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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
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HOUSE OF LORDS

OFFICIAL REPORT

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Introductions: Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle and Lord Brownlow of Shurlock Row	23
Death of a Former Member: Lord Nicholls of Birkenhead	23
Birmingham Commonwealth Games Bill [HL] <i>First Reading</i>	23
Sentencing (Pre-consolidation Amendments) Bill [HL] <i>First Reading</i>	23
Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Bill [HL] <i>First Reading</i>	24
Health Service Safety Investigations Bill [HL] <i>First Reading</i>	24
Pension Schemes Bill [HL] <i>First Reading</i>	24
Northern Syria: Turkish Incursion <i>Statement</i>	24
Football: Racism <i>Statement</i>	28
Queen's Speech <i>Debate (2nd Day)</i>	32

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

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

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

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House of Lords

Tuesday 15 October 2019

2.30 pm

Prayers—read by the Lord Bishop of Coventry.

Introduction: Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle

2.36 pm

Natalie Louise Bennett, having been created Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle, of Camden in the Royal Borough of Camden, was introduced and made the solemn affirmation, supported by Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb and Lord Bird, and signed an undertaking to abide by the Code of Conduct.

Introduction: Lord Brownlow of Shurlock Row

2.42 pm

David Ellis Brownlow, CVO, having been created Baron Brownlow of Shurlock Row, of Shurlock Row in the Royal County of Berkshire, was introduced and took the oath, supported by Baroness Chisholm of Owlpen and Lord Callanan, and signed an undertaking to abide by the Code of Conduct.

Death of a Former Member: Lord Nicholls of Birkenhead Announcement

2.49 pm

The Lord Speaker (Lord Fowler): My Lords, I regret to inform the House of the death of the noble and learned Lord, Lord Nicholls of Birkenhead, on 25 September. On behalf of the House, I would like to extend our sincere condolences to the noble and learned Lord's family and friends.

Birmingham Commonwealth Games Bill [HL] First Reading

2.49 pm

A Bill to make provision about the Commonwealth Games that are to be held principally in Birmingham in 2022; and for connected purposes.

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

Sentencing (Pre-consolidation Amendments) Bill [HL] First Reading

2.50 pm

A Bill to give effect to Law Commission recommendations relating to commencement of enactments relating to sentencing law and to make provision for pre-consolidation amendments of sentencing law.

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

Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Bill [HL] First Reading

2.50 pm

A Bill to make in relation to marriage and civil partnership in England and Wales provision about divorce, dissolution and separation; and for connected purposes.

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

Health Service Safety Investigations Bill [HL] First Reading

2.51 pm

A Bill to establish the Health Service Safety Investigations Body and to confer the function of carrying out investigations and other functions on that body; to make provision in connection with investigations carried out by that body; to make provision about medical examiners; and for connected purposes.

The Bill was introduced by Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford, read a first time and ordered to be printed.

Pension Schemes Bill [HL] First Reading

2.51 pm

A Bill to make provision about pension schemes.

The Bill was introduced by Baroness Stedman-Scott, read a first time and ordered to be printed.

Northern Syria: Turkish Incursion Statement

2.52 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon) (Con): My Lords, with the leave of the House, I shall now repeat in the form of a Statement the Answer to an Urgent Question asked in another place on the Turkish incursion into northern Syria:

“On 9 October, following the US announcement that it would withdraw its troops from the region, Turkey launched a military operation in north-east Syria. Turkish troops have pushed into northern Syrian towns and villages, clashing with Kurdish fighters over a stretch of now 125 miles. The UN estimates that at least 160,000 people have been displaced in less than a week.

From the outset, the UK Government have warned Turkey against taking this military action and, as we feared, it has seriously undermined the stability and security of the region. It risks worsening the humanitarian crisis and increasing the suffering of millions of refugees. It also undermines the international effort that should be focused on defeating Daesh.

[LORD AHMAD OF WIMBLEDON]

I can tell the House that, on Thursday 10 October, I spoke to Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu and expressed the UK's grave concerns. On Saturday 12 October, the Prime Minister spoke to President Erdoğan to reinforce those concerns and urge restraint. I also addressed the issue at the NATO Parliamentary Assembly on Saturday and, yesterday, the EU released a statement, which we joined, condemning Turkey's unilateral military action and calling on it to withdraw its forces.

The United Kingdom Government take their arms export control responsibilities very seriously and, in this case, of course, we will keep our defence exports to Turkey under very careful and continual review. I can tell the House that no further export licences to Turkey for items which might be used in military operations in Syria will be granted while we conduct the review.

Yesterday, as honourable Members will know, the US signed an executive order to impose limited sanctions on Turkey, including against senior members of Turkey's Government. The EU considered this and on balance decided against sanctions at this stage. However, we will keep the position under careful review.

It is only right that, as we condemn this military intervention, we also recognise some of the legitimate concerns that Turkey has in relation to the 3.6 million refugees that it has taken from Syria and its concerns around the threat to its security from the PKK at its southern border with Syria.

For decades, Turkey has been a staunch ally in NATO, one of the largest contributors of military personnel. But with close partners, we must at times be candid and clear. This is not the action we expected from an ally. It is reckless and counterproductive and plays straight into the hands of Russia and the Assad regime. The UK Government call on Turkey to exercise maximum restraint and bring an end to this unilateral military action".

2.55 pm

Lord Collins of Highbury (Lab): My Lords, I thank the Minister for repeating the Statement. Anyone who heard the first-hand account on the "Today" programme on the radio this morning will be extremely shocked by the consequences of this illegal action. Clearly it is time for a very strong, robust response. I am concerned that the Foreign Secretary in the other place constantly referred to our robust export licence regime and said that we would keep the matter under review. Surely it is now time to say that there will be no more arms and that we will ensure there is a proper review of our existing exports, to ensure that British arms were not used in this terrible attack.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: First, I welcome the noble Lord back to his rightful place; it is good to see him back on his feet. I assure him that we are looking at the situation very closely. We take our arms export control responsibilities very seriously. As I said in repeating the Statement, we will review our situation regarding exports to Turkey and keep it under careful consideration. I also assure the noble Lord that no

further export licences will be granted to Turkey for items that might be used in military operations in Syria. This is currently under review; I can give him that reassurance. Of course, the other important thing to bear in mind is that we continue to raise the deep concerns we have bilaterally. As I said in the Statement, the situation has gone from bad to worse, with the plight of 160,000 displaced people adding to what was already a crisis on the ground. This is in dire need of resolution. Turkey really needs to show restraint and we need to ensure support for those refugees who have now been additionally displaced in the region.

