, I think that it will greatly benefit from private finance coming into the organisation—or more so than is the case at present, although it has been quite successful at raising money in recent years. However, we need a restriction on the way in which the land will then be used.

My amendment recognises the multifaceted aspects of Kew. Essentially, it is scientific, as the noble Viscount, Lord Eccles, said, but Kew's objectives relating to science, the environment, education that stems from that science, and the amenity and enjoyment value—the sixth function, as the noble Viscount called it—all need protection. Therefore, my amendment stipulates that the use of the land should not challenge or undermine any of those objectives and outcomes. It is couched in pretty broad terms. It says that the use of the land must either contribute to or support Kew's objectives—support can mean bringing in the finance for those objectives—or at least be compatible with them. The word “or” there in my amendment should perhaps be “and”, because in a sense compatibility with those objectives is my central point.

My noble friend Lord Campbell-Savours asked whether a developer could build possibly unsuitable residential buildings on those sites. The Minister said that everybody would object to that, so it would not happen. However, under the Bill it could happen. That is my point. At Second Reading I explained my ancestral and childhood love and affection for Kew, and that is shared with a wide range of people. However, certain developments in the rest of London, including those along the Thames in, say, the neighbouring borough of Wandsworth, which we can look at over the bridge down the road, have not exactly been compatible with their surroundings.

If anything impinged on Kew, it would be detrimental to its amenity value, it would probably undermine its UNESCO world heritage site designation, and it could change the public's attitude towards it. I completely accept the Minister's view that such development is unlikely. In the short term it is almost impossible because Ministers will have the present apparatus of regulation and planning controls at their disposal. I have no desire to challenge the intentions of the Minister, the department or the Kew trustees in bringing forward these proposals. However, this House and this Parliament need to say, “Well, yes, do all that, but let's write in a general restriction to ensure that these probably imagined and scaremongering possibilities do not arise”. I would feel a lot safer, as I think other lovers and supporters would, if those restrictions were put in.

I hold no great attachment to the precise wording of my amendment. I would be delighted if at the end of this debate the Minister said, “We accept the principle but we will ask parliamentary counsel to draft an alternative form of words that will achieve the same objective”. That outcome would be very helpful and I would welcome the Minister saying something like that at this stage. If he could bring something forward on Report that achieved those objectives, I would very much welcome it. However, in default of that, I would like the Minister and the House to take my amendment seriously. I beg to move.

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: My Lords, I have my name to my noble friend Lord Whitty's amendment but I also have Amendment 4 in this group so I hope noble Lords will forgive me if I introduce it at this stage; it addresses the criteria to be used for any lease extensions.

I should say, as is implied, that we support Amendment 2 in the name of my noble friend Lord Whitty. This goes back to the Second Reading debate, where—I agree with the Minister—we are more or less on the same page; we are trying to find a way around some of these issues. During the Second Reading debate there was some concern from around the Chamber, expressed in different ways, about what was perceived as an inevitable weakening of controls over the use of the land and property, which could indeed result in developments which adversely impact on Kew's global status and reputation. I heard what my noble friend Lord Campbell-Savours said. I am not sure that anybody will try to build a high-rise block of flats, but there could be issues around the commercial development of restaurants or shops and so on which could—not necessarily at the outset but as time went by—damage the reputation of Kew. These are some of the issues that we need to extract, and ensure that they are put to rest.

4.30 pm

At Second Reading, the Minister was at pains to explain all the safeguards that would be in place to make sure that inappropriate development did not happen. He rightly referred to the role of the trustees, the local planning authority and indeed UNESCO. He repeated that in his letter to us of 16 May. I am grateful to him for adding that clarification. I am sure that the trustees, in particular, will ferociously guard against any attempt to foist an alien intrusion on them. I am sure we all have faith in the trustees who have

[BARONESS JONES OF WHITCHURCH]

been appointed, and that all the bodies, including the local authority, will be assiduous in trying to protect the values and inspiration of the site.

However, we have to bear in mind the precise wording of the Bill because, despite the Minister's reassurances, it focuses the decision in the hands of one person, the Secretary of State. As the noble Lord, Lord Hodgson, pointed out at Second Reading, this mirrors the provision of the National Heritage Act 1983 which states:

"If the Minister directs the Board to exercise functions specified in the direction in relation to land so specified, the Board shall exercise them on his behalf in such manner as he may from time to time direct".

So, in the earlier legislation, and in the Bill before us today, the Minister can overrule the board of trustees as he sees fit on the use of the land. That is why we worded our amendment as it is framed before your Lordships today. The one body that is completely independent of the Secretary of State and cannot be overruled by him or her is UNESCO. Our amendment would require the Secretary of State to consult UNESCO on whether any lease granted under the Act would impact on Kew's very precious world heritage site status. We felt that this would be a secure way of protecting the integrity of Kew's activities, which are carefully monitored by UNESCO and subject to a detailed management plan agreed between UNESCO and Kew and updated from time to time.

I hope that noble Lords will see the sense of this proposal. Like my noble friend Lord Whitty, I would, if the Minister felt so inclined, very happily talk about the precise wording that these guarantees might take, which could be put on the face of the Bill to reassure ourselves and all noble Lords that the criteria will be in keeping with Kew's very special status.

Baroness Tonge (Non-Affl): My Lords, I support Amendments 2 and 4, at least in spirit. I first apologise for not having spoken at Second Reading; I had an unavoidable appointment so was unable to do so. Had I been here, I think I would have agreed with all the remarks made in that debate, which was excellent.

I have lived in Kew for 45 years. I was a local councillor for nearly 10 years and an MP for the area. I can claim to know Kew and Kew Gardens pretty well. My husband always used to say that I knew every letterbox in Kew, which indeed I still do. I am not sure that I could claim to know every tree in Kew Gardens but I know a fair number of them and I certainly know Kew Green very well. It is a very precious place, dear to residents and the nation.

I would like to go back very briefly to 1983. I remember well attending as a local councillor a public meeting in a school hall in Kew that had been called by the director of Kew Gardens and his team—they were not trustees then—to explain that Kew Gardens was going to become a trust. They explained the system of becoming a trust with trustees and no longer being directly funded by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, as it was then. I rather disgraced myself at the meeting by being very outspoken; as noble Lords will know, I tend in that direction quite often. I said that I was terribly afraid that this would lead to Kew becoming a botanical theme park.

Of course, that has not happened. I was shouted down, quite rightly. However, over the last 30 to 40 years, I have noticed how much Kew has changed. If you come to Kew at Christmas or during the school summer holidays, it is geared to making money by getting children to spend lots of money on popcorn, ice cream and rides in pretty-coloured boats on the lake in front of the Palm House. It has been commercialised. The people who have spoken are quite right to worry that other forms of commercialisation could occur. It is a creeping sort of process and we need to beware of it. The present director, Richard Deverell, is absolutely terrific. He is a wonderful person and he is doing great things for Kew. However, we cannot guarantee that future directors will be as careful and as caring as he is.

I understand that Kew has to raise more money. Indeed, my noble friend Lady Kramer made the point at Second Reading that the entrance fee has now gone up to £16.50. It used to be a penny when I was a local councillor. Everyone loves to say that. Of course, £16.50 is hugely expensive for most families and we want to make it more widely available. Kew has to make more money, but we have to be careful. These amendments in particular say that we must make sure that this is not the beginning of more commercialisation at Kew Gardens, and a loss of the emphasis on the huge amount of botanical and scientific work that goes on there.

Viscount Eccles: My Lords, I have a great deal of time for what the noble Baroness, Lady Tonge, just said. I also have a great deal of time for this amendment. To me, the crucial thing is the words,

"compatible with the core ... scientific ... activities of the Royal Botanic Gardens".

As I said, the balance at Kew is the crucial issue. It is primarily a scientific institution. The people who work for scientific institutions are not necessarily very good at defending their own wickets. Their minds are on other things—higher things, very often.

In supporting this amendment, I should like to talk about change. There has been quite a lot of talk about Kew's funding. Kew is now 60% bigger than it was in my day, on three measures. A change has taken place. We employed about 500 people at that time. Kew now employs over 800 people. If you look at the Defra grant, as opposed to the MAFF grant from my last year, it is now over 50% higher in real terms than it was then. Noble Lords will find that if they look at almost anything at Kew. Its total budget or turnover—£111 million—is also about 60% higher in real terms than it was in my final year there, 1991. Kew has had a very good run. A lot of that is due to the support it has had from MAFF and then Defra, the tremendous support from the public and its own foundation, and its ability to attract funds from many sources, including partnerships.

However, a lot of other changes have taken place. Climate change, environmental damage and worries about food security have gone up the agenda—you name it: biodiversity, species extinction and so on. My concern is that Kew has the capacity to do much more. Indeed, I do not complain about it being much larger in real terms. It has the capacity to be much more proactive and to be engaged in some of the solutions to some of these problems that we all face. But if the

balance shifts too far in favour of estate management and parks management, science will go down the agenda relatively. If noble Lords look at what is happening at Kew and the management structure in the round, they might come to the conclusion that the balance has shifted too far in favour of the sixth general function—the parks function—and too far away from the first five, notably the first two about the investigation and dissemination of science.

Therefore, I come back to the point that if we are removing the Charity Commission as some sort of umpire, which we are for legal reasons, that makes it even more important to deal with the dimension of the gamekeeper—Defra—and the poacher—Kew—which, between them can come to whatever conclusions they want about what is to the public benefit unless there is some other way of monitoring that situation. Clearly Parliament has a role, as do some of the movements out there, such as the Green Party and Extinction Rebellion.

The most important thing to achieve with the Bill is to have something in it that commits Kew and Defra to work out the appropriate state-of-the-art interpretation of Section 24, to publish what that is and to have it debated in whatever forum wants to debate it. At the moment there is no clear interpretation of Section 24. At Second Reading I referred to Professor Ghilleen Prance's vision of 1993. He had, and set out, a pretty clear definition of what Section 24 meant and how Kew should respond to it. Reading today's much glossier and more expensive publications does not give me the same clear understanding of how Kew and Defra interpret Section 24.

I have a great deal of time for the amendment. If my noble friend on the Front Bench were willing, we would welcome a government-drafted amendment that covered the points made by the noble Lord, Lord Whitty. If not, we will have to return to this subject on Report.

4.45 pm

Baroness Kramer: My Lords, perhaps I may suggest to the Minister a fairly straightforward way out of this. If I understand the House correctly—of course, I may not—and look at my own view, I do not think anyone has a problem with granting 150-year leases to the seven properties on Kew Green. As the Minister said, six are listed; the seventh is still within a conservation area. No matter what its political colour, the local council will not allow any kind of abuse of those properties through its planning committees. I am sure that being able to lease them for a larger sum of money to ensure that they are restored—I think some are close to falling on someone—would not be opposed by this House. The problem is that the Bill uses a much wider sweep to cover, as the noble Lord, Lord Campbell-Savours, said, a great deal more property than those seven houses.

Personally, I do not think the part of the botanic gardens that is so clearly the botanic gardens will be at risk but I want to raise the issue of the parking area. Probably just a few of us here are so familiar with the gardens that we understand the parking area; for those who do not, that area is quite peculiar. It is right on the river, so that some of the best river views in probably all the country are enjoyed by the cars. Part

of the parking area is a sort of casual gravel and the rest is a mix of grass and trees, with people trying to park their cars between the trees. There are just a couple of parking meters. I cannot remember what one puts in now—I think it is around £7—but whether you park for five minutes or the whole day, that is it. It is not even supervised.

I know developers have looked at that site and cannot believe that it is put to such a use. The obvious answer for them is to make an offer to Kew to provide some form of alternate parking—there is great pressure not to allow people to bring cars to Kew at all—and use the site for some form of luxury housing. Your Lordships can see why that would be desirable. I think the community would have huge concerns about all this. It would be different if the property was developed to create new buildings for science and the core work—the collection and activities at Kew. But the fear that it could be used for housing or a couple of cafes, or whatever else, comes to mind when you know the area well.

Because that is a completely separate discussion, I suggest to the Minister that since Kew Gardens needs to be able to deal with those seven properties on Kew Green, why not narrow the Bill? Frankly, we could name the seven properties since there is only that small number of them. I am sure this House would then be able to deal with that legislation directly. Meanwhile, the constraint of a 31-year lease continues to apply, which means that if new development of the kind I have just described is to be explored, the Government would have to come back to the House and raise the question around the specific character of that development.

Baroness Warwick of Undercliffe (Lab): My Lords, as this debate has gone on I have become more and more concerned. When I supported the Bill at Second Reading, it was very much on the basis of emphasising Kew's world excellence in its particular fields of science. The emphasis on raising the extra money from new sources of private income was entirely based on an understanding that this was what the additional resource might be used for, so I am really anxious.

While I do not want to repeat all the arguments made so far, it seems that unless we specifically indicate or reinforce the original objectives of Kew in the Bill and establish why this change is being introduced, as my noble friends Lord Whitty and Lady Jones seek to do here, there is clear potential for reputational damage to Kew. It is not just among the public that there would be huge reputational impact; it would have an impact on Kew's ability to raise further funds subsequently because its reputation will have been harmed. Even if the form of words is not right, given the aim of reasserting Kew's main objectives—I was grateful to the noble Viscount, Lord Eccles, for reinforcing the point that the scientific excellence of Kew and its scientific interrogations are its prime focus—I hope the Minister will reconsider.

Lord Campbell-Savours: My Lords, I shall intervene only briefly. I sense that the Minister has difficulty in mouthing the words that residential property development could be considered on that site, not now but perhaps

[LORD CAMPBELL-SAVOURS]
 in 20 or 30 years' time when there is a lot of pressure. I understand that, under residential development for flats, that land would probably fetch in the region of £1,500 per square foot. That provides some fairly expensive property. There will be people who, under pressure and needing funds, might take a chance and put in for a development, perhaps on the car park that was just referred to. I support the amendment suggested by my noble friend. In the event that it is rejected at this stage, I might come back at a later stage to see how the legislation, whose subtext is residential development in the long term, can be interfered with and greater restraints than currently exist introduced.

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: My Lords, I say from the outset that I take the amendment in the name of the noble Lord, Lord Whitty, with the seriousness that I know he takes Kew. I also recognise the direct knowledge of the noble Baronesses, Lady Tonge and Lady Kramer, down to the last tree in the car park, which is probably the one that unfortunately has had most bonnets interfere with it. I understand the local and historical knowledge of the former Minister and the desire of the noble Baroness, Lady Jones of Whitchurch, for protections. My noble friend Lord Eccles is a former chairman of Kew. The noble Baroness, Lady Warwick, talked about reputational damage and the noble Lord, Lord Campbell-Savours, talked about how we ensure that the Bill, which is laudable in so many senses, gives protection for ever. The whole basis of why I am seeking consent for the Bill is to help Kew. I absolutely recognise that your Lordships all want to help it too.

I am, therefore, grateful to the noble Lord for his amendment and for the clear indication that your Lordships regard Kew in the same light as I do, as the Minister with day-to-day responsibility for it. This is an establishment of unique value and an institution worthy of the highest protection. I was interested in what the noble Baroness, Lady Tonge, said about children. I was fortunate enough to go to one of the early openings of the children's garden last week. I did not detect commercialism there; I saw a lot of children running around enjoying plants and understanding more about them. Taking off the rose-tinted spectacles of previous times, families have changed. We have all changed, as have the sorts of things that engaged us. I am afraid I did jump on a trampoline—it was a very small one. There are all sorts of things we can do to engage children. My analysis of the children's garden and its design is that it gets children engaged. I want children from all backgrounds to think, "I want a life in plants; I want to come to Kew as a scientist; I want to work for Kew". Those are my ambitions for Kew's reach to local communities and beyond. I have teased this out myself, because I clearly want Kew to be protected forever. I am grateful for the opportunity to set out the restrictions.

First, as a UNESCO world heritage site and conservation area with 44 listed buildings, Kew Gardens is subject to some of the highest level of scrutiny and statutory approvals available under the planning system—as it should be, of course—and this will not change under the Bill. Regardless of any additional conditions that might be placed on the lease by the Secretary

of State, any significant internal or external developments under the lease, whether structural or otherwise, would be subject to the relevant development permissions. The local planning authority, with advice from Historic England, in particular, would be responsible for deciding whether a proposed development should be allowed to go ahead and whether to grant planning permission for new buildings, major alterations, including any to listed buildings, or significant changes to the use of a building or piece of land. The Bill will not change or replace this governance process.

I hope it will be helpful to your Lordships to set out in detail the separate planning controls that protect Kew's unique heritage. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 is the legislative basis for decision-making on applications that relate to the historical environment. Sections 66 and 72 of the Act impose a statutory duty on local planning authorities to consider the impact of proposals on listed buildings and conservation areas. This is particularly relevant to the Royal Botanic Gardens and the Kew Green conservation areas, as well as the many listed buildings in the Kew UNESCO world heritage site that contribute to its outstanding universal value.

The National Planning Policy Framework, the NPPF, sets out the Government's planning policies and how they are expected to be applied, dealing particularly with the historical environment. The Government's national planning practice guidance gives further information on how national policy is to be interpreted and applied locally. As the relevant local planning authority, the London Borough of Richmond would apply the policies of the NPPF to its local plan, setting out policies for making planning decisions in its area, including those covering historic buildings and conservation areas. The local planning authority is advised by Historic England on all aspects of the historical environment, and by the Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service on all archaeological matters.

The NPPF provides clear direction for planning authorities on the determination of applications affecting designated and non-designated heritage assets. The framework recognises that UNESCO world heritage sites are of the highest significance and that great weight must be given to the conservation of their significance and their setting. It says:

"Heritage assets range from sites and buildings of local historic value to those of the highest significance, such as World Heritage Sites which are internationally recognised to be of Outstanding Universal Value. These assets are an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations".

The framework also provides for key policy tests for developments that would harm the significance of designated assets, including world heritage sites.

I hope noble Lords can see that these sections clearly set out the importance of a world heritage site and the local planning authority's duty to ensure that the greatest level of consideration and protection is applied when implementing national, London-wide and local planning policy. Kew Gardens is also located in a conservation area, a designation that ensures that extra planning controls and considerations are put in place. Any significant alterations to buildings or

new developments would result in further scrutiny from the local planning authority as a result. Further, 44 of the buildings and structures on the Kew Gardens site are listed, acknowledging their special architectural or historic interest. This designation regime is set out in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the list is maintained by Historic England. Any works to alter, extend or demolish Kew Gardens' listed buildings would require listed building consent from the local planning authority and Historic England, whether planning permission is needed or not. Listed status covers the entire building, internal and external. It is a legal offence to carry out works to a listed building without permission. The Bill will not alter this.

As I have mentioned, any development on a world heritage site or its settings, including any buffer zones, should conserve, promote, make sustainable use of and enhance its authenticity, integrity, significance and outstanding universal value. In particular, it should not compromise a viewer's ability to appreciate its outstanding universal value, integrity, authenticity or significance.

5 pm

In addition, much of the Kew Gardens site is designated as metropolitan open land. This designation protects areas of landscape that are strategically important green space, and there are controls on increasing an area of development on such a site, similar to those for the green belt. Any applications for development on Kew Gardens' metropolitan open land would require approval from the Greater London Authority.

Planning permissions appropriately tailored in accordance with listed status, as well as the other checks that I have mentioned, would allow only development in keeping with Kew Gardens as it is now. The strong and multi-layered checks already in place ensure that any leases granted can only be consistent with Kew's core functions. I am confident that all the protections are in place and are robust.

Regarding the point about UNESCO, made by the noble Baroness, Lady Jones, I absolutely understand the purpose of her amendment. As we all know, Kew Gardens is a UNESCO world heritage site, due to the special character of the landscape and the historical and contemporary scientific and horticultural activities. Any development must preserve or enhance the objectives of UNESCO, not put them at risk. As a party to the 1972 World Heritage Convention, the UK Government are ultimately responsible for the preservation of the site. The Secretary of State is the Minister with this responsibility. My department and the Kew trustees are duty-bound not to compromise the condition of the site, in line with the management and protection of all world heritage sites across England, including through any leases that may be granted under this Bill.

By way of further assurance, Kew has its own world heritage site stakeholder group to maintain and enhance the site in line with its world heritage site management plan. The effective implementation of government legislation and national, London-wide and local planning policy provide the primary mechanism for meeting the Government's commitments to UNESCO as signatories to the convention.

As to how the amendment is drafted, there is no mechanism within UNESCO for consultation prior to the grant of a lease. If there are concerns about inappropriate development, UNESCO is notified by DCMS and the International Council on Monuments and Sites, undertaking a technical review before submitting a report.

Noble Lords can also be reassured that Kew Gardens contains a number of designations in addition to being a world heritage site, and as such, they all form key protections against inappropriate development. The Bill would make no change to the current planning process and statutory approvals for alterations to buildings and new developments on the Kew Gardens site. Such process and approval provides assurance that the world heritage site will remain protected against inappropriate—

Baroness Kramer: Can the Minister tell us—clearly not now—what the status is of that car park land? It sits outside the wall of Kew Gardens, so I am not sure how far it is covered by any of the protections he has mentioned, even though it is the obvious site if you were going to have a commercial development. It would be extremely helpful to know what the protection is there.

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: I referred to buffer zones. This is an issue for Kew in terms of how planning proposals beyond the curtilage of Kew Gardens may, in turn, impose upon the world heritage site. I will write to the noble Baroness about the precise element of the car parks, but they are all part of Crown land, which is part of—ah, the noble Baroness is signalling that that may not be the case. May I come back to the noble Baroness on the question of that car park?

In conclusion, it is important to note that the Bill will not supersede the application of any existing legislation or policy already in place. This includes any proposals for new build or changes to the use of buildings, including on the wider estate. I mention that because Kew is a proactive scientific institution and therefore it is inevitable that, in protecting Kew and its wonderful historic site, we will have to have future state of the art scientific buildings with laboratories to help us find solutions to protect our natural ecosystem. So I deliberately raise the fact that, in protecting Kew, we will need new contemporary buildings to assist it in advancing scientific knowledge. I want to protect this great, historic site, and I am sure that it is our objective to trench that for ever.

I repeat that I have looked at this in great detail and I cannot think of anywhere that has more protected elements, with so many varied facets, than Kew. So I say to the noble Lord, and to all noble Lords, that obviously I am in tune with what they want from this. I would like to continue discussions with the noble Lord, Lord Whitty, and other noble Lords, because I want to get this right. However, in the meantime, I ask the noble Lord to withdraw his amendment.

Lord Whitty: My Lords, I thank the Minister for that, and I thank all noble Lords who have supported the intent of the amendment. The Minister clearly spelled out the number of protections that currently apply in different statutes and regulations. I concede

[LORD WHITTY]

that they make Kew probably one of the most protected acreages in the world. Nevertheless, I think I am right in saying that none of the protections existed 150 years ago—and not all of them existed 31 years ago. Therefore, we cannot be sure that they will exist in 31 years or 150 years—yet the leases will have been granted when the Bill becomes an Act.

I am grateful for the Minister's offer to discuss this further. I understand about all the protections, but they could all change—and, even if they do not, issues could still be raised. I am mindful of another UNESCO world heritage site: the Liverpool waterfront. A building adjacent to it has raised serious questions. I think that in the end UNESCO accepted that it did not offend the status of the site. However, looking at it as a lay person, one might think that it came dangerously close. If a similar building were put on the Kew car park—although I suspect the protections would stop it—it would challenge a lot of what Kew stands for and what it looks like.

I am not suggesting that we should preserve Kew in aspic. I recognise, as the Minister has just said, that new buildings and new facilities will be needed to keep up with the scientific and educational activities of Kew—of course that will happen. But my amendment allows for supportive and compatible development, and we must make sure that the outcome of such development is compatible with and supportive of the general objectives of Kew.

I am disappointed that the Minister did not offer to draft a rather better government amendment for Report. However, I look forward to discussing this with him to see whether perhaps he could go some way down that road. In the meantime, I reserve the right to bring this back should that development not pertain. I thank all noble Lords who participated in the debate and I beg leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment 2 withdrawn.

Amendment 3

Moved by Baroness Jones of Whitchurch

3: Clause 1, page 1, line 5, at end insert—

“() The Secretary of State must prepare and publish an annual report on the balance between income generated by leases granted under this Act and grant funding provided by Her Majesty's Government to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.”

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: My Lords, Amendment 3 addresses the future Defra grant to Kew. It follows on from the very useful debate on this issue at Second Reading, which I thought reflected a great deal of consensus around the Chamber. We all recognised the importance of the vital research and educational work carried out at Kew, and were united in wanting to consolidate its world heritage site status. We also recognised that the additional money which might be generated by longer leases, initially estimated to be in the region of £15 million, could provide valuable additional investment in its infrastructure, scientific endeavour and visitor experience.

But there was also in that debate a common concern about substitution—the possibility that any additional funds could simply be used by government to cut the Defra grant further, leaving Kew in a no-win position and no better off. We have tabled this amendment to try to address these concerns.

Of course, there was only so much that the Minister could say to reassure us on this point at Second Reading. As he himself admitted when asked about future cuts,

“at times of national difficulty, all institutions and departments must play their part”.—[*Official Report*, 7/5/19; col. 1168.]

As we know, different Governments over many years have taken different views on how much should be spent from the public purse and on when to put the squeeze on expenditure through a policy of enforced austerity and cuts. So there is no guarantee that the Defra grant, which has been falling steadily over the years—from 90% in 1983 to 37% in 2018—will not fall further. As we heard in that debate, this has been the subject of real parliamentary concern, with a House of Commons Science and Technology Select Committee report warning in 2015 that cuts in government funding were placing Kew's world-class scientific status at risk.

Our amendment is a simple one which seeks to ensure that the additional income which Kew generates from the careful management of the extended leases should go direct to the trustees for future investment on the site. At this stage this is a probing amendment, and, again, I do not claim to have worded it perfectly, but I suspect that all noble Lords share the sense of its intent. I look forward to hearing a positive response from the Minister and beg to move.

Baroness Bakewell of Hardington Mandeville: My Lords, transparency is really important, but I am concerned that a set of accounts should be produced just for the income from the leases on seven properties. That seems quite bureaucratic to me. I accept that the noble Baroness said that this was a probing amendment, so I will be interested in what the Minister has to say. I would have thought that these accounts could have been incorporated into the consolidated Kew accounts, rather than being a separate set. That would be a better way of doing it.

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: My Lords, I agree with the noble Baronesses that we should always be transparent. I hope that I will satisfactorily be able to explain why I think that these matters are covered.

First, pursuant to the National Heritage Act, a statement of accounts in respect of each financial year for Kew is prepared, examined and certified. A report on this statement is produced by the Comptroller and Auditor-General as head of the National Audit Office and laid before each House. Details of Kew's income, including government, commercial and charitable donations, are all set out in this report, which is a public document.

I reassure the noble Baroness, Lady Jones of Whitchurch, that income received by Kew in respect of these leases, subject to this Bill, will also be reflected in this report. In addition, Kew itself publishes audited annual reports and accounts. These state how much

grant in aid it receives each year from Defra and how much is restricted to specific projects. Within this report, Kew will report on funds from the lease income as part of its funding note.

5.15 pm

The leases initially granted under the Bill are envisaged as being long-leasehold residential. Once those properties are leased, it is not envisaged that there will be a particularly steady stream of further properties to be leased or, equally, a steady flow of annual rent, as the value is in the premium these leases will achieve. That is the point which the noble Baroness, Lady Bakewell, was taking your Lordships towards. To insist on a further and separate annual report—indeed, a third—would necessitate a reporting burden for each year of a 150-year lease, even when there is likely to be a nil return for the vast majority of those years. Should the figures for the granting of a specific lease be required, in line with the Land Registry publication requirements, the price paid for the lease and the lease document itself will be available from the Land Registry.

I assure the noble Baroness, Lady Jones, that all the information that I understood that the amendment required will be available to the public under the mechanisms already in place. As I say, to impose an annual requirement would simply produce a further burden, in most cases with a nil return. Although the amendment is probing, it has given me an opportunity to emphasise that, as regards the two existing accounts, the matters relating to this legislation would be covered. With that explanation, I hope that she will feel able to withdraw her amendment.

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: My Lords, I am grateful to the noble Baroness, Lady Bakewell, and the Minister. The report was just a hook or mechanism to try to flush out the issue of the distribution of the funds; in itself it will not add greatly to the parliamentary knowledge of income. However, I noticed that the Minister carefully skipped the point I raised about the distribution of funds between Defra and the money that Kew will raise in other ways in the future. That continues to be a concern but I recognise that just reporting on it is not necessarily the way to flush it out. Nevertheless, I am grateful to him for that comment, and I may reflect on whether there is a better way of raising that issue at a future stage, but for the moment I beg leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment 3 withdrawn.

Amendment 4 not moved.

Clause 1 agreed.

Amendment 5

Moved by Baroness Jones of Whitchurch

5: After Clause 1, insert the following new Clause—
“Requirement to publish information

Within one month of the day on which this Act is passed, the Secretary of State must publish an impact assessment including information about the property portfolio at Kew affected by the Act, the associated financial liabilities and income projections.”

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: My Lords, Amendments 5, 6, 7 and 8 in this group are in my name. All of them are probing amendments, and we already began to address some of the issues in the other debate, so I will try to amend my notes as we go along. They all address the need for more information to be provided about the financial impact of the Bill and the management of the longer leases.

Amendment 5 addresses the fact that the Bill does not include an impact assessment, and the background details of the financial consequences of implementing the Bill are indeed rather sparse. For example, as we know, the original estimates for additional receipts from the extended leases was quoted as £40 million, and this figure has now been scaled down to £15 million. However, we have not really had an explanation for the disparity between these two figures, or indeed an explanation of the basis on which that new figure of £15 million has been calculated.

The statement on the financial implications of the Bill in the Explanatory Memorandum is equally vague:

“Incomes from the change will depend on further development of Kew’s Estates Strategy and third party partnerships”.

However, in his response to me at Second Reading, the Minister reported that:

“The estate strategy is not in the public domain”,—[*Official Report*, 7/5/19; col. 1171.]

and is therefore not available to us, although he said that he would be happy to talk to me about it.

At Second Reading and earlier in this debate, a number of noble Lords asked for further details of the property portfolio at Kew so that we could assess fully the potential for future lease extensions beyond the seven residential properties initially identified, but they have not been forthcoming so far. In addition, the Minister referred several times to the difference between the core and non-core estate, which I know he is beginning to regret. At some point, we need to flesh out both that difference and how much of the non-core estate could be affected in future. There is a black hole where that information needs to be. I hope that he will come forward with further details on that at some point.

I moved the amendment not to be unhelpful but to understand the potential for future income generation—not just for those seven properties but for what could be in the pipeline beyond that. We would all benefit from knowing that. At the moment, it feels as though we are being asked to sign up to an open commitment with little in the way of financial guarantees to underpin it. We felt that the mechanism of an impact assessment would be a helpful way of getting that information.

Amendment 6 would require the lessee to gain permission from the Kew trustees before undertaking any refurbishments. The Minister addressed that issue in his earlier answers. Obviously, one advantage of bestowing longer leases on properties is that it gives the lessee more freedom of opportunity to improve the property they lease. It is important that we tie down the approval process for those refurbishment plans to ensure that they will all receive prior approval.

Amendment 7 would require the criteria for the grounds on which longer leases would be granted to be published. Again, we touched on this at Second Reading;

[BARONESS JONES OF WHITCHURCH]

there was a concern that, although proposals from the holders of very long leases may seem reasonable at the time, the holder of that lease—for 150 years, say—could, over time, deviate from the core values underpinning Kew’s activities. As I said, that is particularly true of commercial leases rather than residential ones. It is obvious to say so but 150 years is a very long time to share a world heritage site with a commercial leaseholder. There is concern that their activities could become more at variance in the longer term. Again, we touched on this issue in earlier debates. We need to be clear about the criteria for extending longer leases and to be assured that there will be more sensitivity here than for a standard lease in terms of the leaseholder’s expectations in respecting the property and the activities they carry out there.

Finally, on Amendment 8, we asked the Secretary of State to publish the criteria under which Kew could end a lease prematurely. That follows on from previous amendments, which address the need to be able to terminate a lease prematurely if the activities of a leaseholder, particularly one holding a long lease, are no longer acceptable to the trustees at Kew. Again, this may concern activities beyond those traditionally imposed on leaseholders but which could nevertheless damage the intrinsic values and behaviours expected of those using the Kew estate. Indeed, it could require automatic break clauses.

I am trying to tease out the basis of the argument. We all feel that this is not a question of having a standard lease as you would for a standard residential property. We may expect other expectations to be built into the lease, with special requirements to honour Kew’s mission. I am interested to know whether the Minister envisages having special leases of that kind. I look forward to his response on these issues. I beg to move.

Baroness Bakewell of Hardington Mandeville: My Lords, I am broadly supportive of the amendments tabled by the noble Baroness, Lady Jones, except that the time limit is a bit short. It is not like me to give the Government a lot of time to do something, but the period of one month set out in Amendments 5, 7 and 8 is not realistic; it should probably be closer to three months.

Amendment 6 is unnecessary because six of the properties are listed and all of them are in a conservation area. Richmond council, which was referred to earlier, will have to give permission for any refurbishments because the buildings are listed and certainly, during my time dealing with these things, I know that you have to consult with the people who are affected by the works. I would therefore expect the trustees of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew to be an official consultee anyway, so the amendment, as I say, is unnecessary.

As regards Amendment 7, the reasons were clearly set out at Second Reading why Kew Gardens wants to lease these properties for longer. Obviously it is to increase the income and to remove the maintenance costs, thus reducing its liabilities so that it can concentrate on its core values, as we have heard from the noble Viscount, Lord Eccles. Again, the period specified in Amendment 8 is too short and three months might be better than one month.

Lord Campbell-Savours: My Lords, I am supportive of these amendments but in saying that I was quite taken by the compromise proposal made by the noble Baroness, Lady Kramer. That was not the subject of an amendment but I hope that Ministers will seriously consider what she said when she proposed the withdrawal of part of the Bill.

What interests me is what will happen in the event that the Government decide to drive through the Bill in its current form with the possibility that at some stage in the future, when we are all pushing up daisies, someone might come along and say, “We are going to develop more of this site”. As I understand it, apart from the protections which the Minister has referred to, along with the tight planning arrangements and highly restrictive covenants that might exist in terms of the land, there is the possibility that it might be decided to raise money by selling land for development. We may not be here, but we are making provision now for what is to happen over the next 150 years.

The questions I am about to ask might sound a little hysterical, but they are not beyond the bounds of possibility. In the event that a developer was brought in, would the land be tendered for? Could the land possibly go out to public auction? As long as the conditions of the covenants and the restrictions and the protections are in place, the land could still go to public auction. Alternatively, could this be decided by the board under private treaty arrangements? Is there the possibility of a clawback on profits made by developers in the form of some kind of betterment levy? How would the ground rents be set? If the board or the department had control of the ground rents, that might well be the way of influencing to some extent what might happen in the event that the land was used for residential development in the future.

Another question that has to be asked if housing development takes place at some point in the future is whether there would be a social housing component. I understand that the local authority is subject to the provisions that apply elsewhere in London. What about subleasing? Would the state in some way be in a position to approve the subleasing of the land? I did not altogether understand what third-party partnerships were when they were addressed by the Minister at Second Reading given that I was not able to be here. Is there an as-yet-unpublished internal development options document written on the basis of maximising the revenue within the planning constraints I have already referred to?

I have never visited the site, although I will. I only really learned about it last night at midnight when I sat up in bed to read the documents and looked it up on Google Earth. It is a vast site, and it was only when I saw the size of it that I realised that on its fringes there may well be the potential for development, which people in the future may grasp at because they need the money, because other budget arrangements are somehow contracting. If the Minister cannot answer my remarks today, I would be grateful if he would write to me.

5.30 pm

Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbotts: Following on slightly from the point made by the noble Lord, Lord Campbell-Savours, can the Minister address the nature of the leases?

These will presumably be repairing and insuring leases, in the sense that at the end of the term of the lease Kew will want the property back in the state in which the lease was granted. It would be worth while if my noble friend could confirm that, either now or in writing later.

The one amendment in this group with which I have particular sympathy is Amendment 7. This seems to provide a way to get some of the answers to the questions posed by my noble friend Lord Eccles about core and non-core land and to the wider concerns in the House about whether this is a one-shot deal or whether there is—as the noble Lord, Lord Campbell-Savours, just said—around the periphery of the properties a whole series of small plots of land that might at one time or another be envisaged as falling under the provisions of this Bill. Some work on Amendment 7 could provide some answers and reassurance to those of us concerned at the nibbling away that might take place over a period of time in circumstances that are hard to foresee now.

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: My Lords, I am most grateful to the noble Baroness for tabling these amendments. Without going on for too long, I should like to take the opportunity to place on record a number of points.

Amendment 5 seeks to require the Secretary of State to publish, within a month of the Act being passed, an impact assessment covering any property that could be involved in these leases and any related financial liabilities and income projections. I understand that the aim of the amendment is to ensure public transparency on the scope and impacts of the leases that may be enabled under the Bill. I am most grateful to the noble Baroness for allowing me to put on record the detail already published in Kew's annual report and accounts, which includes the valuations set for Kew's heritage assets of land, buildings and dwellings, as well as those assets under restoration.

Kew has already estimated the value to Kew of the properties affected. I understand that the £40 million was in 2015. Since then, the assessment is that the value of leases and avoided renovation costs in the short term would be up to £15 million. This estimate is based on the seven residential leases, of which two are currently unoccupied properties that require substantial renovation. This means that there cannot be any more quantified projections other than those that Kew has given at this time.

The need to scrutinise the impacts of lease proposals will be fulfilled by Kew in taking specialist advice and preparing proposals for consideration by, first, its executive board and board of trustees and, ultimately, the Secretary of State. This includes the involvement of Kew's finance committee, audit and risk committee and capital development committee, as well as Defra. As I have said, and as we have all realised, Kew will focus on the seven residential properties currently let on assured shorthold tenancies or empty. As I have said, Kew has no immediate plans beyond that.

I find it really rather alarming that everyone is determined that dreadful things can happen. The noble Lord, Lord Whitty, has already said that this is one of the most protected sites in the country. No Parliament

can bind its successors. All we can do is use our best endeavours now, with the protections that are there in legislation. I am looking at the noble Lord, Lord Campbell-Savours. If a Parliament decided to amend the National Heritage Act in an adverse way, of course we would regret it, but it is for future Parliaments to decide those matters. What we can deal with today is having all the protections we possibly can. I have sympathy with all that the noble Lord, Lord Whitty, is seeking, but it is on record—even from the noble Lord—that this is the most protected part of the kingdom.

The development of all aspects of the Kew estate will remain subject to the approval of its board of trustees and in line with Kew's world heritage site management plan, just as any shorter-term leases already would. Although I fully endorse the desire for meaningful transparency in these leases and the motivation behind the amendment from the noble Baroness, the degree of variation means that it would be best served through Kew's existing proposals and commitments. Indeed, the lease would be publicly available at the Land Registry when the sale completes.

It is the view of my department that this amendment would risk providing information that would not be precise. Of course, it is subject to market conditions. In addition, the Secretary of State has to follow the guidance in *Managing Public Money*, formerly the *Treasury Green Book*, which requires value-for-money assessments.

The noble Baroness, Lady Bakewell, referring to Amendment 6, made some important points about the local planning authority. I understand and share the wish of the noble Baroness, Lady Jones of Whitchurch, that any refurbishment or development should require the correct approval so that it does not compromise the property—which is Crown land—the world heritage site or Kew's functions and activities in any way.

Kew's activities, including any lease under the Bill's provisions, are overseen by Kew's board and the Secretary of State. The discussions and negotiations about leases would be initiated by Kew in accordance with its governance. This includes the trustees' code of best practice, the National Heritage Act 1983 and the framework document between Kew and Defra. The lease itself would be prepared for and on behalf of the Secretary of State using specialist property lawyers and specialist commercial advice.

There will be numerous bespoke conditions in the lease agreement itself that shall offer the appropriate and relevant protection to Kew under this amendment. As I shall detail, these would deal with the unique nature of the land at Kew and, in particular, the listed buildings on Kew Green and, in doing so, provide complete protection for the Secretary of State and Kew.

As well as conditions bespoke to Kew, which I shall turn to in a moment, the usual lease conditions would apply. The usual leaseholder covenants include obligations not to do anything that contravenes planning; to comply with any estate regulations that may be drawn up; not to make any alterations to any part of the internal or external structure of premises without freeholder consent; to submit plans to the freeholder if consent for alteration is required; not to sublet or transfer premises without

[LORD GARDINER OF KIMBLE]

freeholder consent; not to interfere with or obstruct the performance of a freeholder in carrying out its duties; not to use the property for anything other than the use specified in the lease; not to access the property other than as specified in the lease; and not to cause a nuisance from the property. In addition, I assure your Lordships that all Kew leases will expressly include a leaseholder obligation not to do, or allow to be done, anything that will bring into disrepute the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, including its status as a world heritage site or the listed building status of any house, for example.

Some of the houses will contain features typical of buildings of this age, such as plasterwork ceilings and cornicing. Given their listed building status, features such as these may not be altered, so any lease would provide that such features must be preserved and may not be damaged in any way. As the noble Baroness, Lady Bakewell, said, the local planning authority, advised by Historic England, is responsible for deciding whether a proposed development, or even internal renovation, should be allowed to go ahead.

I hope I can also reassure your Lordships that the Secretary of State would absolutely not grant a lease without the recommendation of the Kew trustees. The Secretary of State would take advice from specialist property lawyers as to the appropriate level of protection given Kew's listed building status and the world heritage site. Therefore, I believe that robust procedures are already in place to ensure that the correct approvals are made. I am as concerned as anyone that none of these buildings be refurbished insensitively, but the terms of any standard lease, bolstered by special conditions for Kew and alongside the governance that the local planning authorities, Kew trustees and the Secretary of State provide, ensure that the points in the noble Baroness's amendment are already covered.

Turning to Amendment 7, I am again grateful to the noble Baroness for the opportunity to clarify the criteria that would apply. Instead of taking three months, I hope I am able to put on record now these points. I re-emphasise that Kew's current proposals extend to only seven properties, two of which are unoccupied and none of which is part of the core estate. These leases are being pursued to free up vital revenue for Kew, and will do so with no impact on Kew's core functions. I am pleased to reassure your Lordships that these criteria derive from the various protections already in place, which I have strongly emphasised. It is, however, absolutely right that the noble Baroness, Lady Jones of Whitchurch, referred to respecting the property, because that is exactly what we must do.

To preserve the protection of the property and Kew's functions, obligations on the leaseholders would include the following requirements, which I will place on record in the context of Amendments 7 and 8: to repair and keep the property in good condition and decoration; to allow Defra or Kew to access the property to carry out any necessary works; to make good any damage caused by the leaseholder to the property or to the Kew estate; not to do, or allow to be done, anything that will bring RBG Kew into disrepute, including its status as a world heritage site; to comply with the provisions of any statute, statutory instrument, order, rule or regulation, and of any order, direction

or requirement made or given by any planning authority or the appropriate Minister or court; not to alter any of the property internally or externally without the express written consent of Kew's board of trustees and the Secretary of State; not to sublet any of the property without the Secretary of State's consent; not to assign, transfer or sell their interest in the property without the Secretary of State's consent; not to interfere with or obstruct the performance of the duties of the Secretary of State, or Kew by way of servant; not to use the property for anything other than the use specified in the lease; not to access the property other than as specified in the lease; not to leave the property unoccupied for a certain period of time; and, finally, not to cause a nuisance from the property. I want to be very clear that there has been proper consideration of this in reference to, as my noble friend Lord Hodgson said, the status and condition of the property.

The noble Baroness was right to raise also the issue of forfeiture. The right to forfeiture occurs when the leaseholder under a lease breaches an obligation contained within a lease. What these obligations may be are a routine part of lease agreements, and so are the conditions for termination of the lease—I have already placed these on the record—as to obligations that will ultimately result in forfeiture if breached under a Kew lease. As I said, the lease agreement itself will be drawn up by specialist property lawyers acting on behalf of the Secretary of State to reflect the various considerations and protections that need to apply in respect of the property itself, the world heritage site and Kew's functions and activities. I should stress that lease agreements will need to be, and shall be, drawn up and agreed on a case-by-case basis by specialist property lawyers, even though they will have most conditions in common.

Forfeiture of a business lease and forfeiture of a residential property are not the same. This Bill does not seek to disapply any protection a leaseholder may have from unlawful eviction. The forfeiture clause in a lease cannot be one size fits all, since the court looks very seriously at any possession claim, and it is a complicated area of law. This does not, however, negate the fact that breach of leaseholder covenants under leases created by this Bill—such as an obligation to keep in good repair—can and will, if appropriate and if sanctioned by the courts following sufficiently serious breaches, result in the Secretary of State taking back possession of the property.

5.45 pm

Advice has been taken from specialist property counsel who deal specifically with Crown land in advance of the noble Baroness's amendment. It may be helpful to note that, well before any claim to take back possession could be necessary—for example, as a result of disrepair—the lease would provide a clear power for the Secretary of State to step in and undertake whatever repairs and maintenance are necessary to preserve and protect the building and prevent any risk to its status, and its listed building status in particular. I thought it important that I put those conditions on the record as a basis on which to show that we take these matters extremely seriously. As I said, I would be very happy to meet any noble Lords interested in discussing these amendments or seeking reassurances.

In answer to the noble Lord, Lord Campbell-Savours, I can say that the value of the leases is considered in the premium. It would be possible to set the ground rent at any level, but this would impact on the marketable value of any lease, and would prevent it reaching its optimum.

As yet, because it is subject to parliamentary consent, Kew has not presented a development options document. Clearly, it wants to be in a position to move from 31 to 150 years, because this will enable it to get the best value from these properties. However, I hope I have managed to give the noble Baroness some reassurance.

To echo the noble Lord, Lord Whitty, the protections for Kew are of the highest order. It is an extensive parcel of land, and we are very proud of this 350 acres of Crown land and its world heritage site status—incidentally, I can confirm that the car park is part of the world heritage site. As a nation, we should be very proud of this world heritage site, and I see it as our duty to for ever protect it. In the meantime, I hope that the detail I have gone into reassures the noble Baroness that some thought and consideration have already gone into protecting Kew.

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch: My Lords, I am very grateful to the Minister for spelling that out in the detail he did. Many of the points he raised provide some reassurance. I was particularly pleased that he talked about bespoke conditions, and that leases will not be just standard residential or commercial leases but will have a bespoke element that applies specifically because of the unique nature of being within the grounds of Kew. I am very grateful for that.

A theme has come out of our discussions on the various amendments. We have assumed, and the Minister has talked about, this relating to seven properties. As the noble Baroness, Lady Kramer, said earlier, none of us has a problem with the original seven residential properties that have been earmarked for a longer lease. Our concern is what happens after that, and I still feel that we have not really been enlightened on that point.

I cannot believe that Kew has no other information about its portfolio and other properties that it may want to put into the mix in future. We are still trying to grapple with the Minister's phrase of "core" and "non-core", and I think we need more information. I would welcome the chance to sit down with the Minister and figure out which properties are "core" and "non-core", and what other properties might be in the pipeline. I realise that this may not happen immediately but in the medium to longer term, and the Bill will relate to aspirations that Kew might have in future. I feel we are still in the dark, and I would like more information, but this is obviously not the time to go into that in more detail. For the time being, I beg leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment 5 withdrawn.

Amendments 6 to 8 not moved.

Clause 2 agreed.

House resumed.

Bill reported without amendment.

UK Foreign Policy in a Shifting World Order (International Relations Committee Report) *Motion to Take Note*

5.50 pm

Moved by Lord Howell of Guildford

That this House takes note of the Report from the International Relations Committee *UK foreign policy in a shifting world order* (5th Report, HL Paper 250).

Lord Howell of Guildford (Con): My Lords, I declare my interests as set out in the register, in particular the fact that I am an adviser to two major Japanese companies.

The scope of the report before your Lordships is ambitious, but as we see the world being reshaped around us before our eyes, with a cascade of new consequences for Britain's role, security and interests, your committee felt that ambition was justified. I want to thank members of the committee for their endless expertise, experience, patience and work in putting together this report, and I also thank our brilliant clerks and clerk assistants who also worked extremely effectively to bring our thoughts together.

In the digital age, entirely new issues have emerged for us to address, aside from whether Brexit goes ahead or does not, or whatever happens on that vexed front. Global power has plainly shifted and been redistributed worldwide, and continues to be so, demanding some deep rethinking about our national strategy and the methods by which we implement it. Major developments in artificial intelligence, blockchain technology, quantum computing and many other areas could shift the balance still further.

In one report, although we took quite a long time over it, we plainly cannot reach all the answers, but your committee felt it important to seek to understand better the roots of all these enormous changes and at least to suggest some of the ways we should be heading to preserve and enhance our security, influence and prosperity in utterly changed world conditions.

Our search obviously starts with changes in the world's two largest powers, America and China, and our altered relations with them in the digital age. In the US, we have a president who tweets every morning and favours policies very different from those of the past. Pax Americana is clearly in abeyance, but whether just for now or permanently is something on which our many witnesses had views and disagreed. Our report inclines to the view that the abeyance is part of a permanent shift, while the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and those advising it hopefully argue otherwise. Clearly, our American allies themselves are conscious that their own primacy, their unipolar moment, is now ended, as our evidence and a visit to Washington confirmed. This was quite a strong view. This is now an America with whom we certainly want to be a partner, but not in any way subordinate. Then we have China, whose economy has grown by 10 times since 1990, lifted by new technology and successive waves of globalisation to the forefront of world affairs.

[LORD HOWELL OF GUILDFORD]

These developments are shaking to the core the assumptions on which our foreign policy has been predicated for the last 70 years and the assumptions on which the rules-based order in the conduct of international relations and affairs has been based. Neither giant country has accepted things as they were. For example, all the key multilateral institutions of the previous century are now looked at critically by the White House. I am told that the President asks his team every morning why the USA is still a member of the World Trade Organization and still in NATO.

This changed approach is deadly serious for us here. It means that the areas where our interests diverge from America's are multiplying. Unlike America, we do not see high-tech China as the number one enemy, although we obviously have to be cautious; and I agree that when Beijing starts banning "Game of Thrones", things are clearly getting pretty tense. Nor do we see the nuclear deal with Iran as something to be pushed aside, as Washington has pushed it aside. We do not see protectionism and trade wars as benefiting anybody, and the implications for us of shifting Washington views about arms control and nuclear risk, where we are in the direct line of fire, could be enormous.

Perhaps on Russia our views are closer to America's. Here we have Russia, a declining but aggressive nation, still empowered by all kinds of new and disrupting technology, returning as an old foe, although in a quite different guise from the ideological form back in the Cold War. Anyway, thanks to digital technology, we are living in a totally transformed era in which Cold War polarities and analogies just do not apply. The threats now come in a quite new and diverse form.

As for China, its influence is now reaching into our lives and our key national interests daily. For evidence of that, although this has blown up since our report was written, one need look no further than to the ongoing furore about Huawei's involvement in our communications and digital technology, which affects every part of our economy and reaches into the centre of our foreign policy priorities. The impact of this issue on our relations with China and America is sharp and immediate and is a classic example of the major international consequences spawned by the digital age. Apart from that, Chinese technology and investment is already all around us in the United Kingdom. It is taking the lead in our civil nuclear power renaissance, it has invested in our utilities—not to mention our football clubs—and I even read the other day that a Chinese railway company could be the sole bidder for operating our east coast main line train service, as well bidding for Southeastern and for a role in HS2.