Baroness Northover (LD): My Lords, this is indeed an extremely dangerous situation. Following on from the noble Lord, Lord Collins—I am also very pleased to see him back—the Statement says that the Minister's right honourable friend the Foreign Secretary,

"addressed the issue at the NATO Parliamentary Assembly on Saturday".

However, although his speech mentioned various trouble spots around the world, I find absolutely no mention of Turkey's incursion into Syria, or even of Syria itself. He makes reference to the,

"relatively minor disputes between us".

Did the Minister just talk about being "candid and clear"? Is the Statement not misleading on this very important matter?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Not at all. While hearing what the noble Baroness said, I know for a fact—and said so in the Statement—that my right honourable friend the Foreign Secretary has spoken directly to the Turkish Foreign Minister. The noble Baroness will also recall that, after the initial announcement from the US, he spoke to Secretary of State Pompeo. He has dealt with this issue robustly and continues to do so. Turkey is an ally. It is important that we have candid exchanges with it and what I said in the Statement stands.

Lord Hannay of Chiswick (CB): My Lords, does the Minister agree that his statement about arms exports sounds awfully like weasel words? How on earth do you define which arms might be used in a major military operation such as this? Could he therefore say how the position we are taking compares with the position taken by the French and German Governments, which, as far as I know, have cut off all arms supplies? Could he also comment on whether, with the gathering criticism of Turkey's action, it might be useful to go back to the United Nations and see whether we can get a more clear-cut position there than we were able to when we tried, quite rightly, last week?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: On the noble Lord's second point, as Minister for the United Nations I can assure him that we continue to look at this through all multilateral fora, including the United Nations. As he acknowledged, we sought to do so only last week. On export licences, I have been clear about any currently being granted to Turkey. He also mentioned the French and German statements. I will look at these in more detail, but I understand that they were for new licences announced by the French and German Governments.

I assure the noble Lord that we have a robust regime for our arms and defence exports, and will continue to look at this situation very carefully.

Lord Howell of Guildford (Con): Can my noble friend say whether the American authorities have explained in full their rather convoluted policy on this horrific situation? It is very hard to follow, and the media here seem unable to explain the switches and changes in the White House. Can he also explain what was behind the comments of his right honourable friend the Secretary of State for Defence, as reported in the *Times* this morning? Unlike the noble Baroness, Lady Northover, I detected a rather sympathetic reference to the Turkish incursions, which sounded extremely strange. Can he explain that?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The withdrawal of US troops is very much a matter for the US Administration. We have made it clear in the bilateral discussions that we have had—including the one I referred to earlier—that this has serious implications, which have been qualified in what we have seen on the ground. We remain concerned about the continuation of the coalition against Daesh, a primary purpose of the global coalition, which we remain committed to supporting.

On the remarks made by my right honourable friend the Secretary of State for Defence, I have repeated the Foreign Secretary's statement that our position with Turkey is very robust. It is an ally. We understand that Turkey has concerns about certain organisations which are also proscribed organisations here in the UK but, at the same time, we did not support the action it has taken and do not do so now.

Lord Morris of Aberavon (Lab): My Lords, rather a long time ago, I had ministerial responsibility for all arms exports. In view of the immense concern about the situation, would it not be better to stop all arms exports temporarily, pending the review? Then, if the review is satisfactory, the situation can be considered in that light.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: I acknowledge the insights and experience of the noble and learned Lord, but I have stated what our current policy is. I restate that we have a robust regime in place and no further export licences will be granted to Turkey for items that would be used in military operations.

Baroness Hussein-Ece (LD): My Lords, according to reports I have read, the German Chancellor spoke directly to President Erdoğan, urging him to declare a ceasefire, as others European nations have done, to avoid any more terrible bloodshed and displacement. Have the British Government done the same?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: I assure the noble Baroness that, as I said in repeating the Statement, my right honourable friend the Prime Minister has spoken to the President of Turkey. We have not only urged restraint but called out that its actions were unexpected and unwarranted. On ensuring that the emerging humanitarian crisis in the region is given priority, let me further reassure the noble Baroness that we will continue to engage directly with Turkey—which, as I

have said on a number of occasions, is our ally—to ensure that our views, and the views of you Lordships' House, are made clear.

Lord Alton of Liverpool (CB): My Lords, a few moments ago the Minister said that a principal reason for our involvement in north-east Syria has been the defeat of Daesh. Vast numbers of people have been released from camps in north-east Syria. Some of those whose names I gave to the Minister and the noble Earl, Lord Howe, over the weekend, have been directly associated with Daesh and are now on their way to the streets of Europe. What is the Minister doing to ensure that these people are apprehended as soon as possible, and, more importantly, brought to justice by creating internationally recognised mechanisms under the convention on the crime of genocide?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The noble Lord expresses a concern, shared by us all, about exacerbating the situation of not just those Daesh fighters but the families who were held. I assure him that I am in receipt of his email, which he referred to, and that we are looking at each case very closely. Where people are identified as due for prosecution—for example, if they arrive back in the UK—it will be for the Crown Prosecution Service to look at each matter individually, and appropriate action will be taken against those who committed these crimes.

Lord Wigley (PC): My Lords, is it not disgraceful how the Kurdish people have been treated in this matter, after the stance that they took against Daesh only a short period ago? What will the Government do to show their sympathy and support for, and understanding of, the plight of the Kurdish people in these appalling circumstances?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: I agree with the noble Lord and, as I said from this Dispatch Box only last week, we should keep the plight of the Kurdish community and those who led and were part of the global coalition at the forefront of our minds. They played a vital role in the defeat of Daesh—its geographical defeat, not an ideological defeat—and we stand ready to support them, particularly with humanitarian support. The decision taken by the US is regrettable and not one that we supported. Furthermore, the actions of Turkey are not ones that we support. We will seek to lend whatever support we can to the Kurdish communities on the ground, particularly those being displaced and in need of humanitarian assistance.

Football: Racism

Statement

3.06 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Baroness Barran) (Con): My Lords, I would like to repeat in the form of a Statement the Answer to an Urgent Question in the other place on the subject of racism in football. The Answer was as follows:

“Thank you, Mr Speaker. Like Members of the House, I was appalled by the disgusting racist abuse encountered by the England football team in Bulgaria last night.

[BARONESS BARRAN]

Whether they are a player, a manager or a supporter, no participant in sport should have to tolerate discrimination of any kind. I would like to pay tribute to the leadership shown by Gareth Southgate and his coaching team, as well as to our players for how they conducted themselves in appalling circumstances. I have spoken to the Football Association to express my support.