Meanwhile, the belt and road initiative, on which we heard a good deal of evidence—the so-called new silk road in several forms by land and sea—winds through the south Pacific, central Asia, central Europe and is now, I learn, even seeking to reach our country and our historic silk town of Macclesfield, although I am not sure that the people of Macclesfield are very enthusiastic about that.

The digital age challenge is not just from China. The whole of Asia is on the march. Asia now has giant cities with infrastructure and high-speed transport

unmatched in the West. Asian middle-class consumption is estimated to grow by \$30 trillion between now and 2030, compared with \$1 trillion—I was going to say "a mere trillion"—in the West. Asia also has the biggest armies, after the US, and is developing new weapons technology based on the microchip, whether it is underwater drones, hypersonic, unstoppable missiles or deeply disruptive cyber capacities. In consequence, the Indo-Pacific region is not only becoming the key world economic zone but also a key global security zone for all of us.

In our report, we tried to ask what all this means for our national policy direction today, our position in this changed world and how we secure and build on it. It concludes that to operate effectively in this new environment we have to combine our military hard power, our technology and our considerable soft power with a new dexterity and agility. We learned in our inquiry that the UK has strong cybercapabilities, but these will be needed to the full as a central part of our defence architecture in the digital age.

Our soft-power kinds of influence and attraction are immense, as in fact a pioneering Lords report on soft power pointed out only four years ago, although that power is not immune from clumsy visa rules and migration policies. However, when it comes to soft power, it is not just a matter of strong support for the British Council, the BBC World Service and plenty of scholarships, vital and highly desirable though all those things are; support is also needed for all the creative industries, as well as for our superb universities, our professional and training skills, and much else besides. In all these things we must invest and invest. On top of using our soft power more adroitly, we have to work harder than ever to uphold the rules-based order, which is under assault from many forces.

We now live in a world of networks, some of which have their own agendas, and we need to be fully engaged with them. Some are new, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, which brings together all the Asian countries in the world's largest trading bloc by far, the African Union and the Pacific Alliance. Indeed, it has been suggested, and endorsed by the Prime Minister, that we should go further and seek full membership of the Trans-Pacific Partnership. We had a welcome on that from the Japanese Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe, as well.

Some of the groupings underpinning the rules-based order and the pattern of international law are of course the familiar ones of the 20th century, such as the Bretton Woods institutions—the IMF and the World Bank—NATO and the UN, all of which need adapting and reinforcing in the digital era, and to all of which we must contribute innovative new thinking. This, we decided in our committee, is vital if they are to hold together and if the international law which underpins them, and which is the collective world expression of peaceful values and human rights, is to be respected.

One such network, of which we are fortunate to be a member but have neglected for decades, is the Commonwealth. Connectivity and the communications explosion have transformed this nexus of 2.4 billion people with common ties of language, law and values,

and have brought it into a third age, far removed from the original 1949 grouping of 70 years ago. I think that then it was just eight countries; now, it is 53. We point out in our report that the modern Commonwealth network also provides a powerful transmission mechanism for our soft power and helps give both a direction and a purpose for our nation at a time when, as we know, both those things are badly needed.

Our approach to the largest Commonwealth member by far—the fast-rising India—needs overhauling. India now has a larger economy than that of the UK and it is the key to the Asian security balance with China. Nor should we overlook the way that IT and the web are transforming other middle-range developing nations, often seen as poor and struggling, into online miracles of growth, development and supply-chain integration—for instance, Bangladesh or, moving to Africa, Kenya and other African societies. A new Africa south of the Sahara is being born and many of its participants are of course Commonwealth family nations.

We conclude that our policy and diplomatic machinery will need a much stronger focus on Asia, Africa and Latin America, however things turn out here in Europe or in the Atlantic alliance. However green we make life here, it is primarily in Asia and the United States that our climate fate will be decided. Whatever we conclude about trade in the European region, it is in Asia—east and central—that the big trade growth, physical and increasingly in digital and data form, will take place in the next two or three decades.

Meanwhile, we also point out that Europe itself is changing, with populist pressures on all sides, fuelled to a large extent by, once again, the tide of electronic information, mass social media access and unparalleled transparency, and by a consequently huge rise in public expectations that Governments are not fulfilling and, in any case, probably cannot fulfil. Whatever our eventual status vis-à-vis the European Union, we will still require new administrative skills in dealing with this shifting European pattern. There will have to be many more bilateral security and defence links, more immersion in local cultures, more language skills and of course many more skills for running our own trade policy.

The report reminds us that we cannot be blind to the numerous threats to our own democracy that the communications flood poses. Fake news and false alarms are obviously part of the story, but so are narrower forms of nationalism—as opposed to normal patriotism and love of country, which of course are quite acceptable—as well as all forms of highly organised crime and international terrorism. Add to that mix the swollen migrant flows, themselves partly triggered by information access on a scale never before available, and we have the makings of the surging protest against and massive loss of trust in all governing hierarchies—the EU very much included—which fill the scene today and which we read about every day in the papers.

None of that is good for democracy. Democracy today is threatened by algorithmic manipulation and the new weapons of foreign meddling. There is also confusion with majoritarianism, which leads, as we know from history, to new levels of intolerance of minorities and false interpretation of concepts such as

“the will of the people”. As Madeleine Albright observed to the committee when we met her, when almost everyone has their own echo chamber, anarchic culture, followed by much worse reaction, cannot be far away.

Finally, we conclude that government machinery is not well attuned to meet these new conditions and dangers. Our FCO, which should co-ordinate the country's whole international interface and spearhead and safeguard our interests, is plainly underresourced. Every witness confirmed that. Nor are we convinced that the main international departments—DfID, the MoD, the Department for International Trade, BEIS and the FCO—work closely enough together. We found it alarming to see how DfID, with its very extensive budget, still seems to pursue agendas poorly co-ordinated with our foreign and security policy objectives.

It may be that the weak binding link here is the National Security Council. We find its workings much too obscure. We note that the work and activities of the National Security Council in the US are publicly shared and discussed on the media, helping to give a confused country some sense of direction. We could do with some of that here to give reassurance about the coherence—indeed, the existence—of a national strategy. In the digital age this becomes more important than ever and much more difficult to pull together.

Speaking from my own point of view, this report is my swansong as chairman of the International Relations Committee, being duly rotated, and I feel immensely privileged to have helped at its birth and over its first three years. Actually, it is not quite my swansong because the committee has one more big report for debate—on the growing nuclear risk—before the July changeover, and we will also publish two or three shorter ones. I hope the committee is felt to have been useful. I believe it is in this area of wider world turmoil and adjusting to new challenges that the future contribution of your Lordships' committee system can be strongest.

John Maynard Keynes once said that his quarrel was not so much with those who disagreed with his economics as with those who refused to see the significance of what was actually happening in the world around them. It is hard not to feel the same today. If this report lifts even a corner of the curtain on how we adapt to an entirely new cycle in the history of international affairs and in our own national fortunes, then it will have done its bit. I beg to move.

6.09 pm

Baroness Smith of Newnham (LD): My Lords, I am delighted to follow the noble Lord, Lord Howell, and to be able to thank him for his three years of service to the International Relations Committee. Clearly, as he has indicated, there will be further opportunities to thank him for his chairmanship.

The International Relations Committee of your Lordships' House is a new committee which we have had for the last three years. Its first meeting was in May 2016; at that point, the assumption was that it would be a committee alongside the EU Select Committee and all its sub-committees—that we would do the international while the EU Committee was doing the European. After our first meeting, we had the now-fateful referendum. We have spent the last three years in the

[BARONESS SMITH OF NEWNHAM]

shadow of Brexit, something that the Prime Minister this afternoon referred to as a having a “corrosive impact” on politics.

The noble Lord, Lord Howell, and the usual channels have ensured that we have a prime slot for debating this important report. It seems at present that almost every slot is available because there is no legislative business of any substance—or so I thought when I was preparing my remarks, but then of course the debate on Kew went on for several hours. So we can clearly legislate despite the shadow of Brexit, but Brexit has overshadowed much of what we have been doing for the last three years.

The decision to have an inquiry into the UK’s role in the world was taken in the knowledge that we had voted to leave the European Union, but the committee was very clear that the report and inquiry were needed regardless of whether the UK leaves the European Union. As the noble Lord, Lord Howell, made very clear, it is timely in the sense of a changing world order. The threats of the world have changed fundamentally in the 25 years since the end of the Cold War. They have changed far more since the end of the Second World War, yet at no point has the United Kingdom sat back and asked, “How do we see our place in the world?” France did so in the immediate aftermath of World War II, and understood that it was a middle-ranking power albeit one with global aspirations. The United Kingdom has continued to aspire to being a global power, and occasionally thinks it can go global on its own.

The part of our report that I wish to address is the part that considers alliances. It will perhaps not surprise Members of your Lordships’ House that I want to focus in particular on the ongoing relationships that the United Kingdom must inevitably have with the European Union on a bilateral basis. We talk about that in the report. By way of caveat, I point out of course that, as a Liberal Democrat, my party has consistently said that we should not be leaving the European Union. Therefore, my remarks need to be understood in the context that bilateral relations matter whether we are inside or outside the European Union.

For the last 45 years, the UK’s bilateral relations with our European partners have developed and become embedded within the European Union. Our relations at the level of Parliament, political parties, Ministers and officials have all been strengthened through bilateral relations that have become semi-automatic because we are part of the European Union. Those relations happen in a much more organic way than they do within the United Nations, OSCE or even NATO.

All those relationships matter, and the Government’s response to our report made it very clear that they envisage that we will continue to have those relationships once we leave the European Union. However, what will be lacking if the United Kingdom leaves the European Union is that daily interaction—the fact that Ministers and civil servants are talking on a regular basis with their opposite numbers. About a quarter of a century ago, Tony Blair talked about the new bilateralism and wanting to strengthen the United Kingdom’s relations with the European Union. This was in 1997 or 1998,

so not quite a quarter of a century ago. He envisaged it as being about strengthening relations between fellow Labour, or socialist, parliamentarians, Ministers and officials.

Clearly, the International Relations Committee would not necessarily be recommending the strengthening of relations between the Conservative Government and socialist parties in Europe, but those relations that have become organic do matter. Relations can and must continue. This is not just something that the Labour Party understood in the late 1990s and the early part of this century. It is something that opposite numbers understand in other countries; for example, the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, the foundation linked to the German CDU, with which I spent the weekend just gone, understands that and is keen to keep relations going with the United Kingdom.

Your Lordships’ International Relations Committee is not alone in understanding the importance of the bilateral. Just this afternoon, I, like other Members of your Lordships’ House, received an email from Daniel Kawczynski about the APPG for Poland. I do not normally pray Mr Kawczynski in aid—our politics do not normally coincide—but he pointed out the importance of Anglo-Polish relations in the context of Brexit. As a key NATO ally and in a position of influence within the European Union, Poland will become a more important ally for the United Kingdom than she is now and it is imperative that a strong working relationship between our two nations is maintained. That is true not only of Poland but of Germany, France and other like-minded countries which have been key allies within the European Union.

The Government’s response to our report indicates that they see the importance of such relations. They have talked about strengthening the bilateral embassies, but can the Minister go further? Can he commit the Government to an understanding of the importance of bilateral relations, not just in the context of embassy-to-embassy discourse, but of party-to-party, Parliament-to-Parliament and Minister-to-Minister discourse too. While those relationships have mattered within the European Union, they will matter even more if the UK leaves the European Union when we will rely on our partners within Europe for the ongoing security relationship which the Prime Minister and the Government have made so clear they wish to continue in the context of Brexit.

6.17 pm

Lord Jopling (Con): My Lords, as the noble Baroness, Lady Smith of Newnham, has said, this report is the culmination of the first three years of existence of the International Relations Committee. Noble Lords must remember that we had to fight for years to remedy the absurd situation where the House of Lords, with all the wealth of experience within its Membership, had no foreign affairs committee. I can only hope that the committee’s work over the last three years will ensure that its future amounts to long life and permanency.

The success of these first three years of work is largely due to the leadership of my noble friend Lord Howell. Now that both of us are to be rotated off the committee, as he said, I want to say a few words that, no doubt, will embarrass him. We have benefited from his unique

experience, his ardent enthusiasm for the Commonwealth, his endless patience and his clear vision of world affairs. He has led us to produce a series of reports, all of which, when debated on the Floor here, have been warmly welcomed by your Lordships.

This is not, of course, the first time that I have had the pleasure of sitting under the chairmanship of my noble friend Lord Howell. I was a member of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee in the House of Commons for 10 years, all of which fell under his chairmanship. As far as I am concerned, it has been a wonderful experience and I want to thank him for his contribution to all this work.

This report is based on what we have called a “shifting world order”. I want to refer to only one aspect of that: our relationship with the United States. No doubt many colleagues will recall my long-term enthusiasm for that relationship, because for 14 years I ran, as secretary, the British-American Parliamentary Group, which was founded during the Second World War by Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt. As the report says, our shifting relationship with the United States began years before the arrival of Donald Trump.

I hesitate to refer back to my own speeches, but I will. I remember that, after visiting Washington with the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Development Policy Sub-Committee of the European Union Committee, I came back just before the Iraq war. I bemoaned the American approach which I described then as them saying, “We are going to do this. If you want to come with us, very well. We welcome that. If you don’t, get out of our way”. Of course, the election of Donald Trump has continued that regrettable shift away from multilateralism.

But much as we may deplore the new approach to issues such as climate change, the Iran nuclear deal or the threat of serious trade wars, not everything from the new Administration has been to our disadvantage. In particular, I have very much welcomed the President’s remarks to try to buck up the complacency of many of our European fellow members of the NATO alliance. I see a good deal of that complacency as a member of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly.

We should never forget that the United States remains a close and continuing ally. We still have considerable influence with them, which we must preserve and develop. I strongly support the response of the Government to the committee’s report, where they say:

“We will work with the US whenever possible but will continue to seek outcomes that reflect UK values and interests even where there are points of difference, as with the Iranian nuclear agreement”.

I believe that sums up very accurately what our approach should be. Surely this must be the right approach, in spite of our reservations about the Trump Administration’s unpredictability.

I particularly deplore the approach of those who see fit to hurl insults at the President when he comes to London in the next few weeks. It is mindless idiocy to threaten to disrupt the visit of the Queen’s guest when he comes here next month. I do not know if we shall have the opportunity to listen to him speak here, but I find it astonishing that people are attempting to prevent him coming to this building, this ancient bastion of free speech and generosity to visitors. Surely our vital,

ongoing need is to continue a warm but objective relationship with our US friends. That must not be soured by boorish and mindless exhibitionism.

6.24 pm

Lord Hennessy of Nympsfield (CB): My Lords, last month, I learned what was for me a new concept when for the first time scientists managed to photograph the rim of a black hole. The astrophysicists called it an “event horizon”—an interesting term.

Thinking about today’s hugely timely debate, it occurred to me that that is exactly what the UK is living through in terms of its foreign policy and its place in the world. However, the metaphor is not exact because I gather that what lies inside the black hole is quite unknowable. By contrast, and partly thanks to this fine report from your Lordships’ International Relations Committee, we have a good idea of what might lie beyond the rim of Brexit if only we can reach and cross this accursed event horizon in reasonable order.

In his memoir *Memory Hold-the-Door*, John Buchan, statesman and incomparable spy novelist, wrote that:

“in the cycle to which we belong we can see only a fraction of the curve”.

It is a line I know the noble Lord, Lord Howell of Guildford, also likes to quote. The curve described in his committee’s report is jagged and alarming in so many ways.

In big-picture terms, what shines through for me is that the great prize in future could be, would be and should be to draw China more and more into the international rules-based system, not least its humanitarian elements. It is also plain that the same prize is probably beyond the West’s reach in terms of doing the same for Russia. The thrill of being a disruptor state with a talent for a wide spectrum of hybrid aggression appears to have an addictive quality for the current management in Moscow, as they continue to assuage the hurt of losing the first Cold War. As for the West itself, the International Relations Committee rightly and strongly stresses that:

“The UK should continue to resist US challenges to the multilateral system, and seek to strengthen key institutions particularly the United Nations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organisation”.

The other tocsin which rings out from this report is the rapidity of technological advances that can swiftly overturn familiar nostrums of statecraft and place ever more the means of asymmetric conflict into ever smaller numbers of hands—sometimes even a single pair of hands. These kinds of developments will not slow down and wait for us to catch up with them once Brexit has at last ceased to siphon off the bulk of our energies. What we need to do is make a virtue of the uncertainty that the Brexit event horizon is bringing us and build on this excellent report by persuading Whitehall to take a fundamental look at our place in the world and the resources we deploy on its sustenance.

A few weeks ago, I fell into conversation about Brexit with a very old friend in the other place, Frank Field MP. “Everybody keeps saying this is the worst event since Suez,” Frank said. “We need to see how parts of the British constitution did or did not work.” It was an

[LORD HENNESSY OF NYMPFIELD]

intriguing thought about a stretching task, which is not one susceptible to an investigatory instrument such as Franks on the Falklands or Chilcot on Iraq. That is probably a theme for another day, but Frank Field's idea stimulated me to take a look at the scattering of post-Suez views that Whitehall undertook. They were all secret, by the way, and there was no Select Committee inquiry into Suez.

I counted a quartet of quite substantial internal reviews: a politico-military one for the chiefs of staff in 1957; the first-ever cost-benefit analysis of the British Empire in 1957, which I have always thought was rather late; a Cabinet Secretary-led inquiry in 1957-58 on *The Position of the United Kingdom in World Affairs*; and finally a Prime Minister-commissioned *Future Policy Study* undertaken for Harold Macmillan in 1959-60 on where the UK would be by 1970 on unchanged current domestic, economic and foreign policies. That report in particular spared its readers in Whitehall nothing about the starkness of the economic prospects, not least in comparison to the six founding member countries of the European Economic Community.

The report before us today is offered as, "part of a constructive debate".

It should be more than that, triggering a review—in public this time of course—as broad-ranging in scope as those post-1956 inquiries. Perhaps Parliament should direct the process using a Joint Committee of both Houses. A royal commission, as suggested yesterday by the noble Lord, Lord Dobbs, might be a good idea; once an instrument of high utility, but now out of fashion, perhaps one could be created specially for the purpose. Or possibly the next Prime Minister could authorise a review as Macmillan did with his sequence of inquiries as he scrambled into the premiership across the rubble left by the Suez affair and the resignation of Sir Anthony Eden.

In my judgment, it is a first-order question that rises above and reaches beyond the usual range covered by the five-year cycle of strategic defence and security reviews. It needs to be a truly national conversation that starts with the fundamental question of whether we should still strive to be a considerable player in the influence markets of the world. There may be those suffering from post-Brexit exhaustion, as we all are to some degree, even though we are not there yet, who think that a period of reticence on our part would be fitting. It has been distressing to discover that we seem to have lost the second part of our genius for muddling through. At "muddling" we have been excelling ourselves; it is the "through" bit that appears to be beyond us.

I profoundly hope that nerves will not be lost, which would leave us in a condition of resentful torpor. A wide-ranging inquiry could be a partial antidote to that, especially if it makes a convincing and realistic case for our remaining a substantial player in the world with verve and conviction. As that great economic planner and institution builder Jean Monnet, who knew us Brits very well, put it when we were experiencing another bad patch in the 1970s, the British have not "stepped aside from history". Monnet was right. We have not, we should not and we will not.

6.30 pm

Lord King of Bridgwater (Con): My Lords, I am delighted to follow the noble Lord, Lord Hennessy. He has yet again made an extremely informative and educational contribution to one of our debates. I join other noble Lords in congratulating my noble friend Lord Howell and his committee on an absolutely excellent report. I just looked at the list of witnesses, which seems to go on for page after page. I am amazed by the scope of the witnesses called and the work that must have gone into it. I recall that when I used to represent the United Kingdom in the Council of Ministers of the European Union, in the various hats I wore at different times, I pretty quickly and clearly picked up that among the inner workings of the European Union there was the greatest respect for House of Lords reports. Ministers said that they were some of the best reports they ever saw and this report is in that tradition.

I was interested in the report's title, *UK Foreign Policy in a Shifting World Order*. "Shifting world order" is the understatement of the year. I thought back to my time in government, when we faced challenges. Obviously there was Saddam's invasion of Kuwait, which more or less coincided with the collapse of the Soviet Union. The world was able to adjust to the end of an enormous Russian empire that had started to build up at the time of Agincourt and had collapsed effectively over about three months in a tolerably peaceful way. The rules-based order seemed to exist in our relationship then. I had the pleasure of dealing with Mr Dick Cheney, who is now called "Mr Vice" but was an extremely distinguished Defense Secretary. He went on to other things. At that time our relationship with the United States was an absolute model. We co-operated with 36 other countries under full United Nations resolutions to deal with the problem of Saddam's illegal occupation of Kuwait.

We are now in an entirely different world, since the development of al-Qaeda and the invasion, adventures and awful experiences of Afghanistan. Since I made my maiden speech on our involvement in Afghanistan in 2001, I have an absolute record of how long we have been there, which is now 18 years. I look also at the situation in Iraq following the invasion in 2003, where every day still in Baghdad, IEDs and bombs are going off, people are being killed and there is misery and confusion. We are, to a certain extent, still involved in these areas.

I listened to a Minister talking in one of our committee rooms today about the precipice of fundamental change that we are about to face. Millions are displaced by terrorism or war, with mass migration following on and population explosions in many countries. Virtually every continent faces challenges in that way. It is combined with new and dangerous weapons of war, which we never had in my time. Even in Northern Ireland we never had suicide bombers, drones, offensive cyber and the involvement of social media and fake news, which we now know are such threats. With that sinister combination you do not need to be a nation state to wage war against the organised world with some of these instruments. Just to cheer us up, this morning we heard the announcement that sea levels are rising even faster due to climate change and about what that might do to further stimulate the risk of population migration in different places.

My noble friend Lord Jopling referred to President Trump's reluctance to be involved in multilateral organisations in this shifting world order. "America first" certainly does not make it easy to continue to promote an active global role. I see that one of President Trump's pledges is to make US foreign policy unpredictable. He has been pretty successful in that; I think the Iranian Government would support me in that remark. I noticed that just yesterday General Jim Mattis, the former Defense Secretary, had been speaking to a distinguished audience in the United Arab Emirates, including Mohamed bin Zayed. He said that we might believe that the US is,

"coming apart at the seams",

and that it might seem,

"like it's chaotic in Washington".

He said that that is the price of democracy and that on the US's role in the world his advice would be,

"to engage more in the world and intervene militarily less".

One or two of us would think that pretty good advice.

Of course, it is against that background that we have the complete change that my noble friend expressed so well, with the extraordinary emergence of China and the surge in its economy taking place. There is a complete change in the balance. With all these changes, the role of Russia—which in my time was so busy with internal affairs that it did not cause any difficulties more widely—is now, as the committee described it, that of a disruptor.

The noble Lord, Lord Hennessy, asked whether we should play a part. We certainly should. Perhaps we are too modest sometimes. We are uniquely well placed. We are a member of the Security Council. Whatever we may say, we have a special relationship with the United States. We are a member of NATO and of the Commonwealth. We have particular relationships in the Gulf. All around the world we have relationships that in the main are based on good friendship. We are not a superpower, which in some ways makes it easier to play our role. I hope we will not back away from playing our part. The committee made the point that we need to get the fullest public support for our foreign policy and to play a role as widely as we can in the world, including getting as many students as we can to our universities, which are referred to in the report as,

"a national industry of global importance".

We need to make our voice known and play our part to deal with the country and a world that is not just shifting, but in great danger.

6.38 pm

Baroness Coussins (CB): My Lords, as a member of the International Relations Committee I was privileged to be part of this ambitious inquiry. I pay tribute to the excellent support we had from our clerks and policy analyst. In view of the time limit, I will pass on the opportunity to comment on China, Russia, cybersecurity or the US, and will use my time to draw attention only to the two recommendations tucked away in paragraphs 354 and 355, on the importance of foreign language skills. The noble Lord, Lord Howell, referred to this issue in his opening speech and it was part of our thinking on whether the Foreign and

Commonwealth Office, and Whitehall generally, has the skills to make it fit for purpose to shape and conduct foreign policy in the shifting world order that we described. I should declare my interests as co-chair of the All-Party Group on Modern Languages and a vice-president of the Chartered Institute of Linguists.

One of the committee's overarching conclusions was that:

"To maintain its influence and leadership on global issues, the UK needs a more agile, creative and entrepreneurial approach to foreign policy".

Language skills are a perfect example of what fits that definition of agile, creative and entrepreneurial. Many recent reports from the British Academy, the British Council, the all-party group and others have stated, with increasing urgency, that in a post-Brexit world the UK will need foreign languages more than ever. But what we have is a languages crisis which risks the UK being unable to fulfil its public policy needs, notably in defence, security and diplomacy. Our committee concluded that language skills are essential for the effective conduct of diplomacy and export growth.

On the positive side, the Foreign Office language school and the Defence Centre for Languages and Culture are, to quote the British Academy's report,

"beacons of commitment to language learning across government".

Witnesses informed our inquiry that the diplomatic academy in the FCO has placed increasing importance on language skills and increased the proportion of posts where a foreign language is required, with a target of 80% by 2020. By contrast, the Department for International Trade told us that it had 24 designated language roles overseas but expects future free trade agreements to be negotiated in English, using professional interpreters where needed. I find that attitude from the DIT extremely worrying and a depressing illustration of the lack of awareness of the importance of language skills, and the cultural understanding that goes with them. After all, we know from research at Cardiff Business School that the UK is losing 3.5% of GDP per annum because of a lack of language skills in the workforce. Yet, astonishingly, the DIT's new *Export Strategy* does not even mention language skills.

I found the Government's response to our recommendation that there should be a cross-government language strategy, including an audit of existing language skills across Whitehall, disappointing. It simply is not good enough to point to the good work being done at the FCO, MoD, DfID and GCHQ, and assume that it will provide the co-ordination and responsibility for languages across the board. It is as much in the interests of the Treasury, the DIT and BEIS to get the message on languages as it is for the FCO. In my view, it is absolutely inadequate to assume that this is just an issue for the Department for Education to resolve. It is not just the DfE's problem and it is unfair to expect that department to sort it all out.

One very good example of the strategic interconnectedness of languages, highly relevant to the topic of this debate, is the need to pay more attention to the 1 million or so school students in the UK who are bilingual. Children who speak languages such as Mandarin, Arabic, Korean, Turkish, Farsi and Somali at home should have their language skills

[BARONESS COUSSINS]

recognised, developed and accredited. They should be shown how much more employable they will be as a result, whether in business, diplomacy, security or education.

The committee's second recommendation on languages is that the Government should do more to encourage universities to restore modern language degrees in order to ensure that we produce sufficient linguists to meet the UK's foreign and trade policy needs. The Government's response rightly points to some of their positive and welcome initiatives in schools, designed to try to improve the supply chain to universities. These are the Mandarin Excellence Programme, the pedagogy pilot programme and the introduction of compulsory language learning in primary schools. Overall, though, I found the Government's response on this point rather thin, lacking any sense of quite how dramatically serious the decline of languages at school and university has become. The Government set great store by the EBacc, yet the boost it has given to GCSE take-up has clearly stalled—stuck for the last three years at only 47%. In 2015, 100,000 fewer language GCSEs were taken compared to a decade earlier and A-level languages, especially German, are in freefall. No wonder over 50 of our universities have scrapped some or all of their modern language degrees. The total number of modern language graduates has declined by 54% in the last decade.

Will the Minister say whether the FCO will take a further initiative, building on the cross-Whitehall languages group, to draw in more departments and agencies? Between them, and with expert advice, they could come up with an effective mechanism for ensuring not just a cross-government talking shop but a genuinely cross-government strategy on languages, backed up by committed leadership, transparent accountability and resourcing—one which acknowledges the importance of languages and linguists for the success and resilience of the UK's future in the world.

6.45 pm

Lord Anderson of Swansea (Lab): My Lords, I join in the commendation of the noble Lord, Lord Howell, for setting the IRC on the map so that it will now be a permanent feature of your Lordships' House. I also commend him on his speech today and his general commitment during his time as a Minister. He set as the aim of the report to give a basis for general debate. The committee has certainly succeeded in that and I hope that the noble Baroness, Lady Smith of Newnham, and others might consider this report and his speech as a set piece for students of international relations, as there were so many wonderful insights.

Not surprisingly, the report follows the path of most parliamentary Select Committee reports by recommending more resources for the subject studied. We are told that the FCO accounts for only 3% of government funding for international work, but in concluding that we need a more agile, active and flexible diplomacy the committee does not examine the case for greater co-ordination and the sharing of resources between the FCO, DfID, the MoD and the Department for International Trade. The emphasis on cyber was possibly a little excessive and may have unbalanced the report. However, the starting point is surely the advice of the

Oracle at Delphi: "Know yourself". What strengths do we as a country bring to a rapidly evolving context? Is the national consensus on foreign policy likely to change, particularly with a more ethnically diverse UK? How do we reconcile our status as a medium-sized European power with our global interests and ambitions? Some, like the children of Israel in the desert, will certainly yearn for the certainties of the Cold War period.

A key question, not properly touched on in the report, is: will Brexit, if it happens, lead to an enhancement or a diminution of UK interests and clout overseas? This question was raised somewhat polemically by Sir Simon Fraser in the *Evening Standard* on 7 May. The report says that seeking a continued close relationship with the EU is vital. The Foreign Secretary told the committee that he did not want the diplomatic alliance with EU countries to change as a result of Brexit, but this is surely wishful thinking in the extreme. As we saw in last week's debate on the CSDP, we will become a rule-taker and not be in the driving seat. There have been a number of straws in the wind. Cyprus has turned from the UK to France to update its naval base. We no longer have a British judge on the ICJ. The UN General Assembly has voted against us on the Chagos Islands. Inevitably, over time, as we become a country outside the EU, we will lose a degree of our clout and be disadvantaged. Contrary to the committee, I see no substantial evidence that India wishes to build an enhanced security relationship with us and, pace the noble Lord, Lord Howell, it is showing a very detached commitment to the Commonwealth as a whole.

The text on which the committee might have sermonised is the comment by Dr Haass, the president of the Council on Foreign Relations, that,

"among the foreign policy elites ... the British role is seen as having been downsized and likely to continue that way, and that Brexit reinforces that".

I recall meeting Dr Haass after he wrote his book on US policy, *The Reluctant Sheriff*. The world has indeed changed, particularly with China and Russia. We certainly have concerns about authoritarian tendencies in a number of European countries but, unlike Russia, none of them has a destabilising role outside their frontiers; none has invaded and occupied neighbouring countries; none has interfered in western elections; none has tried to assassinate dissidents on the streets of our cities. We should not, of course, seek to provoke Russia; we should co-operate where it is in our mutual interest but we should be vigilant and realistic and have that awkward posture of holding out our hands but keeping up our guard.

The major change has been in US policy. Is this a continuation, as the noble Lord, Lord Jopling, sought to argue, or is it essentially a fresh start? The President has cast aside more moderate advisers, blows hot and cold on North Korea, Iran, Russia, the UN and NATO. He has imposed steel tariffs on her allies and is, in general, unpredictable and often capricious in his policies. Traditionally, we share many interests with the US, not least in intelligence and nuclear. However, the blunt truth is that we align more and more with the countries of Europe and the US no longer sees us as an interpreter of or bridge to our European allies; nor do Japan or other investing countries. Nevertheless, I stress that we

should recognise the US as our most powerful ally and ensure that, during his forthcoming visit to the United Kingdom, President Trump is afforded all the normal courtesies, certainly far more than those afforded to President Putin, who faced far fewer demonstrations than President Trump is likely to.

We should be concerned about the comments by Sir Simon Fraser that he could not think of any time in his distinguished diplomatic career,

“when there has been less clarity, frankly, about the purposes and objectives of British foreign policy”.

Yes, there has been a welcome increase in diplomatic posts and personnel. Yes, we are in the premier division of soft power, but there is general puzzlement at the aspiration for a “global Britain”. Is this no more than a verbal fig leaf to cover a vacuum of policy; a part of the liberated, nostalgic future promised by the Brexiteers? Is there not a danger of falling between many stools, facing the choice of greater dependency on the United States or becoming an outrider to the European Union? This is hardly a happy posture for our country, which has so many advantages and such a remarkable history.

6.53 pm

Lord Lamont of Lerwick (Con): My Lords, I draw the attention of the House to my entry in the *Register of Lords' Interests*. I work for a number of companies, but I particularly draw attention to my chairmanship of the British-Iranian Chamber of Commerce and the fact that I am also the Government's trade envoy to Iran. I join in the general congratulations to my noble friend Lord Howell, who has done a tremendous service to the House in presiding over this new committee for the first three years of its existence and producing this extraordinary, outstanding report. It is remarkable in covering a huge number of different issues but having crisp and novel recommendations on almost every area. I will concentrate on one, which has already been touched on by various noble Lords: the unilateralism that is now appearing in American policy and the difference between our own attitude and that of the US to the issues on which we disagree.

I agree with everything that my noble friend Lord Jopling and the noble Lord, Lord Anderson, said about the United States. However, it is right that when we have differences, even with our oldest ally, we should have the courage to express them openly. What is the value of a long-standing, deep friendship if we cannot speak frankly to each other and be open when we disagree? The report emphasises the need for a rules-based system. It is important to have one, but it is also important that foreign policy is not just institutionalised. Often today, particularly in the US, the foreign policy establishment indulges in lazy thinking, carrying forward the thinking of the Cold War, too often posing a completely false dichotomy between deterrence and dialogue. Deterrence and dialogue are means to an end; they are not ends in themselves and we need both of them.

Intelligence services can tell us what is happening; they are often good at that. But are they so good at telling us why it is happening, or is there a problem of interpretation? Why are different countries acting in different ways? Actions that we intend as defensive may be seen by others as aggressive. Many people feel

that we have mishandled our relationship with Russia somewhere along the line. I had a lot to do with Russia in the period from 1991 to 1992 and vividly remember the optimism, the feeling that Russia was about to become a normal country. What happened? We have a narrative that circles around Ukraine, Georgia, Salisbury and cyberattacks on Estonia. Russia also has a narrative: it has been responding defensively to threats about Georgia and Ukraine becoming members of NATO, as President Putin warned at the Bucharest summit, and to the alleged broken promise not to enlarge NATO at all. This is, of course, disputed by people but Mr Gorbachev and President Yeltsin both warned that the expansion of NATO could have very bad consequences for the relationship with Russia. Again, we need a combination of deterrence and dialogue.

The US says that it does not recognise spheres of influence, whether in Georgia or Ukraine, but at the same time John Bolton tells us that the Monroe doctrine is alive and well. We need to be careful not to create the same situation with China. It would be a mistake to shut China out of the global system. It would be a great mistake to have a technology war with China. The most dangerous example of unilateralism by the US is the abrogation of the nuclear deal that was signed between Iran, the US and the E3. The International Atomic Energy Authority certified on 14 different occasions that Iran has complied with the agreement. The US is not just reimposing sanctions, it is also putting pressure on China, Japan, India and Turkey to reduce the oil exports of Iran to zero. For a country where 50% of the revenue comes from oil, this is tantamount to a declaration of economic warfare. Mr Pompeo says that there is a link between al-Qaeda and Iran. That, as he must know, is nonsense. We hear a lot about Iran's meddling in the region. I understand that and appreciate that it is a problem. But there is still a problem of interpretation here. Is this defensive or aggressive? Iranian policy is driven largely by national interest. The most important event in modern Iranian history was the Iran-Iraq war. It lasted longer than the Second World War and they lost more people in it than we did in the whole of the Second World War. For us, the Second World War is a vivid memory, but it was 74 years ago. The Iran-Iraq war ended only 31 years ago, so it is not surprisingly that Iran's fear of invasion remains. It is not surprising that it is determined that if it is attacked again, the fighting will be outside its borders and there will be a cost to anyone who is backing an aggressor.

When we hear talk of Iran interfering in other countries, it probably strikes the Iranians as extremely odd when they see the West tolerating the interference of Saudi in Bahrain, the interference of Saudi in Yemen, and the presence of the United States in Iraq even when the political party of the Prime Minister of Iraq is opposed to it. I fully recognise that there is a problem of Iranian proxies and the use of proxies throughout the region, but the problems of proxies of Iran will be solved only by a comprehensive security agreement in the region that gives some comfort and some security to Iran as well. The real problem of proxies will not be solved by sending aircraft carriers and the threat of 120,000 men.

[LORD LAMONT OF LERWICK]

A recent poll in Germany showed that more Germans thought that the US was a threat to world peace than thought that Russia was. I do not agree with that, but I do not find it entirely surprising that public opinion there came to that conclusion. John Bolton recently repeated the maxim of the ancient Greeks: “If you want peace, prepare for war”. Yes, we all understand that, but the danger is that if you prepare only for war and if you forgo dialogue, you may end up with the last thing you want; an accidental war. In the Gulf we are close to tipping the scales to an accidental war, and that would be a great tragedy.

7.01 pm

Lord Hannay of Chiswick (CB): My Lords, I am delighted to follow the noble Lord, Lord Lamont. I do not always agree with him on every subject under the sun, but I strongly echo what he said about relations with Iran. No one could reasonably deny that the report we are debating today paints a picture on a wide canvas. That canvas was most admirably depicted by the noble Lord, Lord Howell, the chair of our committee; I serve on that committee, and I pay tribute to the outstanding role he has played in what is not very usual in your Lordships’ House—the establishment of a new committee, the setting up of the new structure and the provision of quite a few pretty interesting reports, I think. Certainly, that has been the view of this House.

I suggest also that no one could reasonably say that the subject matter our report covers is not urgent and topical. At no point since the end of the Cold War, which was three decades ago, and perhaps going back further than that, have power relationships been shifting so rapidly and so fundamentally. A rising China, no longer content to hide its light under a bushel; the US in its post-primacy era, navigating erratically and unpredictably; Russia, still relatively a declining power, but assertive and often disruptive; and for ourselves, the twin pillars of our foreign policy for many years, our influence on the EU policy in Brussels and on US policy in Washington, at risk of being seriously reduced. All that at a time when the risks to the rules of the road—on strategic nuclear policy, trade, climate change, human rights—are being challenged by some of the main players.

It cannot be said too often—and several have said this before me—that this report is not about Brexit. However obsessed we may be with that subject, we would need to be discussing the problems we have identified and finding new approaches to them, on every one of the topics covered in this report, even if we were not poised at the moment on the brink of momentous decisions. Those problems will not go away or become less whatever decision we take about Brexit.

Any review has to have at its heart this country’s relationship with the United States, both bilaterally and as a partner in NATO and many other international organisations. I have to say that in my view this is not in good shape. I cannot identify a single one of the Trump Administration’s policy decisions which took account of or benefited our interests, and many have gone in the opposite direction. However, we must not

succumb to anti-Americanism—here, I echo the views of many others. Nor must we delude ourselves that if only President Trump were defeated in 2020, everything would be fine. We Europeans will have to put more effort into bearing alliance burdens. Waiting for the US to give a lead on every subject and then following it, as we have done so often in the past, will no longer be sufficient.

China is clearly here to stay as a global power. Is it a systematic adversary, as Vice-President Pence would have us believe, or is it rather a systematic competitor? I would support the second of those possibilities. It could be, and I hope will be, a valuable partner in policy areas such as climate change and even trade. Of course, Russia will remain a problem for us for as long as President Putin pursues disruptive policies and seeks, sometimes by force, to create a sphere of influence. Does that mean we should not be discussing with the Russians areas of common interest, such as strategic stability, nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament? That, I suggest, would be unwise. Discussing those issues is not, as your Lordships’ committee said, in a report which we published last month and which I hope will be debated before too long, business as usual. We discussed such matters with Russia even during the Cold War and I hope that we will begin to discuss them again now.

We must certainly not neglect emerging regional powers in Asia, Africa and Latin America: those emerging powers will play crucial roles in regional security and prosperity, which will be of importance to us too. We will need to work closely with them to our common benefit. How can we stem the disintegration of a rules-based international order which it is in our national interest to sustain and to develop? By working together, I suggest, with like-minded countries right across the world to implement and strengthen commitments on climate change, to circumvent policies designed to paralyse the World Trade Organization and to make UN peacekeeping and peacemaking operate more effectively. This may, in some cases, involve doing things without the United States, but the door to its participation must remain open. In the long run, we will need it and I think it will find that it needs us too.

On the process of British foreign policy-making, we tried not to be too prescriptive and not to indulge in micromanagement. The establishment of the National Security Council seems to us to have provided much-needed co-ordination across government, although we questioned the desirability of asking one person to do two full-time jobs, as Secretary of the Cabinet and National Security Adviser. We urged that the artificial distinction between foreign policy and external economic policy, which is not covered by the NSC’s remit, should be dropped and we underlined the importance of the National Security Council leading a national foreign policy narrative, not leaving that to the effect of selective leaking. It would be good to hear the Minister’s views on those recommendations.

In conclusion, I do not conceal that we were a little disappointed by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office’s initial response to our report, which fell short, we felt, of what was needed. It was really a thing of shreds and patches, lacking any overall view and strategy. We are

still in correspondence with the Foreign Secretary about that and I hope the Minister will be able to begin to remedy that failing when he replies to this debate. The waters we are navigating are choppy, the political choices are not easy, but the country surely needs more of a sense of direction than can be provided by frequent repetition of slogans such as “Global Britain”.

7.09 pm

Lord Grocott (Lab): My Lords, I must admit that, when we started our report, I had doubts about the huge scope of *UK Foreign Policy in a Shifting World Order*. The fact that we kept within bounds, to a degree, was down to the skill of our chairman—to whom I pay tribute, as others have—and also our secretariat, especially Eva George and Joe Dobbs, who had the monumental task of putting all the material together.

I would like to discuss a couple of the assumptions about the nature of the changing world order and the extent to which we are, or are not, in a period of fundamental change or watershed. While it is always tempting for all generations to think that we live in uniquely interesting times, and while acknowledging that many of the tools of international relations were changing dramatically—new technologies, social media, mass communications—much of our evidence suggested that many fundamental challenges remain the same. One of our witnesses, Dr Ulrike Franke of the European Council on Foreign Relations put this graphically in a section on increased automation on the battlefield. She said:

“it is important to understand that we may be adding more layers to the battle space but, in the end, to put it bluntly, it will probably come down to 18 year old soldiers dying somewhere in the mud”.

So how much is new and how much is more of the same? What about the assumption, for example, that a special challenge of our times is the threat to the so-called rules-based international order? Implicit in that assumption is that there must have been a time—a golden age, maybe—when this international order was understood and enforced to our universal benefit. That begs at least two questions. First, what precisely is the rules-based international order? Secondly, when precisely was it operating as intended?

We made an attempt in our report to address the definition question. On page 7, we say that the rules-based international order involves,

“a shared commitment by all countries to conduct their activities in accordance with agreed rules that evolve over time. ... It also involves ... the acceptance of restraints by states”.

That sounds wonderful, but I ask myself: when exactly was this golden age, when the rules-based international order was functioning?

One of our witnesses, Sir Mark Lyall Grant, former National Security Adviser, gave an answer, saying that it was a 20-year period between 1989 and 2009 when, “we suddenly saw the UN Security Council unblocked ... a whole series of new institutions and new normative developments, particularly at the United Nations”.

Surely what is most noticeable about this argument is, first, how short this period was—just 20 years—and, secondly, that it coincided with the single most dramatic development in international relations since the end of the Second World War, namely the collapse of the Soviet Union. If it was indeed the period when the

rules-based international order was working well, and if we agree that the system developed 74 years ago, after the Second World War, then perhaps the period we are living in today is not quite so exceptional. One might even say that the relatively successful operation of the rules-based international order was the exception rather than the rule, and that what is happening today is that normal service has been resumed. By normal service, we surely mean that what we most need are the traditional skills of bilateral and multilateral diplomacy.

In this context, I very much support our report’s recommendation in paragraph 331, that we must invest more in our global diplomatic presence and that to fulfil the UK’s responsibilities as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, the UK should have a presence in every country.

This brings me to what is surely a hugely important observation about international relations today, which is all too easily overlooked, and that is the resilience of the nation state. It has become fashionable to make assumptions about globalisation, not just as a description of the modern era, but almost as a policy objective. As a consequence, the nation state is seen to be an increasingly outdated organisation. So many pressures seem to challenge it—the growth of modern technologies, citizens communicating with each other across national boundaries, the growth of non-state actors and the power of multinationals. As Sir Mark Lyall put it so clearly,

“The only question in my mind is whether these pressures will exert such asymmetrical pressure on the nation state that the system will collapse”.

Yet surely the evidence about the enduring importance of the state, both as the basis for people’s loyalties and identities and as the basic building block of international relations, is overwhelming. Tom Tugendhat, the chairman of the Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee, put it well when he said in a speech last May:

“At the end of the Cold War, there were some who said that the nation state would soon be consigned to the dustbin of history ... the state is back. It is the primary vehicle of global influence and power. It comes before multilateralism. And it’s time we acknowledged it”.

Since the Second World War ended, there has been an inexorable growth in the number of states, much of it the result of decolonisation. Since then, we have had many more new states and old ones re-established following the collapse of the Soviet Union. We have seen multinational states such as Yugoslavia break into their constituent parts and Czechoslovakia dividing. We have seen many nationalist movements calling for the creation of new states—and surely it is only a matter of time before Palestine is recognised as a new state. Statehood, as measured by membership of the United Nations, has increased from 51 when the UN was established in 1945 to 193 today—an increase of almost 400%. To me, the evidence is clear: while globalisation and multilateralism may be the fashionable words of our time, do not underestimate the enduring appeal of the nation state; reports of its demise have been greatly exaggerated.

This argument about the abiding appeal of the nation state is directly relevant to the future direction of the European Union. There are those who think that national loyalties are dying and that they will

[LORD GROCOTT]

gradually transfer to a wider loyalty embracing the whole of Europe. Others—I am one of them—see the EU essentially as an organisation built by treaty from the top down and not by consent from the bottom up. No wonder its leaders are so fearful of referendums.

So my conclusion is that, yes, there is indeed a shifting world order, as we say in the title of our report, but despite all this change, what is needed most is a nurturing and strengthening of the traditional requirements of our foreign policy—namely, worldwide representation, the skills of diplomacy with whatever new tools are available and the bilateral relationships between sovereign nation states.

7.17 pm

Lord Tugendhat (Con): My Lords, like others I should like to begin by congratulating my noble friend Lord Howell not just on this report but on the whole period of his chairmanship of the International Relations Committee. He has rendered an enormous service to the House, and the continuation of the committee after he steps down will maintain that work well into the future.

The report itself is of course a timely contribution to the foreign policy debate. It comes at a time when the whole direction and basis of British foreign policy needs to be rethought as a result of Brexit, and it also comes at a time when assumptions on international relations across the world are being called into question, not just by President Trump but also by the rise of China and some of the policies that China is pursuing.

The report deals comprehensively with the issues to which these changes give rise, but it provides questions rather than answers to those issues. In so doing, I fear it exposes with alarming clarity the muddle that the United Kingdom has got itself into. That emerges in the summary to the report, with its exhortation to resist United States challenges to the multilateral system and to make defence of the rules-based international order central to our bilateral relations. I agree very strongly with that, and so do many other noble Lords. But how can one reconcile that exhortation with our departure from the most important and highly developed international organisation of which we are at present a member?

Whether or not it is good or damaging for Britain in the long run to leave the European Union is of course a matter of intense domestic debate. But there is one thing on which one has to be absolutely clear. Our decision to leave the European Union is very damaging to the European Union. It means that the European Union is losing its second-largest or third-largest member and it calls into question a number of the policies on which it is based. Some harsh words have been uttered about President Trump, but he has done nothing as damaging to the international rules-based order, or to international organisations, as that. It is something that it behoves us to remember.

Not only that, but on the basis of this report our Foreign Secretary does not seem to have grasped the full consequences of what we are doing. He is quoted as saying that the United Kingdom should be a link between the United States and Europe. I certainly

agree with that; it has been our traditional role and something that we have sought to do for a very long time. But you cannot be a link between the United States and Europe if you are weakening your relationships with your principal European partners and if you are weakening the international organisation to which they attach more importance than any other. I am of course delighted to read in the report that the Foreign Secretary wants the strongest possible partnership on foreign and security policy with like-minded European partners. That is absolutely right; we certainly do. But that is not quite the same as being a member of the European Union.

Many of us in the House will remember Ray Seitz, an outstanding ambassador to this country, and will have read his book, *Over Here*, in which he describes the basis of British influence in Washington. He explains that it is based partly on the defence and intelligence relationship that is discussed in the report and partly on our experience in different parts of the world. He emphasises the extent to which it is because we are a member of the European Union and have been able to influence the way in which the Union developed.

That, I am afraid, is not the only example of an inconsistency between what the report sensibly recommends and the direction of British foreign policy—or at any rate British policy—at present. Among the international organisations that the report mentions is one that it particularly wishes us to uphold: the WTO. That, too, is quite right; the WTO is a very important organisation and we certainly wish to support it, particularly in the light of our departure from the EU. But it is of course also the international organisation to which President Trump has perhaps done more damage than any other by, in effect, neutralising its appellate procedure. To call in aid WTO rules as an alternative to EU rules at precisely the point that the United States is undermining the WTO, as the ERG MPs and some Ministers who favour a no-deal Brexit recommend, beggars belief. I am afraid that it is another example of how the wise words of the report are at variance with what the British Government are doing.

Another is the inconsistency, to which the report rightly draws attention, between the need for the United Kingdom to strengthen its considerable soft-power assets and the Government's policy on students from abroad. Including them in the immigration target both damages our universities' ability to compete in the international market and conveys an attitude of hostility to the students and to the countries from which they come. In particular, it has damaged relations with Commonwealth countries, and above all with India. The report rightly attaches importance to the Commonwealth, and the future of the Commonwealth will depend to a great extent on the attitude taken by its largest member.

So I praise the report, and I wish only that the behaviour, policies and direction of the British Government were more in line with its recommendations.

Baroness Goldie (Con): My Lords, this is a cracking debate, as I am sure all noble Lords will agree. However, more of your Lordships are managing to disregard the advisory speaking time than are observing it—so I am in your Lordships' hands.

7.25 pm

Baroness Hilton of Eggardon (Lab): My Lords, it has been a great privilege to be a member of the committee chaired by the noble Lord, Lord Howell, and to serve with other distinguished Members of the House. We owe a great debt to our clerk, Eva George, who made sense of our often rather disordered discussions. It is a great regret that I shall be recycled at the end of June.

As has been said, our report had two main themes. The first was an examination of the shifting power balances in the world and the breakdown of a rules-based order for trade and diplomatic relations. Like my noble friend Lord Grocott, I am doubtful that such an order ever existed. It was rather that the dominance of the United States and perhaps of Europe made it seem that there was a worldwide consensus on how to conduct international relations. China, Russia and many developing nations were outside the club and always played by different rules.

Our second theme was the rise of new technology, with its means of instant communication and provision of intelligence. Traditional forms of diplomacy and statecraft often depended on personal and confidential relationships that allowed negotiations to take place behind closed doors and could ignore uncomfortable realities. It is no longer possible to ignore, for example, China's treatment of the Uighurs in Xinjiang province when aerial photographs show the vast internment camps and the destruction of ancient mosques. In the 19th century it took three months to assemble a response to the Indian mutiny. Nowadays, instant responses are expected to unfolding events, so it becomes all the more important to have well thought out and long-term strategies so that short-term tactical responses can fall within an established framework.