We have made progress in this country to combat discrimination in our domestic game and make our stadia more welcoming places to be. The Government are supporting a number of anti-racism initiatives, including the Premier League's "No Room for Racism" campaign and the "Show Racism the Red Card" and "Kick It Out" campaigns, all of which have achieved a great deal in this area. In February this year, my department held a summit on discrimination with a range of bodies acting within football but we cannot be complacent and must remain a leading voice on this issue internationally. International competitions should bring cultures and countries together and, while it was a step in the right direction to see the protocol engaged last night, it is clear that much more needs to be done to stamp racism out of the game".

3.08 pm

Lord Griffiths of Burry Port (Lab): My Lords, I am grateful for that response. What contrasting images, on two successive days, between typhoon-struck Japan on the rugby field and these disgraceful exhibitions of racism on the football field in Sofia. Of course, the vocabulary available to us for condemning this must be used properly and powerfully. I wonder whether it is not the outbreak of something that lurks beneath the surface and is therefore much more widely worrying than simply what happens on the football field. That gives a sense of urgency to our need to respond. I note that the Bulgarian Prime Minister has spoken out and that, subsequently, the president of the Bulgarian Football Union has resigned. Clearly, within Bulgaria there is feeling about this too. Perhaps we should try to keep our diplomatic channels open and our arms outreached to embrace the positive side of Bulgarian society, as well as being critical of the damning and damnable incidents that we have all been witness to.

Baroness Barran: I thank the noble Lord for his reflections. Like him, we welcome the positive action that was taken so promptly by the Bulgarian Government last night and note the resignation of the president of the Bulgarian FA. The noble Lord is right that there are wider forces at work here. We have worked for a long time to try to stamp out racism in all parts of our society, but particularly in football, and we continue to be vigilant.

Lord Addington (LD): My Lords, I thank the Minister for repeating the Statement and for the sentiments she expressed. It took concerted action by both the football authorities and the Government to clean up the game here to the extent that we have. What steps are being taken to get the Governments of all the UEFA countries to take action together to make sure racism is not tolerated, so that there is consistency of action across the piece?

Baroness Barran: I thank the noble Lord. In response, I repeat the spirit of the comments made by my honourable friend in the other place. He is open to meetings and to supporting every effort in this area. We are clear that the football authorities need to be in the lead in solving this but, as the noble Lord noted, Governments can be useful in supporting them. My honourable friend the Minister is committed to doing that.

Lord Bassam of Brighton (Lab): My Lords, it is 19 years since I took legislation through this House to tackle racism and hooliganism in our stadia. Will the Minister now look again at the legislation and consider making racist chanting and other racist behaviour in stadia a more severe and aggravated offence? Will she also press ministerial colleagues to ensure that international standards on this subject are raised and brought in line with those in this country? We have led the way in tackling these issues.

Baroness Barran: That was before my time, but I commend the noble Lord for the work he led in this area. I am happy to take away his suggestions and consider them. The Government have been active in trying to work with the football authorities; we met them in February this year. Actions were published in July, and we are keen to see how those translate into practice.

Lord Cashman (Non-Aff): My Lords, does the Minister agree that the only route out of this discrimination is through education and information? We have made great progress in this country; I welcome developments in Bulgaria. On education, does the Minister agree that we should support head teachers and teachers whether they are working in Bulgaria or Birmingham?

Baroness Barran: The noble Lord is right that education is an important part of this, and it is included in some of the proposals the football authorities published in July, as well as improving reporting systems, better training and support for referees and stewards and improved use of CCTV. It is not one single thing that will address this but a combination.

Baroness Browning (Con): My Lords, watching the television footage of the Bulgaria match, it was obvious that one could identify the faces of many of the culprits. What action is going to be taken against those individuals? If my noble friend does not know, perhaps she could make inquiries. Are we going to see the same people turn up at football matches elsewhere? It was quite obvious that they were not there for the football.

Baroness Barran: I do not have a specific answer to my noble friend's question, but I will inquire and write to her.

Baroness Armstrong of Hill Top (Lab): My Lords, we have to be careful that we do not become too complacent. Those of us who continue to love football, who go to matches even when they are terrible, know that this is still an issue in this country. We have none the less the richest league in the world—the Premier League—and it could and should be doing far more,

influencing what is going on internationally but also working not just through Premier League clubs but throughout the Football League, with grass-roots clubs that are struggling to survive and do not have the money for education and training programmes and so on. Is it not about time that the Government made it clear to groups such as the Premier League that they have a responsibility and cannot let us down by pushing it off?

Baroness Barran: The Government have made it very clear how strongly they feel about these issues. We believe that the football authorities should be in the lead in delivering on this, but there was a renewed commitment this morning from the Minister to make sure that that happens as quickly and effectively as possible.

The Lord Bishop of Leeds: My Lords, it is very clear that what we saw in that match yesterday is just part of a much wider issue around the rise of far-right fascism in eastern European countries. Are the Government paying attention to that, and to the context in which this particular phenomenon in football fits in?

Baroness Barran: I think the Government and noble Lords are aware of the rise of far-right extremism. Sadly, that has certainly come through in statistics in our own country. We are working extremely hard to counter it.

Lord Stirrup (CB): My Lords, does the Minister not agree that this is not just about football or one country? We are seeing a growth of extremist views and ideologies across our societies that harm us all. What is required is not simply to condemn them but to see a renaissance of international leadership on behalf of the values and standards we have long held dear and for which those who went before us fought and died. If she agrees, from whence does she think such international leadership might spring?

Baroness Barran: My view is that one should always start with oneself; we can all play a part in that leadership. I hear the concern of both the noble and gallant Lord and the right reverend Prelate about what is happening more broadly in our society. I absolutely acknowledge that, but would temper it with the importance of celebrating some of the extraordinary work going on at a local level to bridge those divides, both between faith communities and across other divides. We need to keep some balance in this narrative.

Lord Campbell of Pittenweem (LD): My Lords, to return to the point made by my noble friend Lord Addington, it is generally recognised that UEFA has been pretty spineless in dealing with incidents of this kind. Might I respectfully suggest that the Minister approach her colleague the Minister for Sport and seek a direct audience with UEFA senior officials to encourage them to take exactly the kind of approach to incidents of this kind which public opinion in this country undoubtedly deserves?

Baroness Barran: My understanding is that my honourable friend the Minister is writing or has written to UEFA and is open to a meeting if that is what is requested.