China has unfair trade practices, but it does take a long view and pursues collaboration with other countries. Its belt and road policy, which may still be more of an illusion than a reality, has provided much-needed infrastructure for developing countries, although it has often placed them under an insupportable burden of debt. It is also providing the groundwork for extensive trading opportunities in future.

China is changing fast. When I first visited Shanghai nearly 40 years ago, it was a dingy and down-at-heel city and our hotel had the largest cockroaches I had ever seen. Now it is a shining city of high-rise blocks and has perhaps the largest port for container ships in the world. We have to remember that 60% of the world's population lives in Asia; the USA has less than 5% and Europe has about 14%. So it is all the more important that we develop trading links with Asia.

Most worrying at present is the destabilising role of the United States, which, even without the antics of its President, is becoming ever more isolationist and protectionist. Contrary to the assumption that we have a "special relationship" with the United States, we see an ever-widening gulf in attitudes and behaviour. Its denigration of the United Nations and reluctance to join any international agreements is deeply disturbing. There is a long list of its undermining of any international consensus or treaty—withdrawal from the Convention on Climate Change, the Iran deal and, most recently, a

global deal to cut plastic waste sponsored by the United Nations. It is also limiting the scope of the World Trade Organization by failing to appoint members to the dispute resolution board, so woe betide us if we end up subject to WTO rules. It is obsessive about forcing Iran into submission while happily trading with Saudi Arabia, which has an even worse human rights record. At least in Iran women can drive cars and there are elections.

The UK's response to worsening international relations will depend in part on working with other like-minded countries, and we are about to cut ourselves off from one of the largest blocs of such nations. We still have some influence in the world by ourselves through our membership of the Commonwealth, NATO and the United Nations, despite our current chaotic politics. Our trade deals can be seen to be made free of bribery and kickbacks and we can ensure that they do not discriminate against women or ethnic minorities.

However, in respect of climate change we have not been an ideal role model. We have reduced subsidies on solar power generation, incidentally putting several small firms out of business. We are allowing fracking and prohibiting onshore wind farms. Now that the crisis of climate change is more generally recognised, I hope, as recently promised by a government Minister, that we will aim to lead the world in this and be carbon neutral by 2050. Also, as our reliance on hydrocarbons diminishes and we increase our use of renewable sources of energy, we may be able to rethink our relationship with some of the oil-producing countries.

There are other ways of showing leadership and demonstrating our values to the world—partly through our membership of international organisations, but symbolism is also important. The fact that two of our embassies flew LGBT flags on 17 May—the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia—was a valuable demonstration and gave comfort and encouragement to local activists. This display of tolerance and non-discrimination is in stark contrast to the activities of American evangelical Christians who have been active in countries such as Uganda promoting hatred and bigotry.

Overall, I am making a plea for a long-term strategic approach to current affairs, working in concert with other countries so that our reaction to events is not erratic and arbitrary and the world becomes a safer and more stable place where we can work together to deal with the greatest threat of all—climate change.

7.32 pm

Lord Ricketts (CB): My Lords, I had the privilege of serving under the noble Lord, Lord Howell, when he was a Minister in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and have appeared before him over many years in Select Committees of different shapes and sizes. I regard him as one of the most profound thinkers about international affairs in public life, so it is no surprise to me that the report from the committee he chairs is excellent. I am not a member of the committee, although I was privileged to be quoted as a witness; indeed, I find that I largely still agree with the comments attributed to me in the report, which is not always the case. Its conclusions have been reinforced in the six months

[LORD RICKETTS]

since it was produced. I will make three points and invite the Minister's comments on them, joining with what many other noble Lords have said.

My first point is about global Britain. This country is international by inheritance, instinct and interests, and we have done very well out of the 70 years of the rules-based international order. The noble Lord, Lord Grocott, is clearly right that it was never a golden age, but I could make a case that that set of rules constrained great power competition and allowed medium-sized and smaller countries to prosper and flourish over the last 70 years. My noble friend Lord Hennessy referred to a number of studies of future strategy which begin to sketch the scale of the challenge we now face—in particular, the 1960 Macmillan *Future Policy Study*. I too have come equipped with a quotation from that admirable paper which sums up our national strategy since the post-war years very well. The study concluded:

“One basic rule of British policy is clear: we must not find ourselves in a position of having to make a final choice between the United States and Europe. It would not be compatible with our vital interests to reject either one or the other, and the very fact that the choice was needed would mean the destruction of the Atlantic alliance”.

That was true in 1960 and is still true today, although many of the trends identified in the committee's report, and the fact that we are likely to be leaving the European Union, risk undermining both the pillars of the strategy set out in the 1960 report.

The scale of the challenge is considerable: we need to define a new foreign policy relationship with the European Union and adapt our partnership with Washington to the facts that the US strategic priority is now confrontation with China and that at least some US opinion is becoming impatient with multilateralism. On many key issues of the day—on the nuclear deal with Iran, trade policy and reducing carbon emissions—we find ourselves on the European side of the debate. We will have to reconcile that in the future. We will also have to reconcile our trade interests outside the EU with, for example, our human rights values in respect of Saudi Arabia and our security interests in relation to China.

In preparing for the debate, I reread the Foreign Secretary's Policy Exchange speech from last October, which sets out some admirable aspirations but is distinctly short on detail. It is not enough to produce incantations about an invisible chain to describe what we will be doing. We need an active, initiative-taking foreign policy, an excellent diplomatic service and a lot of soft power assets, but those need political leadership and initiative to make the most impact. As a recent example, the summit to tackle terrorist and extremist content online was an excellent initiative, and the inspirational Prime Minister of New Zealand, Jacinda Ardern, made the journey half way across the world to attend it and issued an excellent declaration. But why was it held in Paris and not London? I hope the Minister can put some flesh on the bones of global Britain for us.

On the future of multilateralism, the report makes it clear that all the institutions which have been so important over the last 70 years—NATO, the UN, Bretton Woods—are now all under pressure. They will all be more important to Britain if we leave the

European Union. The report recommends that we champion UN reform, and I agree, but I have not seen much detail on how the Government will go about that. For example, could we set an example by contributing more UN peacekeepers to peacekeeping operations as a mark of our commitment to the organisation? We are having the NATO summit in London later this year, which is good, but, again, we will need to lead with ideas on how to reform NATO to keep it relevant to changing US interests—in particular, paying more attention to Asian security issues.

My third point is about the new national strategy that we will need. The place to make the difficult choices and reconcile the conflicting interests is the National Security Council. That is why the recent leak was so damaging—not because the information was necessarily very highly classified, but because it undermined the trust that this council is a safe space where Ministers and their advisers can take decisions on the basis of robust argument which can be kept in confidence. We can already see the impact of that leak. What should have been a reasonably contained discussion about where Britain was going to source its equipment for 5G has now become entangled in a much wider dispute between the US and China about the future of the internet and global dominance in new technology. I fear that we are on the brink of a high-tech trade war. The fact that the action that Google felt obliged to take as a result of the listing of Huawei has caught up hundreds of millions of people in the use of their iPhones and laptops shows the scale of the issue we are confronting. That could become a serious national security issue. But for now, the leak has made it impossible to make calm and proportionate decisions about where Vodafone and BT should source their antennae for the next generation of the internet, and it is an example of why the National Security Council will operate only if everyone can trust that it will remain a secure environment.

We will face many more contentious issues than that as we tackle the problem of defining a national strategy, and we desperately need an effective National Security Council. That is a very necessary, if not a sufficient, condition of success.

7.40 pm

Lord Bates (Con): My Lords, one of the hallmarks of the International Relations Committee of your Lordships' House is the rigorous analysis and clarity of its conclusions, especially under the chairmanship of my noble friend Lord Howell. Chapter 1, paragraph 1 of the report clearly illustrates this point:

“The evidence we have taken since January confirms that the international scene is in a state of turmoil and upheaval”.

It should be noted that the January the committee refers to is of course January 2018. Recent events and developments have served only to underscore that judgment: the rising tensions in Iran, Pakistan-India, Venezuela, Libya and the US-China trade wars, to mention just a few. The report describes a worrying outlook, and the trajectory is downward.

Much attention is focused on great power tensions brought about by rising and declining powers and the shifting tectonic plates of the post-Cold War international order. Harvard Professor Graham Allison has referred

to these shifts in power as the “Thucydides Trap”, taken from the *History of the Peloponnesian War*, in which Thucydides observed that it was the rise of Athens and the fear that this inspired in Sparta that made war inevitable. Picking up his theme of the inevitability of war, Professor Allison identifies 16 times in the past five centuries when an established power has made way for an emerging power—from France to the Habsburgs, the Habsburgs to the Ottomans, and so on, up to the present day. The trap is that in 12 out of those 16 examples it resulted in war: interestingly, not intentional conflicts but almost accidental wars, in which commitments, interests, allegiances and treaties with small states on relatively small issues spiralled out of control into a global conflagration.

We can all agree that a great power conflict in the nuclear age would be catastrophic for our civilisation, let alone our planet. I argue that the primary objective of the international community should be to manage that transition in a way that avoids the abyss of the trap of war—but how? The upholding of the international rules-based order happens primarily through the United Nations and specifically the UN Security Council. However, the report points out in chapter 4 that there is a major problem here. In table 1 it lists the 42 times a permanent member has vetoed a resolution since 1990. Russia has deployed the veto on 22 occasions, the United States on 18 occasions, and China on 10. The other two permanent members, Britain and France, have not used their veto for 40 years.

This inability of the international community to act decisively to uphold the rules-based order led the UN Secretary-General to lament to the Security Council last April that there was,

“escalation, fragmentation and division as far as the eye can see with profound regional and global ramifications”,

and to declare:

“The Cold War is back—with a vengeance but with a difference”, as the old safeguards and mechanisms that managed the risk of escalation between the US and the Soviet Union in the past,

“no longer seem to be present”.

The report identifies the need for the Security Council to reform. The Government in their response agree. Yet this gives rise to the classic diplomatic Catch-22, whereby action is required to reform the great powers’ veto but the reform cannot be secured because of that veto.

We know that sparks from small fires in the current tinder-dry conditions of global affairs could give rise to a major conflagration. We know that should a fire start, it will be virtually impossible to put out, because the deployment of the fire brigade may be vetoed, as we have seen in Yemen, Syria and Myanmar. We must therefore become much more focused on conflict prevention.

Yet during my time as a Minister at DfID, I was struck by the fact that when a military or emergency humanitarian response was required, the international community could mobilise with awesome efficiency and release billions of pounds, but when conflict prevention initiatives were suggested, there was a kind of gentle smile and a tilt of the head, and we would begin fumbling down the back of the ministerial sofa for loose change.

My argument is that the international order is changing and that the risk of a great power conflict is probably at its highest for 50 years. At the same time, it is becoming more and more difficult to respond effectively through multilateral institutions, so our attention must turn to working with others on conflict prevention. Peacebuilding, peacekeeping, arbitration and conflict prevention need to become a core competence of UK foreign policy going forward, not an optional add-on. This commitment is enshrined in global goal 16. We must learn to mobilise for peace where we used to mobilise for war. Perhaps the committee might bring its considerable expertise and wisdom to bear on the subject of the effectiveness of current UK conflict prevention and peacebuilding capabilities. I would like to think so.

Two weeks ago I stood on the steps of the magnificent Peace Palace in The Hague before I set off on the final leg of my walk from Belfast to Brussels, seeking common ground. The Peace Palace is home to the International Court of Justice and the Permanent Court of Arbitration. It was the vision of Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands and Tsar Nicholas II of Russia, and stemmed from The Hague peace conference. It was a time of heady international enlightenment and optimism in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War. The ideal was that wars could be ended and disputes between nations settled through recourse to law and arbitration. The splendid Peace Palace, funded by Scottish philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, opened its doors on 28 August 1913—only to have them slammed firmly shut less than a year later as the world was plunged into the most catastrophic war in human history.

Our great blessing is that there is no heady optimism around at the moment to cloud our judgment. We will not be sleepwalking into war as we did a century ago. The international community is alert to the dangers, and this may prove to be our salvation. I do not believe that war is inevitable, but we must adapt our approach to the new realities. Above all, we must never cease to engage and exert all our influence to preserve peace, upon which all else depends.

7.47 pm

Lord Browne of Ladyton (Lab): My Lords, I am pleased to follow the noble Lord, Lord Bates, and to see him back, tanned and fit, after his walk from Belfast to Brussels, seeking common ground. Perhaps if he found common ground, he can let us into the secret of where it is, now that he is back where he should be, sharing his interesting thoughts and remarks with us. I draw your Lordships’ attention to my entry in the register of interests, particularly my vice-chairmanship of the Nuclear Threat Initiative.

I add my words of commendation, congratulation and thanks to the Select Committee on International Relations for its report, and in particular to its chair for inquiring into these important and complex issues. Under the chairmanship of the noble Lord, Lord Howell, the committee renders a great service to your Lordships’ House and particularly to the reputation this House has abroad. I know from my own conversations with international colleagues how much they respect the reports of the committees of this House, particularly that committee under its chairmanship. The evidence

[LORD BROWNE OF LADYTON]

for that is to be found not only in this report but in a report which, like the noble Lord, Lord Hannay, I hope we will be able to debate at some future point: the committee's most recent report on nuclear risk, disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation.

I have heard some fine speeches today. Many people in your Lordships' House have the ability to paint on a broad canvas but I tend to concentrate on a couple of points, which I will do in this debate. I do not think it will surprise most people who know me to learn that I intend to restrict my remarks to UK-Russia relations and to one aspect of chapter 3 of the report: new technologies, defence and security, and in particular the threats new technologies generate.

In my mind, these issues are very much related. I have chosen them because the combination of deteriorating relations and the military use of technological advances potentially poses a major challenge to our security. They are not the only aspect of new technology that will do so in future, but they are one. I remind the House that we live in the part of the world that has the vast majority of the world's nuclear weapons—well over 90%—many of which are only minutes away from use at any given time. We also live in an environment sadly dominated by the deterioration of trust and confidence, which undermines strategic stability, and by the regular military exercises happening on the border between the West and Russia, generating the potential for a crisis that could very well escalate and result in an accidental or deliberate use of these weapons.

I agree wholeheartedly with the report's recommendations on UK-Russia relations in paragraphs 84 and 85—particularly the latter, which recommends that we,

“remain open to dialogue with Russia on issues of common concern, such as counter-terrorism and nuclear non-proliferation”.

It points out what may be obvious but is worth restating: that the maintenance of “a better understanding” of Russia is fundamental to our foreign policy. The noble Lords, Lord Lamont of Lerwick and Lord Hannay, spoke about this issue but I want to speak strongly about the need for us to maintain this important dialogue with Russia.

In its evidence to the committee, the FCO stated that the Government,

“want to reduce risk, talk about our differences”,

referring to relations with Russia. However, it appears to be the Government's policy that dialogue with Russians is limited to what is absolutely necessary in the multinational context, and there appears to be an embargo on high-level contact. Incidentally, it happened when Alan Duncan—the Minister for Europe, whom I much admire—met Minister Titov at this year's Munich Security Conference. Even then, the reporting suggested that his definition of “dialogue” meant cultural exchanges and people-to-people links, not the fundamental issues we should be talking about.

On the absence of strategy, paragraph 83 takes an abstract from Dr Antonenko's evidence. She is referred to as having,

“called Western sanctions against Russia ‘a substitute for policy’”.

I tend to agree. I also tend to agree that the absence of meaningful dialogue is a substitute for policy. I argue consistently for engagement with Moscow. Of course, in doing so, I agree with the report. I am not saying that we should ignore Russian aggression, its violation of international norms and treaties—in Ukraine, for example—its interference in other countries' democratic elections, its use of chemical weapons or even the evidence to suggest that it is in violation of the INF treaty. My argument is that dialogue is an element of a policy that includes the recognition, rejection and deterrence of that sort of behaviour. It does not mean giving Russia a free pass; nor does it require that we do not promote our own interests and defend our values or our allies. Indeed, the contrary is the case. Engagement is an opportunity to do all of the above directly to the Russian leadership, and creates an opportunity for us to discuss issues of common concern.

Maintaining a meaningful level of contact with our adversaries has always been imperative for our mutual security. We understood this during the Cold War when the West, particularly the United States, was engaged in a deep ideological struggle with the Soviet Union. We understood the need to support co-operative engagement. In particular, US and Russian arms control negotiators met regularly in New York, Vienna and Geneva, and military commanders spoke regularly with their counterparts. None of that happens today. We understood that we had a joint and mutual obligation to prevent the use of nuclear weapons or the development of crises. Now, we appear to be in a downward spiral of confrontation in which dialogue is treated by us as a reward to be earned rather than a diplomatic tool to be deployed.

I am running out of time so I will not get on to my second point. What is the Government's policy on Russia? If the answer is, “Deterrence and dialogue”, who is conducting the meaningful dialogue?

7.54 pm

Baroness Meyer (Con): My Lords, I too congratulate the noble Lord, Lord Howell, and the committee on this excellent report. At a time of great uncertainty in global affairs, it is essential to examine rigorously where the national interest lies and how to safeguard it. The report is an outstanding contribution.

Our role in the world is about not only the detail of policy but the spirit in which it is carried forward. I hope that all Members of this House, whether leavers or remainers, can agree that, in foreign affairs, we should see Brexit as an opportunity, not a damage limitation exercise, and we should bring to the enterprise a spirit that is both optimistic and aggressive—in the best American sense of the word. We should also learn from the French, who are not shy about waving their flag or showing patriotism.

The other day, somebody said to me that our coming last in the Eurovision Song Contest was the result of Brexit. I replied that if you want a metaphor for our future role in Europe, take football. The European Championship and the Europa Cup have been dominated by teams from London and Liverpool. For the first time ever, and despite Brexit, all four finalists are English: passionately supported by British fans and managed, sometimes even owned, by foreigners, with multinational teams. That is my kind of Europe.

On the report, I invite my noble friend the Minister to respond on three points. First, the report urges that, after our withdrawal from the EU, we should put more resources into our relations with its member states. That is obvious common sense. However, as was stressed by the noble Baroness, Lady Coussins, who is not in her place, we need to include a stronger concentration on the learning of foreign languages—both European and others, such as Russian and Chinese. We have to develop a cadre of diplomats who can negotiate and do business in the local language. You may say, “Ah yes, but in most of these countries, anybody who matters speaks English”. Even where that is the case, if you speak the language, it is much easier to win your point, build useful relationships and understand what makes the country and its people tick. I speak from experience as someone who has lived in France and Germany and who speaks several languages. I know how different it is to go to Russia and speak Russian: you have a different relationship with people.

My second point relates to the Marshall scholarship scheme, mentioned in paragraph 38 of the report. The scheme finances around 40 of the best and brightest American students studying for a year at one of our universities. As noble Lords know, the scholarships were created after World War II to thank the United States for the generosity of the Marshall plan. For more than 60 years, the upper reaches of American government, law, business and the academy have been occupied by Marshall scholars. The scheme is very dear to my heart: for five years, every September, I and my husband hosted a reception at the Washington embassy to bid farewell to the latest group of Marshall scholars, bright-eyed with optimism and enthusiasm at the adventure they would experience.

I am delighted that the report says that we should increase our support for the Marshall scholars—of course we should. It is a seed corn investment in our most important bilateral relationship. The cost, in the grand scheme of things, is tiny. I very much hope that, perhaps during the visit of the President of the United States, we can announce that we would like to double the number of such students who come to this country every year to 100.

Finally, the report brings out well the complexities of dealing with the US under President Trump. It is unclear whether some of the features of his presidency are specific to him or are of a long-term nature. Either way, it would be prudent for the FCO to devote greater attention and resources to the development of a cadre of American specialists similar to the way in which we prepare diplomats for postings to any other big foreign power. For all the ties that bind us, the US is a foreign country that is likely to become more foreign in the years to come.

I very much hope that the Government will look favourably on these three points, as well as on the report in general. What I am proposing is not expensive—it does not require us, in that notorious phrase, to “punch above our weight”. With all the reserves of hard and soft power at our disposal, it just requires us to punch at our weight and to play to our strengths.

8.01 pm

Lord Alton of Liverpool (CB): My Lords, I too greatly welcome this timely and well-judged report from the International Relations Select Committee, and particularly the recommendations to strengthen engagement with the Commonwealth, to invest more in our global diplomatic presence, to increase the deployment of our smart power assets such as the British Council and the BBC global news, and I wholeheartedly support the commitments to the multilateral rules-based system—to the UN, NATO, the WTO and other multilateral organisations, however imperfect they may be. I also welcome the recommendation to increase engagement with regional powers across Africa, Asia and Latin America. That is particularly relevant in post-election India and Indonesia. I have three points to make.

In a world where 84% of people hold religious beliefs, I would like to have seen a reference in the report to the rise in persecution, crimes against humanity and genocide. Upholding Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is directly linked to national security, displacement and migration, stability, prosperity and other strategic concerns. As the BBC’s courageous correspondent, Lyse Doucet, has said, “If you don’t understand religion, you cannot understand the world”. It is certainly an issue that is taken seriously in Washington, and that brings me to my second point.

The committee concluded that the UK’s “bedrock” relationship with the United States is under “disturbing pressure”. Past Administrations in both countries have always been able to differ, as on occasion did Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, but it is central to this country’s interests that, notwithstanding our other relationships, we should sustain this bedrock relationship and entrench our more natural alliances such as the Five Eyes. Fevered anti-Americanism is a huge error. With this in mind, in the light of plans to allow Huawei’s investment in 5G and other Chinese investment in our national infrastructure, we should pay special attention to the remarks of Robert Spalding, the former senior director for strategy at the US National Security Council, who writing in yesterday’s *Daily Telegraph* said that to “miss the significance” of the US position would be a “grave misjudgment”.

That brings me to China. While we should seek ways to engage with China, I am concerned that the report’s summary paragraph underestimates the serious dangers posed by China’s increasingly aggressive behaviour on the world stage combined with its increasingly repressive behaviour towards its own people. Consider, for instance, China’s influence on the UN and specifically the bodies and mechanisms focusing on the promotion and protection of human rights. In its report *The Costs of International Advocacy*, Human Rights Watch says:

“China has worked consistently and often aggressively to silence criticism of its human rights record before UN bodies ... the stakes of such interventions go beyond how China’s own human rights record is addressed at the UN and pose a longer-term challenge to the integrity of the system as a whole”.

Human Rights Watch cites: cases of harassment and intimidation of UN officers, NGOs, and activists; efforts to weaken key human rights resolutions; and

[LORD ALTON OF LIVERPOOL]

opposition to any discussion of China's own human rights record. In the Brookings Institution's *China's Long Game on Human Rights at the United Nations*, Ted Piccone warns that we are at,

"the start of a more wholesale campaign to reshape the rules and instruments of the international human rights system".

More effort should be made to protect civil society organisations and activists, and to allow their safe participation at the UN. More effort should be made to radically reform the Security Council veto—a point referred to earlier in the debate by the noble Lord, Lord Bates. China's threat to use the veto or to consider its use when looking at referrals to the International Criminal Court of countries like North Korea and Burma—I declare my interests as the co-chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on North Korea and as vice-chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Burma—graphically illustrates how the rules-based international order, or at least the rule of law, can be so badly compromised.

All of this is happening when China's own human rights situation is at a critical moment. Under Xi Jinping, we have seen a rapid and significant deterioration in political rights, in freedom of religion or belief and in freedom of expression. Those who defend these rights or question in any way the dominance of the party are subject to harassment, intimidation, arbitrary detention, torture and imprisonment. Thousands of lawyers, religious adherents, journalists, academics, labour activists and students have been targeted in this way. In the context of evolving UK-China relations, evidence given to the Select Committee highlights the need for the UK to remain committed to its own values and ideals. Carrie Gracie, the former China editor at the BBC, told the committee that it was,

"very important to speak up for one's values, assert where one's red lines are and be firm about adhering to them, because one's Chinese counterpart expects that".

One glaring example is that of the mass detention of over 1 million people in Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region. Normal life for Muslims has become impossible. An excellent briefing by CSW describes what it calls the,

"already critical level of fear ... Disappearances can happen at any time, to any person, without warning. In such a climate of fear, many Uyghur Muslims have stopped public and communal religious observance and have broken off contact with relatives overseas".

Over Easter, I met a group of Uighurs. British citizens are among the many families whose relatives have disappeared into these camps. If the UK is to remain committed to its values, we must continue to speak up about the appalling situation in Xinjiang. If China fails to respect the rights of Muslims to live peaceably within its own borders, it will place at risk its own internal harmony and, overseas, its belt and road programmes.

I turn finally to Hong Kong, and I declare an interest as a patron of Hong Kong Watch. We must not forget the ongoing importance of the UK's commitment to Hong Kong under the Sino-British joint declaration. Last month, I met two young graduates

who were among the 100,000 people who in early May joined protests against proposals to amend the city's extradition laws. Hong Kong's International Chamber of Commerce says that these will have an,

"adverse impact on Hong Kong as a place to live and work, and to continue growing as a major international business center".

If we fail to act, we will be passive witnesses to the most grievous breach of the joint declaration since the handover. I hope that the Minister will make a clear statement on that in his remarks.

Not for the first time, the noble Lord, Lord Howell, has done us all a great service by giving us this opportunity to debate an important report. I join with others in expressing great admiration for his unstinting and sustained service to the House.

8.08 pm

The Lord Bishop of Winchester: My Lords, I thank the noble Lord, Lord Howell, for bringing this debate and chairing the Select Committee that produced this excellent report. I declare an interest, having spent 12 years as general secretary of the Oxford-based CMS—historically the Anglican mission society—working across 50 countries, and prior to that six years working with an indigenous Africa-wide Anglican mission society based in Nairobi. My diocese has companion links with the Anglican provinces of Burundi, DR Congo, Rwanda, Uganda and Myanmar, and growing links with Chile. I was born in Tanzania, grew up partly in Kenya and still have a home near Thika.