Queen's Speech Debate (2nd Day)

3.18 pm

Moved on Monday 14 October by **Baroness Anelay of St Johns**

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty as follows:

“Most Gracious Sovereign—We, Your Majesty’s most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Lords Spiritual and Temporal in Parliament assembled, beg leave to thank Your Majesty for the most gracious Speech which Your Majesty has addressed to both Houses of Parliament”.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon) (Con): My Lords, it is a great honour to open this debate on Her Majesty’s gracious Speech. I am equally delighted to be joined by my noble friends Lady Goldie, Lady Sugg and Lord Callanan. He has the unenviable task of closing what I am sure will be an expert and wide-ranging debate.

Over the course of the next two days we will consider in detail this Government’s approach to foreign affairs, defence, international trade and our relationship with Europe—all matters on which your Lordships’ House is highly qualified to comment and advise. The common thread running through the strategic purpose of all these departments of state is, of course, their outward-looking international focus. As a consequence, they share a responsibility not only to protect our people and promote our prosperity but to project our influence on the world stage as a pragmatic champion of our shared values and a steadfast defender of our interests. All these topics were eloquently covered by my noble friend Lady Anelay, my predecessor in this role and a former Minister of State at the Department for Exiting the European Union, in her Motion for a humble Address, and by my noble friend Lord Dobbs in his seconding of the Motion. As ever, both delivered their speeches with wit and wisdom in equal measure.

In today’s shifting global landscape, with the rules-based international system coming under challenge from an aggressive Russia and a rising China, from trade tensions and terrorists and from intractable conflicts and climate change, global Britain is needed more than ever. In addition to these challenges, there are also a great many opportunities to be seized beyond our immediate horizon. Sometimes they are the flipside of the same coin: you just have to look at the vast economic potential associated with innovating to tackle climate change.

In anticipation of our departure from the European Union, our international departments have been making the necessary preparations to ensure that the United Kingdom is ready to meet these challenges and seize these opportunities from day one. I will set out some of the ways in which we are doing just this. I turn first to my own department, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Our efforts are focused on strengthening our partnerships, reaffirming our commitment to the rules-based international system and championing our values.

[LORD AHMAD OF WIMBLEDON]

To strengthen our partnerships, we have undertaken the biggest uplift in our diplomatic network in a generation—work started under the leadership of my right honourable friend the Prime Minister when he was Foreign Secretary. By the end of next year we will have boosted our staff numbers by more than 1,000 globally and upgraded or opened 14 new posts, making us the third-largest diplomatic service in the world after the US and China.

Our departure from the EU gives us the opportunity to reimagine our relationships with our European partners, both bilaterally and with the EU as a whole, so that we can maintain and strengthen our security, trade and personal ties with our closest friends and allies. The injection of more than 500 new staff across our European network has given this work new impetus. We also have the opportunity to broaden our horizons beyond Europe, deepening our trading ties with the world's growth markets, from Asia through to Latin America. To give one example, the total GDP of the 10 ASEAN nations has grown almost sixfold in less than 20 years to nearly \$3 trillion, offering huge scope for UK companies. That is why we have established a dedicated mission to ASEAN in Jakarta, which will work closely with our new regional trade commissioner, based in Singapore. In Latin America, Africa and Asia, our £1.2 billion prosperity fund is supporting innovation and skills to boost incomes and attract foreign investment, bringing benefits to local people and international companies alike.

We are also determined to increase our co-operation with our Commonwealth partners. Many noble Lords have that as a key area of interest. They will know that this unique organisation speaks for one in three of the world's people. We are determined that their voices should be heard. As a body representing so many small island states and countries vulnerable to climate change, the Commonwealth has a vital role to play in promoting action on this very issue. We also believe that there is significant scope to tackle key issues such as modern slavery and to increase intra-Commonwealth trade and connectivity. Just last week my right honourable friend the Secretary of State for International Trade, Liz Truss, hosted a meeting of Commonwealth Trade Ministers at which precisely these issues were discussed. Members agreed to enhance co-operation on shared priorities such as e-commerce, fisheries subsidies and the reform of the World Trade Organization. For the remainder of our period as chair in office of the Commonwealth—and beyond—I assure noble Lords that the UK will continue to strive to promote the potential of the Commonwealth as a real force for global good.

These partnerships of course are not just about trade; it is important to state that they are also about working together internationally to build and maintain peace, stability and prosperity and defend the rules-based international system, which I know my noble friend Lady Anelay focused on in her contribution. This means building international alliances to counter unacceptable behaviour, as we did after the Salisbury incident—many noble Lords will remember that time. It means maintaining critical international agreements such as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, with

which we are working with European partners to bring Iran back into compliance. It means engaging with all concerned to avoid further bloodshed in north-eastern Syria, and using our seat on the Security Council to drive action on pressing issues, as we are doing currently on the Rohingya crisis and the conflict in Yemen, to name but two. It also means supporting reform of the World Trade Organization as an essential arbiter of disputes and the champion of free trade.

Finally, and possibly most importantly, our vision for global Britain is about promoting our values: human rights—an issue that noble Lords know I personally focus on—equality, democracy and the rule of law. We want the United Kingdom to be a moral anchor in the world, a global force for good, championing causes that really matter and which transcend national boundaries. That is why, through our Department for International Development, we spend 0.7% of our gross national income on tackling poverty, ensuring that we spread opportunity around the globe. Indeed, development will sit at the heart of our international agenda as we leave the European Union and look ahead to our presidency of the G7, and deliver on our vision of a truly global Britain.

To meet the sustainable development goals by 2030, the United Nations estimates that an extra \$2.5 trillion will be needed every year to drive poverty reduction in developing countries. If we are to play our part in overcoming this challenge, the United Kingdom must mobilise significant private sector investment. That is why my right honourable friend the Secretary of State for International Development, Alok Sharma, announced the launch of a new International Development Infrastructure Commission in the summer, to provide expert advice on how to accelerate investment in low-carbon, sustainable infrastructure.

Educating girls is one of the best investments countries can make to reduce poverty and truly achieve sustainable development goals. That is why last month at the UN the Government announced a further £515 million—more than half a billion pounds—to help more than 12 million children, half of them girls, to get into school. Of course, children can benefit from schooling only when they are healthy, which is why we are turbocharging efforts to end the preventable deaths of mothers, newborn babies and children in the developing world by 2030, and leading the global response to the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which is vital for global health security.