Early on, the report endorses the rules-based framework for international relations and emphasises three contributory dimensions in which the rules operate: the political aspect of liberal democratic nation states; the economic aspect of the increasing globalisation of economic relations; and the diplomatic expectation of peaceful change. While endorsing the significance of this framework and noting the strength of commitment to the rules-based international system, or RBIS, in the responses of HM Government to the report's 66 recommendations, I add the need to re-emphasise the place of education in soft power, the place of religion in transnational civil society and the contribution of the voluntary sector to fostering mutual development in a shared world. These strengthen the realistic assessment of physical and cyber security, trade relations, human rights and maritime communications, which all contribute to a peaceful world order.

My main point is that a greater emphasis on the soft power of higher and further education, on the religious and civil aspects of society and on voluntary agencies for mutual support actually strengthens the RBIS framework but also begins a transition towards new ways of working. In a world where everything is highly connected through modern communications, and where there can be a dramatic influence by the local on the global and vice versa, the rules-based framework is shifting in its emphasis. In whatever way we interpret this shift, alternative perspectives are shaping our thinking, drawing on cosmopolitan ideals, global governance models and international covenants. I am not proposing any of these, but they should influence our thinking when our world is now more polycentric, informal media voices count and values are increasingly central.

I therefore welcome the general impression given by the Government's response to this report. There is a sense of new openness and reinvestment in our international relations. Alongside the recognition of major changes in the reality of our relationships with Europe, the USA, China, Russia and India, there is also an affirmation of the importance of middle-ranking powers in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The commitment to invest in new positions, the language audit and the establishment of new missions all indicate a positive engagement. Cross-departmental working is also most welcome.

My reflections are therefore limited to the three points I highlighted earlier. First, in continuing to promote soft power, I again advocate for the importance of the UK's higher and professional education offer to the wider world. By its nature, higher education is one of those aspects of cultural engagement that allows for a real mutuality, and therefore a re-evaluation of the British perspective and its contribution to other nations through its education of those who will lead and build societies elsewhere. My own portfolio of interests from these Benches includes further and higher education. I therefore again advocate for a more informed approach to the PR impact of including student numbers in the immigration figures. We lose the chances of sharing, through higher education, our liberal democratic perspectives if students are put off from coming earlier on. The numbers are going in the wrong direction, and the influence we might have had is diminishing. Our world-class education might therefore not be accessed by some of the best minds in the world. However, I note that the Government intend to increase international scholarships and professional bursaries. These will certainly enable the kind of future relationships the report proposes.

Secondly, I suggest that in a world where up to 80% of people are committed to a religion or belief, it is vital that our policy of international relationships includes an expertise and engagement with what motivates billions of people, framing their personal and social aspirations. There are literally billions of Christians and Muslims and millions of Hindus, Buddhists and members of other religions. This dimension of human life is not confined to the private; it is public, social and transnational, and a core element of civil society. From a Christian perspective, I know well the importance of the Catholic Church and the networks of the Anglican Communion, which stretch across over 160 countries. I therefore warmly welcome the recent draft report from the Bishop of Truro looking at the persecution of Christians worldwide. This not only points up a key dimension of human rights but shows the need for greater religious literacy about what people are prepared to live and die for in the contexts of their countries and nations. People seek change and vote for change mostly on the basis of deeply held convictions. Our understanding of politics and how these shape our global economics cannot be separated from the tap-roots of the religious beliefs that people who construct these imaginations draw on and express. I therefore urge that religious literacy is a language that could be invested in as part of this new openness to international relations.

Lastly, I was a little surprised not to see an emphasis on the importance of the voluntary or charitable sector's contribution to international relationships, particularly in connection with the UN sustainable development goals. These goals represent an advance on the millennium goals that had a real and practical impact on questions of global poverty and health. There are 17 goals; they start with "no poverty" and conclude with,

"revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development".

In my own diocese, we are encouraging a new emphasis on global citizenship, particularly in Church of England schools. These 17 goals capture something of what it means for us to work together across the world for a common future, recognising that we are all citizens of this one planet. I would like to have seen in the report and the Government's response a greater recognition of the SDGs in connection with the references to NGOs. Linking back to my second point, I also suggest that an 18th goal needs to be added—religious freedom for global good—so that we can harness the resources of religious communities locally and transnationally to tackle some of the greatest global challenges, not least that of climate change, which is now a shared crisis and is presenting itself in the clear threat of species extinction and predictions of sea-level rises.

I congratulate the new Secretary of State for International Development, Rory Stewart, on his appointment and hope he will consider these points in collaboration with his colleagues in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office as they shape our foreign policy in a shifting world order.

8.16 pm

Lord Marlesford (Con): My Lords, how lucky the House of Lords is to have had this committee, and how lucky the committee is to have had my noble friend Lord Howell as its first, very distinguished, chair. I intend to focus on just two points on the challenge to the rules-based international order: economic migration and political Islam. First, I want to suggest how this rules-based order needed to come about.

Economic progress and prosperity in much of the world comes, as it always has, from investment in technology advances by entrepreneurs, who have the freedom, opportunity and inclination to take financial risks, with the consequent personal profit from success or loss from failure. It is not a coincidence that the transistor was devised in Bell Labs. The Americans first of all thought that its main use would be in hearing aids. It took Mr Ibuka, who founded Sony, to open the door for the widest use of the transistor. I suppose what I have said is a simple-minded definition of capitalism; of course, in Beijing, it is known as "socialism with Chinese characteristics".

This progress and prosperity, however, can be threatened by political instability. Political stability requires security, predictability and acceptance by populations of the form of government that they endure—or perhaps, preferably, enjoy. For a century, from the publication of Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*, economic progress was largely generated in Europe, then, after the American civil war, for a magical half-century in the newly formed USA. Europe's

[LORD MARLESFORD]

colonial era and the British Empire promoted and sustained world growth, although that was on the back of some shameful exploitation. It was from these challenges that the need arose for a rules-based international order.

The great advances from electronic technology—the digital age—have provided amazing opportunities in the half-century from 1960. As the report suggests, the great benefits also brought high social and political costs. The instant worldwide availability of virtually all information has enriched lives and reduced inequality to an amazing extent. Interpersonal communications, once an expensive luxury for the affluent, are now available at virtually zero marginal cost for most of the world.

However, the arrival of electronically facilitated terrorism has resulted in one of the biggest non-productive, disrupting and destabilising use of resources, for which the opportunity cost has probably been comparable with conventional warfare. The emergence of social media has played a major and almost wholly irresponsible role in fanning the flames of discontent, with the consequent alienation of people from their political leaders and widespread disillusion with the political process.

One disrupting factor has been uncontrolled migration. It was triggered by refugees from the political instability in the Middle East which followed the Arab spring. It has morphed into economic migration, mainly from sub-Saharan Africa, driven by market forces. The attraction for people in poor countries of the much higher standard of living and better opportunities in the developed world, particularly the United States and Europe, has proved irresistible.

It is becoming ever clearer that the EU, with neither the political support nor the capacity to process, let alone absorb, the scale of migration, needs an alternative strategy. I shall mention a proposal for immigration into the EU which I have put forward before: the designation, with a UN mandate authorised by the Security Council, of a large holding area—probably in north Africa—to which refugees could go. There, they could be assessed and helped; some would go home, some would go where they wanted to and some would remain. In the long run, we might even form a new state, which one might call Refugia. I recognise it is a difficult project, but I believe it is well worth trying.

I want to say a word finally about political Islam, which is perhaps the biggest threat today to a rules-based international order. Authoritarian secular government can be far from democracy, but it can morph into democracy. Political Islam aims, through jihad, to replace secular government with theocracy, which is the antithesis of democracy and by definition precludes it. A key thread has been the Muslim Brotherhood. Based on Sunni 18th-century Wahhabi teaching, it was established in Egypt in 1928, and still operates there today; only last week, it blew up a bus full of tourists near the Pyramids.

The Islamist threat met crisis level with the emergence of Islamic State in July 2014, which swept through much of Iraq and Syria. Its declared aim was the eventual replacing of nation states with a world caliphate. ISIS was defeated in March this year after military action,

and its leader, al-Baghdadi, remains at large, threatening worldwide vengeance. Building on decades of Wahhabi finance through Saudi Arabia and Qatar, ISIS, with its affiliates, has established a large number of widespread, rapidly growing, highly malignant jihadist tumours which, by penetrating national Governments, are still threatening world peace and prosperity.

8.24 pm

Lord Bilimoria (CB): My Lords, when I came to this country in the early 1980s as a 19 year-old student from India, Britain was known as the sick man of Europe. It had no respect in the world. A country which had a great empire was going nowhere. In a recent article, James Landale wrote:

“William Gladstone, said that his first principle of foreign policy was ‘good government at home’ ... countries with a strong sense of national identity, a healthy economy and a stable political leadership with a clear agenda tend to have good foreign policies ... I am not sure Britain quite lives up to that ideal”.

I congratulate the noble Lord, Lord Howell, and his committee on this outstanding report, *UK Foreign Policy in a Shifting World Order*. It is the sort of committee and the sort of report that makes the world look at the House of Lords and respect it. It says right up front that,

“a harsher and more inward-looking America, a shrinking political centre-ground in much of Europe, a more aggressive Russia ... the collapse of some regimes in the Middle East ... and China”, wanting its time in the sun are a challenge. Then the report goes straight into global Britain. This is the whole challenge. Sir Simon Fraser, the former head of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office said that,

“he could not ‘think of any time in my career when there has been less clarity, frankly, about the purposes and objectives of British foreign policy”.

My noble friend Lord Ricketts, who spoke earlier, was,

“‘disappointed at the lack of an energetic, active, distinctive British foreign policy in the last couple of years’. He thought Brexit was ‘distracting enormously from that’. Dr Haass said that ‘among the foreign policy elites—or the foreign policy establishment ... the British role is seen as having been downsized and likely to continue that way, and that Brexit reinforces that”.

In a speech in October, the Foreign Secretary spoke about his vision of the invisible chain. He openly said that,

“while the UK ‘may not be a superpower’, it was ‘probably the best-connected of the major powers in the world’. Through ‘our links with the Commonwealth, the transatlantic alliance, our European friends, and”’,

one could go on, and then he talked about shared values.

Given our size and nuclear power relationship, there is a country that the report talks about, which is India. It is the largest country in the Commonwealth and a growing economic powerhouse, and we should take it far more seriously. We have just had the largest democratic event in the history of the world: there were 900 million voters in the Indian election. The results will be declared on 23 May. Are we taking India, an emerging global power regionally that has the whole world looking it, as seriously as we should? The report states:

“The FCO said the UK’s relationship with India was ‘central to our aspirations”’,

and Mr Roy-Chaudhury pointed out,

“other countries are assiduously seeking to engage with India and they appear to offer more than the UK ... is able to commit to”.

As the founding chairman of the UK India Business Council, I have seen this first-hand in the way we have treated India. I accompanied Prime Minister Blair, Prime Minister Brown and Prime Minister Cameron—twice—to India and I was there when Prime Minister Theresa May was there in 2016. She asked India to take back Indians who had overstayed in Britain. That is no way to build a relationship. She did not even meet the universities delegation when we were there. Britain increased the minimum salary for IT workers from India, a great services export, by 50% the week before she left. Just before that, Britain reduced the cost of a two-year multiple entry visa for business and tourist visitors from China from £350 to £85, and in India to this day it is four times the price. The report says very clearly that international students must be removed from the net migration figures. Does the Minister agree? The number one reason why international students do not choose the UK as their number one choice is the lack of postgraduate work opportunities. We are beaten by Canada, Australia and America. We need to bring back the two-year postgraduate work visa.

This year is the centenary of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in Amritsar by Brigadier-General Dyer, for which Britain has never apologised. The Prime Minister had the opportunity, including on the anniversary itself, to apologise, and she did not. Why can the British Government not apologise for this monstrous act, as Churchill put it? It was nothing short of murder, as my mother put it, of innocent men, women and children, Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims alike.

The report talks about the Commonwealth. Sir Ciarán Devane, head of the British Council, said that the Commonwealth “gives us something extra”. India now has a major role to play in powering the Commonwealth ahead. I know the noble Lord, Lord Howell, is a great champion of the Commonwealth.

Many witnesses talked about Europe. The report is not focused on Europe, but it states:

“Britain’s first circle of interest and influence, even outside the EU, will be via Europe ... continental Europe [is] our first line of defence and interest”.

Sir Simon Fraser said that,

“our policy naturally aligns with that of other European countries”.

Then we come to defence. The report talks a lot about soft power but also about hard power. Soft power is useless without hard power. We have just celebrated the 70th anniversary of NATO, to which our country is the second highest contributor after America. However, our defence spending is 2% of GDP, whereas America spends 3.5%. I think we should spend over 3% of GDP on our defence, as that would make our position even stronger.

The report also talks about how badly the Foreign Office is resourced, with an expenditure of only £1.95 billion. The noble Lord, Lord Ricketts, said that the FCO’s budget was “far too low”, and Sir Simon Fraser described it as having been “hollowed out”. Regarding the influence that we have as a country, we are a permanent member of the UN Security Council, the G7, the G8, the Commonwealth, the G20, NATO

and the EU. We have phenomenal influence and yet we have had setbacks, with, as the report points out,

“the loss of a British judge on the International Court of Justice for the first time in the Court’s history”.

The decision to leave the European Union will contribute to how we are perceived.

One soft power element is our universities. As a proud university chancellor, I have said that they are one of our strongest assets. The British Council has highlighted 55 world leaders who have studied at UK universities, and the Chevening scholarship scheme is absolutely phenomenal in boosting our soft power. Professor James Mayall, who, like me, is a fellow of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, has co-authored a book entitled *Values in Foreign Policy: Investigating Ideals and Interests*. In it he says:

“For several generations, governments have claimed that their foreign policy is based on a value system, and that they behave ethically in their dealings with foreign countries”.

I think that we do behave ethically in our dealings with foreign countries.

The FCO has three strategic objectives: first, to protect our people; secondly, to project our global influence; and, thirdly, to promote our prosperity. Yet, what is Britain if we leave the European Union? The Brexiteers talk about “global Britain”. I believe that we will have a loss in influence. One of the key tests that was not sufficiently covered by the report is security. Will we be able to reach agreement with the EU’s security agents, such as Europol? Will we have access to the Schengen Information System database and will we be able to benefit from the Prüm arrangements? We used one database over 500 million times in one year. Will we be able to shape Europe’s foreign policy, as we have been able to do, and will any trust be left between us and Europe if we leave the European Union? We are already losing our important positions in the world. There is no question but that we will be greatly diminished.

I conclude by congratulating the noble Lord once again on his outstanding report. This little country, with 1% of the world’s population, powers ahead. In spite of these three wretched years following the referendum, we are doing very well. Just imagine: if we can remain in the European Union, we will be able to greatly enhance our foreign policy in a shifting world order.

8.32 pm

Baroness Helic (Con): My Lords, our era is characterised by disruption, change and unpredictability, at home as well as abroad. There is an acute need for reason, tolerance and knowledge of history to overcome the challenges that we face, yet the politics of the moment seem dominated by those who display quite the opposite.

As a student examining the period between the two world wars, I struggled to understand how a whole generation of political leaders could sleepwalk into conflict. I am not suggesting that we will finish like that generation, but at times we too seem to be sleepwalking into the unknown, amid a ferment of populism, nationalism and identity politics.

Foreign policy should always be rooted in an understanding of the world as it is, but it should also be inspired by a vision of the world as we wish it to

[BARONESS HELIC]

be—what my noble friend Lord Hague of Richmond eloquently described as idealism tempered by realism. It seems to me that one of the harmful effects of the Brexit debate is that it has clouded both our idealism and our realism. I fear that we lack a clear vision of where our interests lie and are inconsistent in our defence of human rights and democratic values. We are at something of a turning point as a country. In a more competitive and dangerous international landscape, we face the question: how do we best protect our citizens and open up opportunity for future generations?

In my view, the nations that will do best in the shifting world order will be those that can capitalise on deep values-based alliances, the widest possible network of diplomatic and economic partnerships, robust national security defences, and the attractive power and moral authority of an open, democratic society. Few countries have more of these in-built advantages than the United Kingdom. If and when other Governments depart from democratic values, the answer is not to become more like them but to double down on the best of our country. Pessimists will point to the darkening international environment and the actions of our closest ally, the United States. It is true that the United States Government are currently attempting to impose their own preferences on the world alone or, as in the case of their Iran policy, supported mostly by undemocratic countries that make fragile long-term allies. If the US enters a conflict with Iran, it will quickly feel the need for transatlantic allies. In my view, the Administration are being reckless by failing to carry European and NATO partners with them on critical matters of international peace and security.

I agree with my noble friend Lord Jopling's wise words on President Trump's visit to the United Kingdom. If I were to meet the President, which of course is highly unlikely, I would tell him that I grew up looking up to the United States; to those of us living without democracy, it was the country we wanted to know and emulate. Yet today it is a country that many fear. You never achieve your aims in foreign policy when you are feared, but only when others aspire to join you, to bridge differences and to share your objectives as their own—where they want to stand shoulder to shoulder with you.

It was a huge pleasure for me to work with my noble friend Lord Howell—who I have learned so much from and admire enormously—as well as my colleagues on the committee. I thank the dedicated committee staff for their contribution to this report. In my view, it has four conclusions. The first is the urgent need for major national investment in the foreign policy of the United Kingdom, and thus an increase in the budget of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. We need to be present and influential in more places and we need the maximum diplomatic firepower to do that. As a country, we settled long ago that we needed to spend 2% of our national wealth on defence and 0.7% on international development. The budgets of both increase automatically as the economy grows. Diplomacy alone is on a declining trend, yet it is diplomacy that will stop us having to spend billions in costly wars and humanitarian aid when conflict prevention fails.

Secondly, since the end of the Cold War, the western alliance has lost the habit of thinking and acting as one on long-term strategic issues, as the Huawei question shows. I hope the Minister also agrees that recovering a sense of joint purpose and mutual strength through the transatlantic alliance should be a major focus of British foreign policy over the coming decade. The way our allies backed us after the Russian attack in Salisbury demonstrated the value of the NATO alliance. Our unity is what our adversaries fear most and we must preserve and build on it.

My third conclusion is the need for human rights to run through the DNA of all our actions overseas. I am not naive. We always have to strike a balance between interests and values, but the pressures of Brexit and need for trade have tipped this in the wrong direction. I believe our relationships with some countries are overdue a recalibration to put greater emphasis on human rights while maintaining important security interests. It is vital that we do not give an impression of weakness.

This week, the Foreign Secretary appointed a diplomat as a special envoy for human rights. While I hope this bolsters the UK's overall efforts, I remember this question coming up during my time at the Foreign Office. When it was put to the then Foreign Secretary, my noble friend Lord Hague, he had a clear answer: the Minister for Human Rights should be the Foreign Secretary. Human rights are not a portfolio. They are indivisible from all foreign policy decisions and bilateral relationships, whether that is the Foreign Secretary raising the incarceration of Muslims in China, the Minister for the Middle East lobbying for the release of women prisoners in Saudi Arabia, or the Minister for Europe pressing for an independent inquiry into the murder of the journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia in Malta.

Fourthly, as our report recognises, “global Britain” remains largely a slogan. I agree with the underlying intention, which is our commitment to projecting influence on a global basis, but actions speak louder than words. It is time to assemble a coherent set of policies to make that a reality, drawing together all our national advantages, investing in diplomacy and intelligence as well as defence and development, placing greater emphasis on NATO and other key bilateral relationships—for instance with Japan—and maintaining the closest possible security and foreign policy co-operation with our European allies.

8.39 pm

Lord Kerr of Kinlochard (CB): My Lords, it is a pleasure to follow the noble Baroness, Lady Helic, who speaks with great authority. It is also a great pleasure to join the chorus of congratulations to the noble Lord, Lord Howell, on this excellent report and his tenure as chairman of the committee. And it is a great pleasure to welcome back the noble Lord, Lord Bates, and to see that he has walked back into our debates in cracking form, no longer having to try to answer people like me. It is a pleasure to say how much I agree with the noble Lord, Lord Browne, on dialogue with Russia, the noble Lord, Lord Bates, on conflict prevention, and the noble Lord, Lord Lamont, on how to handle Iran.

John Bolton, United States national security adviser, famously said that if the UN building in New York lost its top 10 storeys, it would not make a blind bit of difference. Bolton rejects the concept of international law and that of international organisations, which he sees as a threat to US national stability. He does not agree with me and the noble Lord, Lord Lamont, about Iran; he has advocated the pre-emptive bombing of Iran and wants regime change there, as well as in Syria, Libya, Venezuela, Cuba, Yemen and North Korea. His is a rather Hobbesian world where national sovereignty rules; he is a bit like the noble Lord, Lord Grocott, on speed.

Noble Lords: Oh!

Lord Kerr of Kinlochard: I am sorry. If the noble Lord, Lord Grocott, was here, I would have said that, but since he is not in his place, I did not say it.

Bolton is his President's man: the President's views are very close to Bolton's. The problem with the President is not the one discussed by two or three noble Lords in this debate—his unpredictability. He is all too predictable. Read the inaugural speech. The report from the noble Lord, Lord Howell, helpfully reminds us of the General Assembly speech last year, in which the President said:

"We reject the ideology of globalism ... Around the world, responsible nations must defend against threats to sovereignty not just from global governance",

but other threats as well. Global governance is a threat to the nation state. No wonder Orbán was warmly received in the White House last week. No wonder Bolsonaro is the poster boy. No wonder Mrs Merkel is so disliked. No wonder Trump's America is out of the Paris accords, the Iran nuclear deal, the UN Human Rights Council, UNESCO and the Trans-Pacific Partnership. No wonder the President is seeking to destroy the WTO body, and is very close to succeeding. It is all too predictable; he told us what to expect from the start.

I used to think there were two pre-eminent threats to the rules-based system—the Bretton Woods system, or the UN system. The one that worried me most in my Foreign Office days was the reluctance of the transatlantic partners—our side of the Atlantic just as much as the Americans—to accept the need to take proper account of the rise of Asia and the Pacific and acknowledge that our weighting in these institutions must decline as our share of the world economy shrank. We were very reluctant to accept that and did so far too slowly. We have not yet really fully accepted it.

More recently, I worried more about whether the system might break down because the ethos of the institutions, rooted so firmly in our ideas about liberal democracy, might come to seem inimical and interfering in regions of the world such as Africa, which are possibly more attracted to a more authoritarian alternative model such as the Chinese model. That is a real risk today.

However, I missed the biggest threat. I did not spot that the greatest challenge to the rules-based system would come from its greatest beneficiary, America. President Trump does not want to reform the institutions. He does not like them; he does not like rules—not if they might bind America. With respect, the Government's

response to the Select Committee's report seems to be in denial about this. The committee said, I thought uncontroversially:

"In the context of the ... Administration's hostility to multilateralism, the UK will need to work with like-minded nations to move ahead on some global issues without US participation or support".

However, the Government are not so sure about that. Their reply says:

"The Government will always seek close cooperation with the US on a full range of issues".

Of course, but the Foreign Secretary told the committee that,

"the way that ... large multilateral organisations work at present does not work",

for the US, and that it is,

"seeking to change that ... But I firmly believe that if we can get the ... reforms",

to the institutions,

"we want ... President Trump would be a big supporter of that system".

Yes, like working with the Luftwaffe in 1941 to restructure London's built environment. The President of the United States wants to bring down the system, not reform it. I wonder how well the Foreign Secretary knows Mr Bolton. It sounds to me as if he might be closer to Dr Pangloss.

I agree with the noble Lords, Lord Jopling and Lord Anderson, about the need to be courteous when the President comes to London, but I hope we will not pull our punches. I served in Washington and I understand the importance of the relationship, but like the noble Lord, Lord Lamont, I think that it has to be based on honesty. I watched Margaret Thatcher handle Ronald Reagan. He respected her because of her insistence on tackling the difficult issues and on plain speaking. If we believe in multilateralism and the rules-based system we must defend them even when the attack comes from our closest ally. We must tell him why and tell him straight. Fudging it, as in the Government's reply to the committee's report, would mean forfeiting America's respect—not just America's.

But it is not only on transatlantic relations that the Government's response comes across as a little bland and Panglossian. I thought that the noble Lord, Lord Howell, was absolutely right to send a rather sharp reply to the response in his letter of 3 April. For me the clock struck 13 times when I got to page 20 of the response and read that post-Brexit global Britain will be,

"using soft power to project our values and demonstrating that the UK is open, outward facing and confident on the world stage. The UK will lead on issues that matter"—

presumably we will leave the unimportant ones to the Chinese and the Americans—

"be an innovative and inviting economy; and a normative power setting global standards that uphold our values".

A trace of hubris? The tone rang a bell with me. It was in *Pravda* in 1968 when I was in Moscow. The Soviet Union was the world leader—the "normative power"—with the world communist movement applauding and the grateful Czechs cheering the Red Army's tanks taking away Dubček. No one who read *Pravda* believed it; no one who wrote *Pravda* believed it.

[LORD KERR OF KINLOCHARD]

Yes, soft power is a huge UK strength, but for its optimal exercise it is best not to be an international laughing stock. Do we honestly think that the Brexit process and paralysis makes us look, “open, outward facing and confident”?

Do we honestly think that the world sees us as the next global leader on the issues that matter—the “normative power” setting global standards? Perhaps the world has not noticed the humiliations of the backstop, condemning us to follow standards set outside our frontiers while no longer having any say. Perhaps no one has spotted how our influence on global rules will shrink when we leave the Union, which is currently setting the pace in global regulatory standard setting. Is it not a little incongruous to preach the virtues of rules-based free trading systems while planning to leave the world’s largest? I feel sorry for my FCO successors who have to write such stuff. I was luckier.

Twenty years ago, the Commonwealth countries took us seriously because through the Lomé Convention process we were fighting their corner in Brussels and winning. The Americans took us seriously because more enlightened Administrations then supported the EU enlargement process, on which we were leading in Brussels and succeeding. Brussels took us seriously because it was believed that we could bring the Americans along, and sometimes we did. My successors must know that if one pillar of the mutually reinforcing tripod collapses, the others crack too. John Bolton cheers and the Kremlin smirks, but global Britain shrinks. It is not too late to stop the march of self-marginalisation and I hope that we will.

Baroness Goldie: My Lords, I cannot help noticing that while the cat was away, time has slipped a bit. We are slipping back again and I respectfully remind all your Lordships of the advisory time limit of seven minutes. Some have been very good at observing that and, in fairness, perhaps your Lordships could all attempt to do the same.

8.50 pm

Lord Dobbs (Con): My Lords, I add my own praise and thanks to the committee for its outstanding report and to its chairman, my noble friend Lord Howell. I am simply in awe of the task that they have taken on and succeeded so well in, so it might seem a little impertinent of me to point to one area where the report does not quite get it right. That is in its emphasis, which has been mentioned by the noble Lord, Lord Grocott, and so many others, on a rules-based international order. There is nothing wrong with that in principle, of course, but sadly we have not been honouring it in practice.

When the Berlin Wall was pulled down, it seemed that democracies were totally ascendant. History had come to an end, we were told. But in the generation since then, what has happened? Politics has happened, and violence. In 2003, we invaded Iraq. Almost the entire world believes that we did that not on the basis of the rules of the international order which we talk about but on the basis of a lie. It was an abuse, like the bad old days of empire; that is how it seemed to much of the world. Sadly, we did not learn the lesson. In 2011, we bombed Libya. Chaos escalated and then

we turned our back. It is ironic that in the cases of Saddam Hussein and Gaddafi, these two leaders had actually given up their weapons of mass destruction. I wonder what lesson Kim Jong-un takes from that as we demand he gives up his weapons—and he watches the old footage of Saddam and Gaddafi being dragged to their deaths from their hidey-holes in the ground.

Undaunted, however, we were still at it again—almost—in Syria. The cry went up: “Assad is evil. Something must be done”—so bomb yet another distant country and then we can go back to sleep, comfortable with our consciences once again. Yet in the eyes of most of the world, none of that had anything to do with a rules-based international system. In the end, we did not bomb Assad. He is still there, yet we refuse to talk to him. Noble Lords have pressed Ministers time and again because if his regime was part of the problem, then it is probably also part of the solution. Yet nothing, even though he runs a country that is supposedly of great strategic significance to us. We talked to Stalin, to Mao and to Idi Amin. We even talk to Putin, who murders his own opponents on our streets. We talk to them all because we realise that sometimes our own national interest requires us to get our hands a little dirty—but not with Assad. I simply cannot understand why, unless it is a reluctance in high places to admit to a desperate failure of policy that is apparent to almost everyone else.

We have fiddled and fumbled in the Middle East. We launched wars in the Middle East to make the streets of London safe for our own. That was one of the original justifications, but we are under attack today more than ever. Yesterday the Home Secretary revealed that the security services have foiled 19 terrorist attacks in the last two years alone, and that the tempo of terrorist activity is increasing. Our failures have contributed to a vast tide of refugees trying to flee to Europe. I do not blame the refugees; we ourselves should shoulder much of the blame.

We need to step back—to stop scouring the world for injustice and crying, “Something must be done”. We simply do not have the power at times to change things for the better. At times, and perhaps too frequently, we have ended up making things worse. If that has been the defence of a rules-based international order, I no longer understand what those rules are. Britain has immense resources, particularly in soft power. My noble friend Lord Bates put it in very fine words: “mobilise for peace”. We have our generosity; we are such a generous nation. We have our language, our universities, our vibrant culture, our historic links and our deep-seated democratic values of fair play and tolerance. But we need to give those values a better outing. There is a challenge in that, of course. Right now we are not doing so great with the democracy thing on the domestic front. We need to practise, not just preach. That leads me to one final word of advice for those who decide our foreign policy: look at yourself in the mirror before staring others in the eye, then re-read this excellent report.

8.56 pm

Lord Chartres (CB): My Lords, it is indeed an excellent report, which analyses the reasons why the world order is shifting. However, behind the turbulence,

the growth of great powers and the decline of others, two great factors have led to profound shifts in human history: climate change and human migration. At the beginning of the 19th century, Europe had 20% of the world's population; at the same time Africa had 11%. Now it is about 10%—of a much larger number—for Europe; Africa is already 15% and because of the demographic profile it is quite likely to have 25% of the world's population by the middle of this century. As Europe is, in some of its parts, hardly reproducing itself while there are millions of talented, underemployed young people in neighbouring regions, we are not even at the end of the beginning of migration pressures. This is a huge challenge.

One thing the UK can be most proud of is our determination to maintain a really substantial overseas aid budget. Focusing it more sharply, with our European allies—many of whom have made the same analysis and are looking in the same direction—on something like an ambitious Marshall plan for Africa makes ethical, economic and political good sense in present circumstances. I paid a very instructive visit to Uganda last year as a trustee of the Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust, supported by the Department for International Development and using the Commonwealth network, of which the noble Lord, Lord Howell, is such a champion and advocate.

The Commonwealth network has been used to confront challenges in fields such as, in our case, eye health in India, the Pacific, the Caribbean and especially Africa. As a result, the achievements have been astonishing. In Uganda, for example, the scourge of blindness caused by trachoma has been largely eliminated as a result of this UK and Commonwealth-supported initiative. In Uganda it is very obvious that the huge Chinese investment in the country, especially in its infrastructure, is enormous and growing. It is also clear that the dividends for local workers are very limited, since even in road building the Chinese imported their own labour. The Department for International Development has more than 40 staff members in the country but, to echo one of the points made in the report, it was far from obvious that there was real integration in the work of the various UK agencies in the country under the leadership of the high commission.

It was also very disappointing from the point of view of our soft power influence that the hugely successful programme to identify and encourage cohorts of Queen's Young Leaders, a programme that now embraces every one of the 53 countries of the Commonwealth, received so little recognition and follow-up from the high commission. We were able to convene a hugely impressive Ugandan cohort of young entrepreneurs and social activists: their very positive experience of their UK programme makes them potential bridge builders, but underexploited ones.

Like my noble friend Lord Alton, I too was disappointed that one aspect of the shifting world order that has followed the fading of our unipolar moment was largely omitted from the Select Committee's report—that is, of course, the growing salience of religious networks and convictions. The various great wisdom traditions and religions of the world have underexploited potential in the work of peace building, just as they are at the same time certainly, and often

for ill, at the very centre of intrastate conflicts, especially those that are about the identity of threatened groups. Respect for international law and treaty commitments must, of course, be a key foreign policy objective—that should be beyond debate—but I want to follow the noble Lord, Lord Dobbs, and say that as we invest in supporting that aspiration, it is extremely important that we equip ourselves to be in dialogue with networks that could possibly be of use to us. We must learn the humility, the literacy and the knowledge that will equip us to participate as equals in dialogue—such a participation as our recent behaviour has put in doubt. In all, this is a very good basis for a serious discussion about our future foreign policy objectives. I thank the noble Lord, Lord Howell, and his team.

9.03 pm

Lord Cormack (Con): My Lords, it is a pleasure to follow the noble and right reverend Lord, Lord Chartres. How delighted I am that he translated to the Cross Benches when he ceased to be Bishop of London.

We are greatly in my noble friend Lord Howell of Guildford's debt. He is a wise man of balanced judgment and real foresight, and his committee's report reflects that. It is a sad paradox that, when we have in your Lordships' House such an admirable committee so brilliantly led, we have a foreign policy that is rather adrift, with political leaders who have not been able to match the professionalism of what is still probably the finest Diplomatic Service in the world. So bravo for the House of Lords having such a splendid international affairs committee, and would that the Government listened a little more carefully—I share some, although not all, of the strictures that the noble Lord, Lord Kerr of Kinlochard, referred to when talking about the government response.

I want to focus on just two or three things. First, I take up the point so admirably made by my noble friend Lord Jopling at the beginning of the debate when he talked of the forthcoming state visit. It is essential that, when the Head of State of our greatest ally, invited by our greatly respected Head of State, comes to this country, he is politely received—especially bearing in mind that he will be attending the D-day commemorations to mark the hundreds of thousands of young Americans who gave their lives in the Second World War. But there is one thing that I would like to ask of my noble friend the Minister, for whom we all have a very real respect, and it is this. Can we please even at this late stage—the programme is still being worked out—invite the President of the United States to meet a group of parliamentarians at least, even if it is just the committee of my noble friend Lord Howell of Guildford and the equivalent committee in the other place, although I would rather it was a larger group than that? For the leader of the greatest democracy in the world to come to the country that perhaps has the proudest democratic reputation in the world and not meet parliamentarians seems a grave omission. We do not have to pay attention to what certain people might have said in the other place in order to bring that about in this place.

Another point I wish to take up, which has been made by a number of noble Lords, including perhaps most forcefully by the noble Lord, Lord Browne

[LORD CORMACK]

of Ladyton, is the failure of our policy on Russia. To have no continuing dialogue with a great European country which itself suffered abysmally in two world wars but which has no infrastructure of democracy; to walk away from those heady days of 1992, which were referred to by my noble friend Lord Lamont of Lerwick, when,

“Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive”,

the Berlin Wall was down and Russia was led by people who seemed to be anxious to become part of the democratic structure of Europe; to walk away as we have done—although perhaps sorely provoked on occasions—is a failure in diplomacy. I very much hope that we can have a more continuing, constructive dialogue, because the world is not a safer place than it was when the Berlin Wall came down. If anything, it is a far more dangerous one.

My noble friend Lord Dobbs referred to our adventures abroad and the terrorism that followed. As we move towards the second half of the 21st century, when the dominant power—among the powers, perhaps one should say, in Asia—will be China, which is still a totalitarian state which treats its citizens with scant respect when it comes to such matters as religious freedom, not to try to have a greater cohesion among the nations of Europe is not only missing an opportunity but perhaps paving the way for a calamity. Like many of your Lordships, I deeply regret the result of the referendum, but I accept it. I have urged acceptance of the Prime Minister’s deal. But it is all the more incumbent on us, especially when right-wing movements of a rather unpleasant nature are manifesting themselves in many nations of the world, to keep the closest possible bilateral relationships. This is something that was pointed out in the report of the committee chaired by my noble friend Lord Howell of Guildford. There are opportunities which, if we do not seize them now, may never occur again.

This has been an interesting debate, with some fascinating contributions. I hope that the Minister will be able to indicate that the Government are prepared to go a little beyond some of the rather bland comments they made in their response. Above all, I hope that he will convey the message that to miss the opportunity of a meeting with the President of the United States—if it can possibly be arranged—would be a great mistake.

9.10 pm

Lord Giddens (Lab): My Lords, I join other noble Lords in saying that this is a terrific report, and I congratulate the noble Lord, Lord Howell, and everyone else involved in producing it. The noble Lord has received lots of plaudits in the debate tonight, and they are well deserved.

The report offers an acute account of the huge dilemmas facing the UK in foreign policy, and it analyses very well the seismic upheavals in world politics, but for me it breaks new ground because it recognises how fundamental the digital revolution is to current dilemmas of global power. There are three respects, however, in which I think what is offered on the impact of the digital age—I agree with the noble Lord, Lord Howell, that this is the age in which we live—could be expanded and further built on.

First, the report is written as though the interconnections between the digital world and geopolitics are something relatively new. That is not the case at all. The digital revolution had its origins in geopolitics and war, both hot and cold. This is true as far back as the breakthroughs of Alan Turing in the Second World War. More or less everyone now uses GPS on their devices to find their way around in everyday life. It is part of the very core of the internet. GPS, however, derives from the “Sputnik moment” that was such a shock to the American psyche in the 1960s. That moment sparked the setting up of NASA itself. Research by DARPA, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, was the very basis of the emergence of the digital world. Without DARPA there would be no internet—and DARPA, too, was created specifically in response to Sputnik. The background to the later emergence of Silicon Valley was also geopolitical. It was an artefact of 1989 and the “end of history” The American author Franklin Foer spelled this out very well. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, for the first time there seemed no alternative to the reign of free markets on a global level. The huge digital corporations that today dominate the world economy sprang up—with unprecedented speed—on the back of research carried out largely by the US Government, but at a time of the release of free-wheeling global markets. We are all today struggling with the consequences, good and bad.

Secondly, the report tends to identify the digital revolution with social media. Social media have indeed had an immense global impact, all the way from the stresses and strains of democracy, which other noble Lords have spoken about, through to the intimacies of our personal lives. There is nothing in the report, however, about the deeply structural impact of the digital revolution or the huge influence that it has had and is having on global politics and hence foreign policy. The prosperity of western countries for over half a century after World War II was driven by technology that favoured the making of things. The dominant form of production today is driven by intangibles, created in turn by information processing. It has made possible offshoring and the globalised division of labour of the global corporations. This is the backdrop to the struggles between the US and China over free trade, which, as we know, could destabilise the world economy and even lead to war.

Thirdly, while AI and quantum computing get a mention, there is not sufficient recognition of the likely impact of deep learning. This too has a profoundly geopolitical backdrop. One of the biggest ever breakthroughs in deep learning was made right here in London, as I am sure noble Lords will know, by a company appropriately called DeepMind. It created the algorithmic program called AlphaGo, which beat the world champion at go, an ancient Chinese game vastly more complex than chess. As I have mentioned before in your Lordships’ House, the impact of this achievement in Asia was huge and is documented—since I am an academic I feel I can mention a book—in Kai-Fu Lee’s book *AI Superpowers*. His opening chapter is in fact called “China’s Sputnik Moment”. The five games played between machine and human were watched by only a small proportion of people in the West but by

nearly 300 million people on Chinese TV and millions more in other parts of Asia. The Chinese Government responded almost instantaneously, pouring huge sums into the further development of AI. Lee's main theme is that China can act much faster, and on a far more gigantic scale, than anything in the West.

Huawei has caught the public attention at the moment and is currently sparking an escalation of already existing tensions between the US and China. However, the underlying problems and issues bite much more deeply. Belt and road, as other noble Lords have said, already spans large areas of the world and has now extended into Europe. A core point, however, is that almost all infrastructure projects these days involve a strong digital component. President Xi has in fact said that China wishes to create:

“a digital silk road of the 21st century”,

incorporating 5G and then 6G. This may have many positives, but it does not take much imagination to grasp the geopolitical tensions that could arise around it. What was originally spawned through geopolitics has in the 21st century come back to be the very core of it.

9.18 pm

The Earl of Sandwich (CB): I first compliment the noble Lord, Lord Howell, not only on this report but on pioneering the IRC. He, my noble friend Lord Alton and I, as the noble Lord, Lord Jopling, mentioned, campaigned since the millennium to have our own foreign affairs committee. For years the Commons opposed us, fearing duplication, but in the end we reached an entente and the committee has now proved its value to both Houses.

This report, although very wide-ranging, raises important issues of foreign policy, and certainly deserves the attention it is getting today. The key phrase being discussed is the “rules-based international system” and whether it is properly understood. The noble Lord, Lord Grocott, was rightly sceptical about it. The phrase raises the great question of *quis custodiet?* It reminds me of recent reports of the use of rape as a weapon of war in South Sudan: no rules are being read out to the soldiers who use this weapon. At another level, I think again of the impunity of various maverick Presidents, not excluding the President of the United States; no one seems to be reading the rules to him. So we have to reflect on the almost impossible challenge we have set ourselves in countries where might is still right and neither democracy nor the rule of law can always respond to it—although we can try.

Indeed, any intervention overseas, whether military, diplomatic, economic or otherwise, begs the questions: “Do we know what we are doing?”, “Do we have the right or power to intervene?” and, “Can we ever get it right?” To my mind, there has been a loss of confidence here in the UK—due not to the uncertainty of our ever-shifting attitude to Europe but to the sheer weight and number of issues around the world that crop up on our screens, most of which we pretend to cope with from afar. The noble Lord, Lord Dobbs, touched on that. We do a good job in the circumstances, but are we really effective?

The committee makes valiant attempts to press the Government on the rules-based system, which it says is “under serious threat”. In response, the Government gently reaffirm that they will not lose sight of core values and will reach out, not just to Governments, bilaterally and multilaterally, but to “global civil society”. I was glad to read that last assertion because NGOs and civil society are taken much more seriously these days, and for good reasons. I am also glad to say that our international development programme is now very closely monitored.

The report only touches on international development, which is an important aspect of soft power. But how much of it is deliberate policy, which would be another report? Not a lot of it is, because from Clare Short onwards there has been a lot more emphasis on the community itself becoming responsible for its own sustainable development. I think our latest Minister will take a similar approach. Inevitably, too much aid ends up with government, which in some places may be the only channel of funding, but quality still falls short of quantity. However, with the help of the ICAI and various Select Committees we can get the balance nearly right. I am firmly opposed to any reduction of our budgets within the 0.7% target.

It seems from the evidence that the UK is going to have to work much harder on its relationship with India—other noble Lords have emphasised this. I agree with the report that, in spite of our historic ties, our Government are not paying India nearly enough attention. Student visas is just one of the areas we should review. I know that the Home Office is trying to make up for terrible mistakes after 2010.

Last week, we discussed peacekeeping; 28 May will be the anniversary of the first UN peacekeeping mission, which was to Palestine in 1948. The report is not enthusiastic about the effectiveness of the UN, and reform seems unlikely. Yet in developing countries and in many situations around the world, the UN is all we have.

The Government have parried a lot of questions, quite skilfully, in a long and carefully considered response. I will add another: will they take any new directions following this report? I make one suggestion: what about Russia and the western Balkans, which we discussed in the EU foreign affairs debate last week? Is that still to be a major foreign policy concern after Brexit? Sometimes I feel that we will lose interest in the Balkans.

At the beginning of my speech, I mentioned the two extremes of Governments flouting the rule of law: South Sudan and the USA. What can the world do about either? Diplomacy can do very little about a country that is still in conflict, except offer humanitarian aid and some minor strengthening of institutions. In passing, I must commend the FCO for its robust engagement in Sudan.

At the other end of the scale is the US Administration. They are, supposedly, our ally and “special relation” but the relationship is uncomfortable. What can we do when the elected President of a world power abruptly threatens war in the Middle East and cannot even inform Congress of his reasons and intentions? I agree with much of what the noble Lord, Lord Lamont, said. One day, the President may change his mind,

[THE EARL OF SANDWICH]

as he often does, and reconsider his attitude to the Iran nuclear deal—he will have to find a deal somewhere. However, his contempt for the UN, the European Commission and the international community is thinly disguised; in fact, it is the obverse of diplomacy.

We are hardly soothed by the FCO reply, which decides not to rock the boat, reassuring us that we will continue to work together on a range of issues. As the noble Lord, Lord Howell, pointed out in his letter to Jeremy Hunt, the response does not engage sufficiently with specific foreign policy decisions that are clearly against our national interests and those of our EU partners.

On Russia, I am not sure that the world order there is shifting at all. Cyberattacks come and go, and Salisbury has left a very bad taste in the mouth. Previous reports from the EU Committee following events in Crimea and Ukraine urged the FCO to rebuild its relations and language skills; I was glad to hear my noble friend Lady Coussins reinforce that point. It would be good to hear from the Minister that this is progressively happening. The report also calls for “better understanding” of Russia. We easily forget how much we have in common with the Russian people, through our shared history and culture. Again, the response to paragraph 85, recommending more dialogue, is muted but that may be relevant to any description of our intelligence and counterterrorist activity.

9.26 pm

Lord Soley (Lab): My Lords, I join noble Lords in congratulating the committee and the noble Lord, Lord Howell, on this excellent report, which has opened new thinking at a critical time in international relations. I know that the noble Lord must step down but I hope that we will not lose his comments in the House because they are always very valuable.

I particularly liked the report’s emphasis on the rules-based order. I have heard some criticism of that, which I understand. There is no doubt in my mind that we have often been hypocritical on that issue. That is not a reason to throw it out the window, however: the rules-based order is vital if we are not to return to a much worse time. I wish to put this in context alongside the idea of a liberal international order, which has been a prop of western thinking since the Westphalia agreement in 1648, followed by the British attempts in the 19th century to emphasise it. Above all, in 1945 and the period afterwards, the Labour Government had a lot to do with this in creating international organisations such as the United Nations, Bretton Woods, the Atlantic Charter, NATO and so on, which have been such an important part of the western idea of not only a rules-based order but a liberal one.

There has been criticism, and rightly so, of the way in which we have lost that order recently. Although it is necessary for the world to maintain a rules-based and liberal order, it is true that, at times, we have been the authors of our failures on not just the political but the economic front. The collapse of Lehman Brothers and the financial crisis that followed did enormous damage to the image of western effectiveness in running economies, and made a number of countries begin to

challenge and question it. The noble Lord, Lord Dobbs, and others have mentioned our failure on some other interventions, but it is profoundly important to say that intervention has not always failed. This is not recent, given that interventions go back at least to the time of the British intervention to stop the west African slave trade. In fact, they can be traced back to Grecian times. We have to be careful about that and it is worth remembering, in view of the criticisms that have been made, that recently we apologised to the Rwandan Government for our failure to intervene and stop what happened in that country. Interventions do not always fail, but they have at certain times, which I accept has made them a problem for us.

Two additional factors are not covered in the report to the degree that I would like, and given that the report is so extensive, perhaps it is a bit mean to mention them. One is population increase. Between 1990 and 2015—25 years—the population of the planet went up by 2 billion. Those 2 billion people have an enormous impact on the political relationship between nation states that have either stable populations or, as in the case of Russia, are actually declining and other states that are increasing their populations dramatically. This means that power relationships will change. It also has a dramatic effect on policy issues such as climate change.

The other factor that troubles me is one that we do not give enough thought to, although it was touched on by the noble and right reverend Lord, Lord Chartres, and others: the importance of religion. It fascinates me that over the past 20-odd years, or really since the collapse of the Soviet Union, political ideologies have declined, but just as they have done so religious ideologies have increased. I have said before in this Chamber that for me God is an idea: there either is one or there is not one. However, religion is actually an ideology which assumes a belief in God. The reason it is important is because for literally a couple of thousand years, religion has played an incredibly important part in government, either in the form of being the Government or, as in recent years, having great influence on government. Iran is the classic example. There is a religious approach to government with a limit to what the political power can do and within that, because of the ideological differences, there is a clash. That clash is important and if people underestimate it they are making a serious mistake, because it is profoundly important in the Middle East through the Sunni and Shia divide. I remember talking to a Sunni man in Egypt. When I challenged him by talking about the problem with religion, be it Christian, Hindu or Islam, being that people often end up fighting each other, he replied, “Give me an example”. I said, “Iran and Iraq”. He said, “Ah, yes, but the Shia are not really Muslims”. In a way that says it all. We do not have to look back that far in our own history to find similar problems. When I was dealing with the Northern Ireland question in the 1970s and 1980s as the chairman of the Select Committee, one of the big struggles was to get Catholics to join the Royal Ulster Constabulary, as it then was. That was because, if they did, they were often killed.

The religious question is always there. One of the changes which is coming about is that the growth of religion as an ideology is changing the way that

politics works. It means that we have to look at it. Religion can be a great stabiliser and help in government, but it can also be a real cause of conflict. If you are looking for the conflict in the Middle East, you cannot ignore the Sunni/Shia divide. That vital point is replicated on the political side by Sunni Saudi Arabia challenging Shia Iran as the dominant power in the Middle East.

I welcome the emphases in the report, and the only other point I want to raise is the danger of nationalism. Living in Scotland as I do now, I listen to Nicola Sturgeon of the SNP and I think, “If she thinks that the answer to the world’s problems is nationalism, she is asking the wrong question”. The same applies to Donald Trump, it applies to some but not all of the Brexiteers, and it applies, when we look at how some people are voting in European elections, to the increasing tendency towards nationalism.

I particularly like the approach taken by the noble Lord, Lord Howell, to the Commonwealth because, like him, I am a strong supporter of it. Although it will not be easy, also like him I believe that there is a very real possibility of a much closer and better relationship between India and the UK. That for me would be a great step forward. But I would emphasise that somehow or other, as the report makes so clear, we have to adjust to a dramatically changing world and make sure that we think through the strategies that are necessary to understand it. That will help us to get our own policies right in many of these individual areas.

9.34 pm

Lord Purvis of Tweed (LD): The seismic changes in the world of recent times should not threaten but thrill us. This was the topic I chose to speak on two years ago at an event in Borjomi, Georgia, to a group of young people from the Middle East, the Gulf and the Caucasus. They had gathered to discuss how the shifts in global patterns under way impacted on their respective regions. It was the first time many had reflected on the relationship between their respective areas, with tense political relationships. Not one of the young people who attended came from countries whose establishment or borders were older than three generations. Their families had lived through constant change, but the issue now is whether the changes over recent years are of such an order of difference that our entire concept of foreign policy should also be reflected on.

During the committee’s hearings for this inquiry—I have the privilege to serve on the committee under the noble Lord, Lord Howell—I frequently reflected on that event. Such a large and comprehensive report as this cannot be given full justification in this short time, so I wish to focus on the developmental changes that other noble Lords have referred to, the transformative nature of new technologies, change in this generation and opportunities for the UK in particular.

These changes will probably mean that this is the first generation in whose lives the biggest challenges will be universal in nature, not focused just on people’s own region, country or continent. Climate change, universal rights and obligations, crime and terror networks and cybersecurity worries are by definition no longer only national challenges. The rules-based system—with 75 year-old institutions designed to address a former world and a peacebuilding concept—is in need of

reform, but pragmatically the committee said that that is difficult to achieve. We regretted some reform agendas stalling, but I was struck by the comments of the former Foreign Secretary, the noble Lord, Lord Hague, who told us that while he was content for today’s global order to use that 1945 order, it would not be desirable to have it in 2045. I agree with that, and we must start thinking now about how a new world order—a new regime for rule-making—will take its place. This consideration will have to take into account that no previous time in human history has seen such rapid social, economic, technological and political change as that dating from when I was born, in the mid-1970s.