Furthermore, as a force for good in the world, we are taking a leading role in defending media freedom, preventing sexual violence in conflict—which to me remains a personal and key priority as the Prime Minister's special representative, and on which we are determined to maintain international momentum—and driving further action on important issues. Yes, that means—also importantly—prioritising climate change. At the UN climate summit in September, my right honourable friend the Prime Minister announced the doubling of UK investment in international climate finance to at least £11.6 billion over the next five years. That includes £1 billion to launch our new Ayrton Fund for climate innovation.

In July this year we held the world's first international conference on media freedom. Next month, in November, we will host the PSVI international conference, which will bring together Heads of State, Foreign Ministers, the UN and civil society to bring justice and accountability to survivors of sexual violence in conflict. Next year, we look forward to hosting COP 26 in Glasgow, in partnership with Italy. These major international gatherings will all serve to raise global ambition on all these vital priority issues, and demonstrate the influence and convening power of the United Kingdom.

On defence too, we are meeting the threats of today while preparing for the challenges of tomorrow. Thousands of our brave men and women are at this very moment deployed in every part of the globe. I know we sometimes have different perspectives, but I am sure that I speak for every Member of your Lordships' House when I pay tribute to our brave men and women for all they do. In recent months this has included: helping to secure the lasting defeat of Daesh in Iraq and Syria, although that remains something that we have to be live to; countering Boko Haram in Nigeria; providing vital hurricane relief in the Caribbean; protecting international trade in the Strait of Hormuz; and enforcing sanctions against North Korea—of course, while maintaining our continuous at-sea nuclear deterrent. These are just some of the initiatives and engagements that our brave men and women are involved in.

We are also getting ready to face the future in a number of ways; first, by investing. The recent spending round increased the defence pot by £2.2 billion. Our people are our greatest asset and with the budget rising to over £41 billion by 2021, we can invest in better accommodation, better childcare and better career pathways for our Armed Forces personnel.

We are also investing in world-class kit in every domain. On land we are working with BAE Systems to develop lighter ammunition, reducing the load our troops have to carry by as much as 26%. At sea—the noble Lord, Lord West, makes an opportune entrance—our future fleet is taking shape. I will pause at that point in case he wishes to say anything. We have 11 new warships in the pipeline. Last month my right honourable friend the Prime Minister announced that we will build five Type 31 frigates, which I am sure the noble Lord, Lord West, will appreciate. They will join our Type 26 global combat ships, our next-generation nuclear deterrent submarines, and our two new aircraft carriers, themselves armed with world-class Lightning F35 stealth fighters. That will be a truly global Navy capable of projecting power from anywhere in the world.

We are also investing in the future of our air power. We have signed a statement of intent with Italy to co-operate, alongside Sweden, on developing our next-generation Tempest fighter and our future combat air strategy. We are creating new technology to detect, track, identify and defeat rogue drones. Moving from air to space, 50 years after the launch of our first satellite, Skynet 1, we are developing Skynet 6 to give our forces unparalleled capacity to talk to each other in any hostile environment.

World-class defence requires a world-class defence industry. This thriving sector already supports more than 250,000 jobs across the United Kingdom, both

directly and indirectly. In the aerospace and security sectors alone, our exports are worth nearly £20 billion a year. We want to match that success in the maritime sector. Type 31 signals a sea change—a dynamic and adaptable vessel primed for the international market, a ship designed with exportability in mind. But it is not enough for our yards to rely on Navy contracts. We need to get them match-fit for global competition. That is why the Ministry of Defence and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy are coming together and joining forces with industry to improve shipyard productivity, enhance skills and boost order books.

Finally on this subject, in defence as in foreign affairs, we are strengthening our global partnerships. HMS "Queen Elizabeth" is currently part of the Westlant 19 carrier strike group deployment off the US east coast, underscoring our commitment to our most powerful ally. Crucially, we are also steadfast in our commitment to NATO as the beating heart of UK defence. With Russia rising and the global threats growing, we are ensuring that the UK remains Europe's leading defence player. We are doing that by exceeding NATO's 2% GDP commitment and delivering the deterrent by offering high-readiness forces; by providing training in Afghanistan and Iraq; by supporting air patrols in Iceland and the Baltics; and by our enhanced forward presence in Poland and Estonia. We have nearly 1,000 personnel serving in the NATO command structure and contributing to alliance operations. In addition, we are leading the agile nine-nation Joint Expeditionary Force, which can complement and plug into NATO missions wherever it is called upon. In short, as we prepare to leave the EU, the UK's defence is not only protecting our security but helping to boost our prosperity and drive our global leadership ambitions.

Turning to trade, our departure from the EU gives us a golden opportunity to set our own independent trade policy for the first time in nearly half a century.

Noble Lords: Oh!

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: I am glad that noble Lords appreciate that priority. We will have the freedom to champion free, fair, rules-based international trade and to open up new markets for UK businesses through an ambitious trade negotiation programme. We will be able to strike new free trade agreements and help UK businesses to expand overseas while giving consumers here more choice in both goods and services.

Among other things, we will legislate to provide continuity for businesses and consumers by enabling continued access to the £1.3 trillion of global procurement opportunities each year, and we will create a new independent body, the trade remedies authority, to protect UK manufacturers against unfair trade practices. Supporting UK businesses to export to other countries is a key priority, and our export strategy is designed to help the UK climb the ranks of trading nations by increasing exports as a percentage of GDP. Last year, exports increased by 3% and now stand at more than £650 billion. The export strategy aims to build on that by encouraging firms to expand into new markets, increasing the information available to help them do so, connecting them to new opportunities and helping to provide the finance they need to succeed.

[LORD AHMAD OF WIMBLEDON]

Additionally, we plan to create a network of free ports across the UK which will boost growth, create jobs and ensure that towns and cities feel the full benefit of life outside the European Union. We have already established a Freeports Advisory Panel and will release further details on how ports and airports across the UK can bid for free-port authority status. We are committed to maintaining the UK's position as the number one destination in Europe for foreign direct investment, with stock levels reaching \$1.9 trillion last year, creating tens of thousands of jobs for UK workers.

I turn, finally, to our exit from the European Union. This Government believe that we must respect the referendum result and leave the European Union on 31 October. My right honourable friend the Prime Minister is clear that he wants to leave with a deal, and we are working with energy and determination towards that very goal. Intensive negotiations are progressing. Just last week, the Prime Minister had a detailed discussion with the Taoiseach, and they agreed that they could see a pathway to a possible deal. There have been constructive negotiations with the European Commission over the weekend, and my right honourable friend the Brexit Secretary is once again today attending the General Affairs Council in Brussels.

The Government's new proposal means that we can leave on 31 October without disruption and in a friendly way. It is a fair and reasonable compromise for all sides that respects the result of the referendum. If it is not possible to reach a deal, the Government have ramped up preparations for leaving without a deal. The Treasury has made available £8.3 billion to prepare for Brexit, including £2.1 billion in August to boost no-deal preparations. To reduce uncertainty for the more than 3 million EU nationals now living and working in the United Kingdom, we have made an unequivocal guarantee that they will have absolute legal certainty over their future status, whether or not we leave with a deal. We continue to encourage other EU member states to do as much as they can to protect UK nationals living within the European Union.

The challenges the world faces today may be unprecedented, but the opportunities are plentiful. As the United Kingdom prepares to leave the European Union, we are prepared to address with determination, vigour and confidence our future aspirations and goals with hope and optimism. We are raising ambition around the globe to confront myriad challenges, from intolerance and inequality to climate change. This means that we are bolstering our support for persecuted Christians and broader religious freedoms around the world, by implementing the recommendations of the Bishop of Truro's review of our work at the Foreign Office; spending more than £200 million to ensure that 1 million vulnerable girls across the Commonwealth receive 12 years of quality education by 2030; helping to reduce tropical deforestation in developing countries through mobilising \$5 billion by 2020 in co-operation with both Germany and Norway; protecting more than 4 million square kilometres of British waters by 2020 through working with our overseas territories to establish a marine protection blue belt; supporting trade and investment in least-developed countries by maintaining duty-free access after breakfast—

Noble Lords: Oh!

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: Sorry, after Brexit—and after breakfast. If you stand here for 20 minutes, you start thinking about breakfast. I am sure that noble Lords are listening with great diligence. I will repeat that line because it is important. We will support trade and investment in least-developed countries by maintaining duty-free access after Brexit and by hosting the Africa investment summit in January. We will play our part in the fight against climate change by legislating for net-zero emissions by 2050, developing the world's largest offshore wind capacity and helping 47 million people around the world to cope with the effects of climate change.

With our bold policy agenda across foreign affairs, international development, defence and international trade, we believe that we are equipped. We are ready to broaden our horizons. We are ready to support our friends. We are ready to continue to strengthen our work with our allies, as well as to stand up for what is right while enhancing our own prosperity here at home.

3.41 pm

Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town (Lab): I heard from behind me: "Does he believe all that?"

My Lords, I am delighted that this two-day debate rightly places our relationship with the EU in the wider context of defence and foreign affairs, because our relationship with our near neighbours, trading partners and close friends lies at the heart of our wider global defence, security, commercial and diplomatic relations. Indeed, how we see ourselves and our place in the world, including our obligations and responsibilities as well as our interests, should guide how the Government plan to withdraw from the EU, supposedly in 16 days' time, and how we construct our future relationship with this vital 27-country bloc.

I choose my words carefully: I speak of obligations because of our history and I speak of our responsibilities because of our economic and defence strengths, our democracy and the rule of law. Historically, we have been seen in both bad and good lights. In acknowledging both, we should be proud of our role in the creation of international institutions and conventions, from NATO and the ILO, and from post-war reconstruction and support for emerging democracies, to rules-based trade and the promotion of human rights.

Relationships can be altruistic and promote solidarity while also benefiting our own interests. This is clearly the case in security, in trade and in promoting peace and increased redistribution. For all of those, the EU has been a major locus of activity. It was born of the need to secure European peace, aligned to increasing trade and embedding democracy. After we joined, we helped to harness the democratic impulse in former dictatorships, including in Spain, Portugal and Greece, followed by those emerging from the Soviet yoke. That is why so many of us wept on the morning of 24 June 2016.

Yet, at that moment, we still hoped that those same impulses—for a peaceful continent, for greater fairness and for economic and democratic growth—would steer the UK's negotiations with the EU. How disappointed

we have been. That is because there was, sotto voce at the start, the desire to break free from European standards voiced as “setting our own rules”. What that actually meant, and which is now clear under this Prime Minister, was the ending of the level playing field, which has done so much to harness the competitive and entrepreneurial instinct without jeopardising worker, consumer or environmental rights and standards.

The Prime Minister wants the extensive level playing field to go and to be replaced by a relationship based on the UK taking control of its own regulatory affairs and trade policy. That is shorthand for a deregulated, low tax, low standards economy—despite undermining our trade with 500 consumers across the 27, despite having to follow US rules rather than ones set here, despite pinning our hopes on a protectionist President and Congress suddenly opening up their markets to our exporters and despite putting faith in a President who will disregard the Kurds without a moment's hesitation to shore up favours with a Turkish autocrat. What a pity that the Government did not listen to the wise words of the noble Lord, Lord Finkelstein, that while:

“Leavers have high hopes of a closer transatlantic relationship ... the United States is hard-headed and self-interested”.

Instead, Liz Truss disregards Trump's behaviour, seeing, “the largest opportunity ... with our closest ally and biggest trading partner—the United States”.

This extreme leaver plan is about lower food, consumer, hygiene, employment, environment and living standards.

Who will pay the price for this bargain basement approach? It will be working people, consumers, public services and future generations, while the whole country will pay for a no-deal exit with common foreign policy and security being perhaps the major casualties. Today we have heard again warnings from motor manufacturers of the bleak future that any no-deal exit would bring.

Challenges about Brexit go much wider. They are about the sort of country we want and the role we want to play in the wider world. Some big decisions face us. As the European Council meets there are choices for the Government and thence for Parliament and the people. If the Prime Minister does negotiate a deal, because of its importance to our nation Labour will insist on it being put to the people in a referendum. Voters need to hear and debate not just the divorce arrangements—the withdrawal agreement—but the vision for our future relationship with the EU, which is the political declaration, and decide whether that is the right way forward for the UK, and particularly for Northern Ireland. But should the PM fail to negotiate a deal, despite what the Minister has said, we, I believe with the support of this House and the Commons, will ensure that he obeys the law by seeking to extend the Article 50 period and not crash out in the way we have just been threatened with again. In fact, it is almost certain that, deal or no deal, or as looks more likely, a failure to agree by Thursday, an extension will be needed in any case. We hear that a withdrawal agreement Bill would comprise 100 pages or so to implement any Brexit deal. It must be completed ahead of treaty ratification, while the Constitutional Reform and

Governance Act 2010 needs 21 sitting days before a treaty can be ratified—unless the Government are thinking of repealing that Act as well.