The noble Lord, Lord Soley, referenced population growth. The population of the world has grown from 3.9 billion in 1974 to 7.5 billion today, and is forecast to be 9 billion in 2050. Africa’s population is expected to grow threefold this century. The world economy has grown astronomically—from \$5.5 trillion when I was born to \$77 trillion, and per capita GDP has grown from \$1,400 to \$10,300 globally today. This is a marked economic and social development that has also been reflected in improved life expectancy and reduced child mortality. People are more prosperous, healthier and better educated today, and there is an emphasis on social spending. Spending on defence globally has gone down from 3.7% in the year I was born to 2.2%.

Today’s world is in many ways a much smaller one. There were 401 million air passengers in 1997; in 2016, the figure was 3.7 billion. The world is much more closely connected as a result of the internet. Half a trillion text messages are sent every day; there were hardly any in the mid-1990s. These are the most significant changes and outweigh possibly the biggest innovations of previous centuries—John Harrison’s marine chronometer and the establishment of GMT.

Politically, too, there has been progress. The number of countries considered democratic or largely democratic in the year I was born was 34; today it is 87. The number of people living in a largely democratic environment has risen from 1.7 billion to over 4 billion today. This will not necessarily mean, however, that they are stable countries; nor does it mean that there are loyal and sustained identities for people in those countries, many of which exist as a result of decolonisation and the effects of two world wars.

On disruption and change—the title of the first section of the report—what comes with democracy is a belief that the individual is a stakeholder. Democracy establishes a social contract which requires the Government to deliver against the expectations of those who vote them into power. Therefore, the rules-making bodies are even more significant, given that the expectations of the people are much higher. Now, the growth in populations is creating a greater need for services and trained staff in schools and hospitals, and Governments are unable to meet the demands of their peoples.

In addition, trust in state institutions such as broadcasters, statistical bodies and the civil service is coming under increasing pressure—including in the United Kingdom. Populations are becoming less trusting of the United Nations, as is shown in trend data from the Brookings Institution and Pew research.

[LORD PURVIS OF TWEED]

As we have heard consistently in this debate, both the US and Russia increasingly take a transactional relationships approach in response to these changes. These are huge global shifts, and they take a transactional, state-by-state approach, putting country first—disruption and destabilisation in order to extract advantage. This is inconsistent with what we consider to be the British approach of stability and co-operation to create an environment in which we can gain advantage. In addition, other organisations and structures are growing to challenge the established 1945 order, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, as indicated by the noble Lord, Lord Howell.

Because of these seismic shifts, there is a more conducive environment for benign and malignant non-state actors to thrive. I do not necessarily disagree with the noble Lord, Lord Grocott, but a simple reliance on the concept of the nation state does not reflect the changes we have seen in this past generation.

Finally, what can the UK do in response to this? The noble Lord, Lord Kerr, was absolutely right in his devastating critique. If we are to be a leader on cybersecurity threats, the rule of law, progressive trade, the ethics of artificial intelligence, human rights, privacy, generational opportunities, investment for youth, transparency and anticorruption, and to be a lead investor for Africa and a top governance partner on global goal 16, we have to have respect in the world. On a visit to Iraq last year, an MP said that they were watching the Brexit proceedings there every day, and laughing and crying at us—neither are what you want to see as a reflection of British foreign policy.

If we are to take advantage of these changes, perhaps it is as the noble Lord, Lord Hennessy, said. His contributions always warm my heart in these debates, and even more so today because he quoted from *Memory Hold-the-Door* by John Buchan—a former constituent of mine, perhaps, in the Borders—which I quoted in my maiden speech in this House. Buchan said that the Borderer qualities, and those that he admired most in human nature, were,

“realism coloured by poetry, a stalwart independence sweetened by courtesy, a shrewd kindly wisdom”.

I hope that those characteristics will be reflected in our foreign policy in the future.

9.43 pm

Lord Collins of Highbury (Lab): My Lords, I too pay tribute to the noble Lord, Lord Howell, and members of the committee for producing this excellent report. It has been an excellent debate and, despite its length, I have remained here throughout and been fascinated by all the contributions. I was reflecting that, last night, I was sitting in front of the television watching a documentary about another seismic change in our political world. Many of the players in that seismic change contributed to the debate today. And that change was, of course, a political party getting rid of its pro-European leader and electing Margaret Thatcher. Politics is often about these changes, and sometimes I find them difficult to accept.

Tonight’s debate and the report are very important. I agree with the report’s final conclusion that we need a more agile, active and flexible diplomacy to handle

our international relationships and ensure that we are in a stronger position to protect and promote our interests. I also agree that the report is a sound basis for a constructive debate, which I am sure will be ongoing, but agreement on broad aims, I feel, is a little optimistic. What should our aims be, taking into account the global power dynamics, our resource constraints and domestic public opinion?

The noble Lord, Lord Bilimoria, quoted James Landale of the BBC, who wrote,

“countries with a strong sense of national identity, a healthy economy and a stable political leadership with a clear agenda tend to have good foreign policies”.

Landale went on,

“perhaps we need to work out first how we see ourselves as a nation”.

In the *New Statesman*, Paul Mason, who has been a strong supporter of the left, put it another way, saying that,

“a foreign policy begins from the questions: what are the long-term interests of our country and how should we achieve them”.

As the noble Lord, Lord Ricketts, and other noble Lords said, for 50 years the twin pillars of our foreign policy have been our alliance with the United States and our support in the European Union. Breaking one of those pillars will clearly have an effect on the other. The idea that we can simply carry on with a strong alliance with the United States while breaking the European Union, as the noble Lord, Lord Tugendhat, put it, is madness. If you believe in multilateralism, it is madness to participate in the destruction of one of the most successful, albeit flawed, multilateral institutions on your doorstep, especially as Trump’s presidency has been so transactional and short-termist and has had little respect for long-standing alliances and partnerships. I think I have previously quoted Ryan Crocker, former US ambassador to Iraq. He said:

“Other than the neo-isolationism I don’t think there is a pattern to his foreign policy ... I think he is purely reactive”.

That is what makes him unpredictable but, from what we have heard in this debate, we can still understand what that is about.

As the noble Lord, Lord Howell, put it in his introduction, Trump’s America-first agenda and the US national security strategy have significant implications for international relationships around the world. The overriding theme is the focus on American prosperity as a core national security goal. At one level, this is a basic principle of any coherent national security strategy, and it certainly informs the United Kingdom’s strategy. The United States is a very important ally of the United Kingdom. Our relationship remains very important, but it is not personal. It is not between not individuals but between two nations and two peoples. We should ensure that our resources strengthen that relationship. I hope we can get the message across to the President when he comes that our relationship will be sustained not through a simple personal relationship with him or his changes in policy but through that long-standing commitment of our two nations and two peoples. Through that alliance, we need to get a better understanding of the broad aims that the report focused on. What are the broad aims of a foreign policy?

One thing that I think we can all agree on is Britain's part in creating a just, safe, secure and sustainable planet free from the fear of hunger and poverty. In my opinion—the noble Lord, Lord Bates, alluded to this—the report lacked one thing, which was a coherent focus on the United Nations 2030 agenda. That should be our approach to building our foreign policy: delivering sustainable development goals that leave no one behind. Those goals are universal and we should measure all our activities against them. We should not say to other countries, “Do this”, without understanding that it is something that we want to achieve ourselves—the goals are universal in nature. Importantly, development, defence and diplomacy have to go together. As my noble friend Lord Anderson said, we need to demonstrate a joined-up, whole-government approach.

My right honourable friend Emily Thornberry gave a keynote speech earlier this year in which she argued that the UK's foreign policy should be used to promote our values and not only our commercial interests, with a greater focus on human rights. She said—I agree totally with the noble Lord, Lord Bates, on this—that we need a strategy to protect civilians in conflict that sets out detailed plans for work on conflict prevention and resolution, post-conflict peacebuilding and justice for the victims of war crimes. That is vital. We also want to see the creation of a Minister for peace and disarmament. The noble Lord, Lord Hannay, spoke about the need for a focus on ensuring that we do not end up in another escalating arms race.

We need to strengthen our commitment to the UN and acknowledge its shortcomings, particularly in the light of repeated abuses of veto powers by some permanent members of the Security Council. The noble Lord, Lord Bates, highlighted that too. However, working with our international partners, we can build support for UN reform and make its institutions more effective and responsive. It is vital that we do so.

I want to conclude on a point that the right reverend Prelate referred to. The ingredients of a thriving democracy are not limited to Parliaments and parliamentarians. Civil society organisations, in which I include churches, trade unions and women's groups, are a vital and important part of democratic life, frequently being the only guarantors of human rights in society. Often, it is not Governments but the people who defend these rights.

One thing I am really pleased about is the report's emphasis on the Commonwealth and soft power. The last two CHOGM summits reaffirmed the commitment to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms, and to support the empowerment of women and girls. Too many women, disabled people and minorities are still discriminated against and denied access, and we should focus on how to support civil society in the Commonwealth to build the sort of changes that we want to see.

My final point is that, if we are to see the change we desire, we should perhaps take up the position of the Swedish Government—I recently met the Swedish ambassador—who have adopted a feminist foreign policy. They measure an activity by its impact on addressing gender equality, asking how it empowers women and changes things for the better. That is one of the things that we should all be looking at on a

cross-party basis. This is not about simply taking a party-political position. It is about creating a safer world for all.

9.55 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon) (Con): My Lords, I join all noble Lords in congratulating my noble friend Lord Howell on securing this important debate. He is someone who provides great insight and wisdom to all our debates, and today has been no exception. At the outset I assure the noble Lords, Lord Kerr, Lord Hannay and Lord Ricketts, that I have studied our first response to the letter sent by my noble friend. We are working on it and I hope that in the next 48 hours we will have a more comprehensive response to that letter, addressing some of the issues that were perhaps not covered in the initial response from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

I share in much of what the noble Lord, Lord Collins, said; he will know this. I agree with him that it is important for us to see that the United Kingdom has a huge opportunity on the world stage to influence the debate and foreign policy. Foreign policy has those three elements of diplomacy, defence and development. In this regard, I have seen directly through my own portfolio of responsibilities the benefit particularly on the agendas of women, peace and security of the coming together of those three departments: the Ministry of Defence, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department for International Trade. The benefits come from focusing not only on conflict after it has happened but on building towards conflict prevention. I am sure all noble Lords will agree.

I pay particular tribute to my noble friend Lord Bates, who I am delighted has returned. At the risk of getting a bit personal, poignant and perhaps a little emotional, it would be fair to say that I miss his wisdom as well as the strength of our friendship and partnership in working on joint initiatives, not just on the WPS agenda but on human rights, development and—as touched on by several noble Lords—the important issue of freedom of religion or belief. I will certainly look to his continued support from his new position, although I am sure that in time we will see him return to the Government Front Benches.

I was taken in by this debate. It was one of those with quite limited questions for the Minister; that is always quite welcome. It allowed me to make lots of notes on the things that I should be looking at. On the issue of hunger, I had a moment of reflection as I was looking at the clock 18 hours in, ready with a sustaining glass of water and a subtle mint to break my Ramadan fast. It was a point of reflection for me personally, so I was listening very intensely to the full course of the debate. I congratulate all noble Lords on their insight, wisdom and guidance in this debate, and in the report in particular.

I will take the various issues raised in turn, by country. We anticipate when we look around the world that, as several noble Lords have said, the balance of global wealth and power is likely to continue shifting eastwards. By 2030, China is predicted to be the world's largest economy while seven of today's largest emerging economies will have overtaken today's G7.

[LORD AHMAD OF WIMBLEDON]

These shifts are disrupting established norms and patterns, as the noble Lord, Lord Purvis, pointed out, which is changing the whole balance of international relations. The international environment is more contested, more congested and more competitive than ever before. As this continues, there will be growing friction over the status and nature of the international order, with a range of new threats from states and, importantly, non-state actors alike. My noble friend Lord Marlesford talked about various organisations which are non-state players but have influence, such as Daesh. We have seen the havoc they have wreaked in both Iraq and Syria.

Although Daesh has been territorially defeated, terrorism remains a potent threat. At the same time, we are seeing a resurgence of state-based threats, especially in the field of cyber, which several noble Lords mentioned. Our growing reliance on digital technology is creating new vulnerabilities. The noble Lord, Lord Giddens, in particular talked about that.

Over the next 10 years, the effects of climate change are likely to have repercussions for international stability and security, as the noble Baroness, Lady Hilton, touched on. I assure her that this remains an important part of British foreign policy.

The noble Lord, Lord Soley, talked about the role of religion among world states. It is true that that has been seen in some of the conflicts that have taken place. However, I say to him that Shia-Sunni rivalry is not just from the Iran-Iraq war but dates back 1,400 years. We have yet to see a solution on that front.

Some of these changes represent profound challenges to the existing world order which threaten our interests. Others represent new opportunities. The issue of us leaving the European Union was an important part of today's reflections. I assure the noble Baroness, Lady Smith of Newnham, that Brexit provides an opportunity to take stock. She said we sometimes need to take time to reflect and take stock of our place and role in the world.

The UK has adjusted the machinery of government to adapt to these new challenges. Since 2010, the National Security Council has been the key body for deciding the UK's international priorities. The noble Lords, Lord Hannay and Lord Ricketts, and the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Winchester all touched on its role. The 2018 national security capability review introduced the "fusion doctrine", which I hope partly addresses the point raised by the noble Lord, Lord Hannay, about the economy. This doctrine integrates all the UK's capabilities—security, economic and diplomatic—in addressing the national security challenges we face.

The UK's foreign policy objectives are defined by the three pillars of the cross-government national security strategy, as laid out in our single departmental plan: namely, protecting our people, projecting our influence and promoting our prosperity. It is worth noting that the Chancellor of the Exchequer sits on this committee.

Looking ahead, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office will continue to protect our people overseas through our consular and crisis activity. We have strategies to reduce the threat of cyberattack, terrorism, weapons proliferation, serious and organised crime,

hostile state activity and the challenges of migration, which were mentioned particularly by my noble friend Lord Dobbs. As we leave the EU, we intend to strengthen Euro-Atlantic security, forging new security partnerships and creating a bigger, stronger and more cohesive NATO.

On projecting our influence, one of our top priorities over the coming year will be to manage our future relationship with the EU. Harnessing the opportunities and mitigating the risks of EU exit, and negotiating a strong future relationship, are key priorities. At the same time, we will continue to play a global role in championing the values that matter to us, and promoting UK leadership—a point raised by various noble Lords. We will promote our leadership on issues such as media freedom, with a conference in July; gender equality; and freedom of religion or belief, on which I lead for the Government as the Prime Minister's envoy.

We will also manage the uptake of new technologies—for example, through regulation—and will continue to play an active role in preventing conflict and instability. That was an area of clear focus in the contribution from my noble friend Lady Helic. I pay tribute to her work. Indeed, we are working together, along with our noble friend Lord Hague, in preparing for the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative conference in November this year, five years on from the 2014 summit.

Several noble Lords mentioned the important relationship with the United States. I say from the outset to my noble friend Lord Cormack that I have listened very carefully and I share his view. I do not have direct influence over the agenda for the President's visit, but I will certainly take back his suggestions. The noble Lord, Lord Kerr, also highlighted from his own experience some of the concerns about the current policy being pursued by the United States.

I agree with my noble friend Lord Jopling and others, such as the noble Lord, Lord Anderson, that the UK's ties with the United States run very deep. This includes our security co-operation and intelligence sharing, and our commercial, academic and cultural links. We remain closely aligned on a wide range of issues, including security, defence and trade. For example, we worked closely with the United States in the UN Security Council on the Yemen peace process and in our co-ordinated response to the Novichok attack in Salisbury. My noble friend Lady Helic raised the importance of our relationships in Europe and across the Atlantic when we dealt with that attack. Those remain key priorities. My noble friend Lord King also underlined the US's important role.

We are able to raise differences with the US when we have them because of our close relationship. We sometimes do so discreetly and privately. At other times we take quite a public stance. There are current US policy positions with which we disagree, such as the US's withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on Iran, a point well made by my noble friend Lord Lamont. Equally, we have differences over the Paris climate agreement and the recognition of the Golan Heights as part of Israel, but we enjoy very close co-operation across the Five Eyes partnership. Indeed, notwithstanding the US's withdrawal from the UN Human Rights Council, we have reached out

and have a very strong partnership with the United States on the importance of freedom of religion or belief, a point well made by the noble Lord, Lord Alton, in our work on standing up for persecuted minorities, faith minorities and those of other beliefs around the world. We continue to work very closely in that respect.

Perhaps there are times when, in a very soft power way, if I could phrase it that way, we could show what our approach is in Britain. Recently, during Secretary of State Pompeo's visit, we had a very productive session with faith leaders at Lambeth Palace. That was a way of showing how you take faith communities with you to build alliances and work with civil society, a point well made by the noble Lord, Lord Collins. I assure him that that is part and parcel of our priorities.

My noble friend Lord Howell rightly talked about China's belt and road initiative and the report focused on China. China is our largest trading partner outside Europe and North America and a fellow member of the UN Security Council. China also has an important contribution to make in the debate on how to adapt the rules-based international system to the demands of the 21st century. The noble Lords, Lord Hannay and Lord Hennessy, shone a light on this important relationship. For all these reasons, we must, and continue to, work with China to support our foreign policy goals.

Striking the right balance in our relationship with China is important. That is why our policy in China will remain clear-eyed, evidence-based and firmly rooted in our values. We maintain a constructive and positive dialogue on major issues and we are clear and direct when we disagree. Again, we have done some excellent work on Yemen and Burma with China, but where we have differences, as the noble Lord, Lord Alton, pointed out, we have disagreed with it in the Human Rights Council, particularly over its treatment of Christians and the Uighur Muslims, who are being held in camps in China. Our relationship with China is important and we continue to focus on it. It was also the focus of contributions from my noble friend Lord Tugendhat and the noble Baroness, Lady Hilton.

Russia is again a key priority. The noble Earl, Lord Sandwich, asked whether the Balkans matter. He will recall that only last summer the United Kingdom hosted the west Balkans summit. In this respect, the Prime Minister announced an increased level of funding in support of the initiatives taken. That has risen to £80 million for 2020-21.

Our relations with Russia are not where we want them to be and we have deep concerns about aggressive Russian activity. It was not that long ago—from memory it was July 2017—that the former Foreign Secretary visited Russia. However, in the wake of the Salisbury attack the United Kingdom took determined action, together with our allies, to stand up to Russian aggression by co-ordinating the largest ever collective expulsion of Russian intelligence officers. We will continue to co-ordinate closely with our international partners to identify and respond to hostile state activity.

The noble Lord, Lord Hannay, also raised the important point of continuing dialogue. I assure the House that we continue to engage with Russian authorities where necessary, including in our dialogue on terrorism

and aviation, to support our interests and protect British nationals. Again, as fellow members of the UN Security Council we continue to engage directly with Russia on important peace and security issues. I assure the noble Lord, Lord Browne, that we work closely on issues such as terrorism and nuclear non-proliferation. The issue of keeping the JCPOA on the table is also supported by Russia and China.

We will continue to engage with wider Russian society through cultural exchanges, business links and programmes involving youth, civil society and human rights defenders. The United Kingdom remains open to a better relationship with Russia and we look forward hopefully to bridging some of the gaps that have occurred. However, there are challenges in this relationship and noble Lords are well-versed on those issues.

The noble Lord, Lord Browne, asked who is conducting the dialogue with Russia. I already mentioned the previous Foreign Secretary's visit in 2017. My colleague and right honourable friend the Minister for Europe continues to engage directly while I, along with Karen Pierce, our Permanent Representative at the Security Council in New York, engage directly with Russia on many issues of common concern and we will continue to do so.

Understandably, noble Lords raised the issue of Brexit. The noble Lords, Lord Hennessy and Lord Ricketts, talked about future objectives, as did my noble friend Lord King. The UK is realistic about our position on the world stage and our ability to influence world events. In 2019, we continue to be a leading member of NATO and a permanent member on the UN Security Council. In London, we have what is arguably the world's largest financial centre, while the use of the English language is well known—and yes, as the Commonwealth Minister I am proud that we are working together to strengthen the work of the Commonwealth as we chair it in the lead-up to Kigali next year.

In the context of the UK's departure from the European Union, the UK's "Global Britain" agenda frames how we will invest in our relationships. Let me assure noble Lords who raised the issue of EU exit, including the noble Baroness, Lady Smith of Newnham, and my noble friend Lord Tugendhat, among others, that our bilateral ties with European partners provide a strong foundation for continued co-operation. We are working closely with our European partners on international issues, such as the JCPOA, and will continue to work closely in strengthening our ties once we leave the European Union. There are regular ministerial contacts beyond our direct engagement. For example, through the European Council we recently worked closely on the agenda for securing a resolution at the UN Security Council on preventing sexual violence in conflict. Our other engagement through fora such as NATO, the OSCE and the UN will continue to demonstrate where we will be dealing directly with our European partners.

The noble Lords, Lord Bilimoria and Lord Anderson, mentioned India as an important and valued partner, which it is. We have spent a great deal of time building and nurturing that relationship. I hear clearly the concerns of the noble Lord, Lord Bilimoria, on the visa issue. I am closely working through the issue he raised of the

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Jallianwala Bagh massacre, which is particularly close to my heart. There will be positive engagement with India as we move forward. The point on visas is well made, and there are areas we need to look at much more closely to ensure we can nurture and strengthen that relationship.

The rules-based order was raised specifically by several noble Lords, including the noble Lords, Lord Kerr, Lord Grocott and Lord Ricketts, and my noble friend Lord Lamont. My noble friend Lord Dobbs also raised this issue. I say to the noble and right reverend Lord, Lord Chartres, that of course we need to reflect on our engagements and what their long-term impacts will be, particularly when we engage militarily. Hindsight is a wonderful thing and we can all look to recent interventions, but how we then learn from those and start building nations is important. In particular, I have recently had some very positive engagement and I believe that Iraq presents a huge opportunity in that respect.

The right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Winchester, my noble friend Lord Tugendhat and the noble and right reverend Lord, Lord Chartres, raised the issue of soft power. Whether it is the BBC or the British Council, the use of languages is important. The noble Baroness, Lady Coussins, and my noble friend Lady Meyer talked about the importance of languages. We are investing quite heavily in this and I take on board that we can invest more. Caroline Wilson, the FCO Europe Director, has been appointed as the cross-Whitehall languages champion and is working directly with academia on improving the situation. The issue of religious literacy was raised. We are working on this through the Diplomatic Academy, and appointments are made not just through the FCO but through DfID and the MoD. My noble friend Lady Meyer also raised the issue of scholarships. In December, Sir Kim Darroch, our ambassador, announced a 50% increase in Marshall programme scholarships.

I am conscious that time has caught up with me. The noble Lord, Lord Giddens, the noble Baroness, Lady Hilton, and my noble friends Lord King and Lord Howell rightly raised digital communication and cyber. That will be an important challenge, because digital communications are a priority on the world stage. In 2016, the *Future FCO* report identified digital diplomacy as a key means of engagement. Since then the FCO has embraced digital tools to engage with, influence and support diplomatic activities. Our digital diplomacy is now widely considered world class. We are working through various programmes to deal with the challenges of cybersecurity. Most notably, we are working extensively with Commonwealth partners on increasing capacity and technical support for small island states.

My noble friend Lord Howell, the noble Lord, Lord Grocott, my noble friend Lady Helic and other noble Lords raised the issue of numbers and Foreign Office resourcing. By 2020 there will be over 1,000 new staff in position and 14 upgraded posts. I can say to

my noble friend Lady Meyer and the noble Baroness, Lady Smith, that this includes uplifts on key European positions. In the interests of time, I am happy to write directly to noble Lords summarising those uplifts.

Finally, I thank all noble Lords who have participated in this debate. Understandably, a wide range of issues was covered. As I said, we will be responding to the subsequent note from my noble friend Lord Howell in the next few days. From the rise of disinformation and authoritarian Governments to the threat of climate breakdown, the challenges we face are complex and serious. The threats we face are compounded by the growing strain on the international rules-based system on which our prosperity and security have depended for so long. I assure noble Lords that we will work with partners across the world to defend and reform international institutions, as we are doing at the UN. The noble Lord, Lord Ricketts, asked for specific examples. Issues of sexual exploitation and abuse is one; governance reforms at the ICC is another. We continue to be engaged at that level.

We believe that engagement and dialogue is the right approach. Protection of our people, projection of our influence and promotion of prosperity in a shifting world order remain key priorities of British foreign policy. Regarding my own direct engagement, I assure noble Lords that the wisdom, insight, experience, challenge and advice of your Lordships will play a crucial part in navigating this path as we continue to consolidate and strengthen the United Kingdom's position on the world stage.

10.18 pm

Lord Howell of Guildford: My Lords, there has been a stream of superb speeches—I thought of nipping out for a sandwich but decided I would prefer to hear every speech, including the kind and very gratifying remarks, particularly about the report, for which I thank noble Lords very much. Two themes among many stand out. The first is the question, here at home, of our national role and positioning, with the United States relationship a bit wobbly, frankly, and changing; China spreading its influence around all of us everywhere; our relations with Europe up in the air; most EU Governments themselves under assault and the Middle East in chaos. That has been the first worry and we are going to have to think our way through it.

The other message is that we have to think down to the roots of all this turmoil, the fragmentation and the rage against elites, the populism and the feeling against treaties and the international order—indeed, against globalism itself as technology races ahead. Those are the two big agonies, the big worries that we are going to have to turn to much more. We are going to have to be very smart to puzzle our way through all this, and I just hope that this debate and the report will help the process on its way.

Motion agreed.

House adjourned at 10.20 pm.

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