We are curious about the reintroduced Bills, which the Government did not dare to complete before Prorogation. They assured us that they were not needed before exit. The Bills cover immigration, fisheries, agriculture and trade. The Trade Bill is particularly important given the amendments made in your Lordships' House, handing Parliament a role in approving post-Brexit trade agreements such as with the US. Without that change, Parliament will have almost no say in the ratification of trade agreements.

Given that the Government, as we have just heard, are prioritising new trade deals as their main aim, we need to be sure that Parliament will not be excluded from them. Will the Minister assure the House that the amendments made here will be retained in the new Bill, including the government amendments—particularly those to maintain standards in agriculture and other goods? Or is he assuming we will not need the Bill, so that the Government can again pause it if they do not want our rather difficult amendments? Would they not actually find a commitment to staying in this customs union helpful in persuading the Commons to support whatever deal they are fiddling with in Brussels?

Our future—economic, social, security and cultural—may well be determined over these coming days and weeks, so we need straight answers from a Government led, according to Sam Knight in the *New Yorker*, by, “a British leader with a complicated relationship with the truth”. The same author writes:

“Brexit has caused an intricate, wicked crisis in British politics”, which is why we need a new way out of this dilemma and a new way of discussing our role in the wider world.

I have not ventured into defence, security or aid, nor the myriad global issues that will be covered by noble Lords over the next two days, and by my noble and newly bearded friend Lord Collins when he winds up tomorrow. Suffice it to say that Brexit can be handled only if we see it in this wider context and with a hard-headed appreciation of the future demands, responsibilities and opportunities for the UK. From watching the Government's fumbling attempts at a deal there is little evidence that there is any hard-headed thinking at all.

Yesterday there was no compelling vision of Britain's role in the world in the Queen's Speech, nor anything to give me confidence that our future is safe in Mr Johnson's hands, so I hope that Parliament will rein him in—for the sake of all our grandchildren.

3.52 pm

Lord Wallace of Saltaire (LD): My Lords, the Minister's opening speech displayed a spirit of faith-based optimism worthy of Boris Johnson himself. In the hard light of the real world, after three and a half years of internal arguments within the Conservative Party and the right-wing media, Brexit negotiations are being crammed into the narrow gap between the end of the Conservative Party conference and the parliamentary deadline of 19 October. So far, we know only that any agreement reached would leave the UK in a looser relationship

[LORD WALLACE OF SALTAIRE]

with the EU than Theresa May had proposed, and that in future Britain would be looking for other preferred international partners than the member states of the European Union.

I will focus on the pledges in the Queen's Speech that the Government will continue to,

"play a leading role in global affairs ... be at the forefront of efforts to solve the most complex international security issues ... champion global free trade and work alongside international partners",

to which I add the Leader of the House's declaration yesterday that the UK will be,

"a strong and reliable neighbour";—[*Official Report*, 14/10/19; col. 19.]

I am not sure to whom.

There is a central contradiction at the heart of the Government's rhetoric about our place in the world after we leave the EU. Yes, the Prime Minister refers from time to time to "our European friends", but the mood music—which our continental neighbours hear loud and clear—is of hostility, in particular to Germany and France: that we are escaping from a new German empire; that British Europhiles are traitorously plotting with the French Government, or even the Belgians; and that we can be free only if we cut the multilateral ties we have negotiated with them for half a century. Last week Jacob Rees-Mogg again referred to the EU as the German empire—I say to the noble Lord, Lord Lilley, who is intervening from a sitting position—displaying as weak a grasp of European history as his recent book displayed of English history.

Lord Lamont of Lerwick (Con): The noble Lord just referred to people referring to the EU as an empire. What was his reaction to Mr Verhofstadt saying to the Liberal Democrat party conference that the EU was indeed an "empire", and to one of his aides being revealed in a BBC documentary as having said that the UK was now its "colony"?

Lord Wallace of Saltaire: I do not recollect anyone saying that the UK was now its colony; I look forward to receiving chapter and verse. The European Union is a confederation of countries in which Britain, from the time that we joined, has played a major part, alongside its other major players. That is what we believe and that is what we wish Britain to continue to do.

Once we have escaped from our neighbours, the Prime Minister promises that we will rediscover ourselves as a more global Britain. But no one has defined what the phrase "global Britain" might mean. A lengthy Commons inquiry concluded last year that it had entirely failed to discover a plausible definition, including from the Foreign Office or from outsiders.

Seventy years ago, Winston Churchill, on whom the Prime Minister apparently models himself, redefined the foundation for Britain's place in the world as resting on three pillars: our special relationship with the United States, our position in Europe and our role in what was then the Commonwealth and Empire. Ten years later, Harold Macmillan realised that we could maintain the special relationship with the United States only by embedding ourselves in the developing

institutions of European co-operation and applied, with American pressure behind him, to join the European Economic Community. The right-wing lobby within the Conservative Party that bitterly opposed this shift was then called the League of Empire Loyalists—the European Research Group is its lineal descendant.

Macmillan recognised that the end of Empire would leave the Commonwealth a useful association but not a strategic partner. Harold Wilson, as his successor, withdrew British forces from their expensive deployments and bases east of Suez.

Lord Cormack (Con): The noble Lord has made a profound mistake. He knows that I sympathise with him on many things, but the League of Empire Loyalists was never a member or part of the Conservative Party. It disrupted Conservative conferences, including one that I was at in 1956. I know a bit about it and he is wrong.

Lord Wallace of Saltaire: I apologise to the noble Lord. I am glad to hear that they were at Conservative Party conferences, but at that point on the outside rather than on the inside. I withdraw that point.

Lord Carrington, as Margaret Thatcher's first Foreign Secretary when she became Prime Minister, played a leading role in developing European foreign policy co-operation, as did his successors, Geoffrey Howe and Douglas Hurd. British foreign policy over the past 45 years has been shaped through European co-operation—above all, through working with our French and German partners, from the creation of the Group of Seven as a forum for concerting European influence in transatlantic relations to the close co-ordination of the three Governments' positions in the nuclear negotiations with Iran, which reached an agreement that President Trump has now torn up.

British influence in the world has been amplified because we spoke as a leading member of a European caucus of nearly 30 states, working together with the UN, in other multilateral organisations and in negotiations over regional conflicts. A British foreign policy without European co-operation at its heart is like a polo: it has a hole in its centre. Leaving the European Union takes away Churchill's European pillar and takes it away at a time when the special relationship with the USA looks to be in more doubt than at any point since its creation in World War II, with an American President who is entirely transactional and has no truck with myths about the Anglosphere or the special virtues of the English-speaking peoples.

The Commonwealth network remains an asset to the UK, but we should not exaggerate how far it enables us to punch above our weight. Yes, many Australians and New Zealanders feel a continuing affinity with Britain but there are limits to how far they will offer us trade or business concessions out of family sentiment. Liam Fox and other Eurosceptics expected India to welcome freer trade with Britain in return for supposed fond memories of the past benefits of British imperial rule, but the Indians' interpretation of their national history, unsurprisingly, is different from ours. They will have noticed the recent neglect of the Indian role in World War I in how we commemorated the centenary of that conflict. There was not much

evidence of British gratitude for the major Indian contribution, so there is little encouragement for Indian gratitude from the descendants of those who fought.

When Boris Johnson was Foreign Secretary he promised, in a rambling speech, that the new global Britain would return our forces east of Suez. He spoke of British ships passing through the Malacca Strait to patrol the South China Sea, as if we still had a massive Navy which could intimidate the Chinese and partner the United States on the other side of the globe. He referred to Diego Garcia, in the middle of the Indian Ocean, as “a major British base”, although it is actually a major US base, with somewhere between 10 and 20 UK personnel to maintain a British presence, and he spoke of expanding our presence in the Persian Gulf, without explaining where we would find the ships or men or what would be the strategic rationale for doing so. It was wonderful stuff for a newspaper column, though perhaps best for something like the *Boy's Own Paper*, if the older Members of this House remember that, but it was deeply irresponsible for a Foreign Secretary to conjure it up when he had not the faintest idea of how to put such a proposal into practice.

Certainly, we have a strategic relationship with the Sunni Arab monarchies. Half of our arms exports go to Saudi Arabia and the Emirates, which makes us as dependent on them as they are on us, and we depend on flows of investment from those oil states to cover our persistent external deficit in trade and finance. I note that the owners of the *Daily Telegraph*, the newspaper that has vigorously demanded that we must take back control of our country from foreigners, are now hoping to sell the Ritz hotel to the sovereign wealth fund of Qatar or Abu Dhabi. Another bit of prime London property will thus slip out of British ownership and control.

If the Government are to fulfil their promise to place Britain,

“at the forefront of efforts to solve the most complex international security issues ... alongside international partners”,

they would be actively engaged in multilateral diplomacy on the overlapping conflicts between Syria, Turkey, the Kurds, Iran, Saudi Arabia, the Emirates and Yemen. Instead, the Conservatives' most experienced Middle East Minister, Alistair Burt, has had the Whip withdrawn and will be standing down at the forthcoming election. We are withdrawing from ongoing consultations with our European partners on Middle East issues, which is the opposite of demonstrating that we are a “strong and reliable neighbour”, so we are left to cope with the contradictions of American foreign policy towards the region—withdrawing forces from Iraq and sending extra forces to Saudi Arabia.

The Prime Minister's determination to negotiate a looser future relationship with the EU than even Theresa May envisaged means that we will lack the mutual trust or the institutional links to maintain a partnership with our neighbours in foreign policy. We will therefore be dependent on the United States as our global partner, as the United States becomes a less reliable partner. The Government have only just realised that a US-UK trade agreement would not get through the US Congress if the British Government had been seen to be hostile to Irish interests. They are still in denial

that their repeated promises of freer global trade have come up against the US Administration's attack on the World Trade Organization and its developing trade conflicts with China and the EU. The White House has even picked on Scotch whisky exports as a target for higher tariffs on the European Union.

Boris Johnson's global Britain looks like an empty phrase. We will have no close international partners to work with and no strong and reliable neighbours whom we trust in a world facing a global recession, rising trade conflicts, violence across two continents and the threat of climate change. If the hard Brexit we are negotiating leads Scotland and Northern Ireland to drift away, leaving England alone without one-third of the UK's land mass and the vital Scottish base for its nuclear deterrent, we will find ourselves a little England, standing alone without friends or influence. Is that what Conservatives are willing to contemplate?

4.04 pm

Lord Mackay of Clashfern (Con): My Lords, I do not feel competent to enter into all the speculations that the noble Lord has just made. It is somewhat of a surprise to me that Mr Churchill thought that the European Union was an important part of the UK's arrangements with Europe. I think that the Council of Europe was what he had in mind, and I believe that that institution has had a very important role ever since he had the idea of setting it up.

As I said, I will not get involved in speculation about history. Rather, I am inclined to look at what we are supposed to be doing, and I do so in the presence of the distinguished author of Article 50—and subject to what he has to say about this, if he wishes to correct me later. However, I claim to have a certain amount of experience of looking at documents and European documents in the European Court of Justice, albeit a long time ago, although experience of that kind tends to stick with you.

First, I think that Article 50 is quite plain that the withdrawal agreement is one thing—it is an agreement—and, apart from and distinct from that, are the future relations, which are the subject of a framework, not a legal contract. The withdrawal agreement is definitely an agreement and is specified as such, but the framework is a distinct and therefore, I believe, less precise arrangement than the withdrawal agreement.

Secondly, it is the withdrawal agreement and the withdrawal agreement only that determines when, or whether, we leave the European Union. The date is fixed by the withdrawal agreement and, when it comes into force, we leave the European Union. If there is no agreement, Article 50 says that the member state wishing to leave will leave two years after the original request or at the end of an agreed further period.

I do not profess to know anything about the negotiations except what I read about them in the newspapers, although they do not all say the same thing and I do not find the descriptions of what is going on particularly clear. However, I feel strongly that the future relationships are not, and should not be, part of the withdrawal agreement, and the attempt to make them so destroys the purpose of the distinction between the two.

[LORD MACKAY OF CLASHFERN]

The arrangement as envisaged in Article 50 seems to be that, once a member state has withdrawn under the terms fixed in a withdrawal agreement, it is no longer a member state; it is a sovereign nation that can enter into negotiations for the future, and those future relationships are to be negotiated then. There is a certain amount of bowing to that in Mrs May's agreement, if I can call it that. There is a good deal of reference to what is to happen in the future.

I was willing to take the view that the risk of the backstop coming into force was very small and that it was therefore something that Parliament should be able to accept. However, the more I think about it, the more I am of the view that the backstop has no place whatever in the withdrawal agreement. As a possible very simple draft, I have suggested as an amendment to the May agreement that all provisions dealing with future relationships come into effect only to the extent agreed upon in the agreement envisaged in the political declaration. I submit to your Lordships that that clarity is necessary if we are to avoid getting into very great difficulty. I cannot see, for example, how the detail of customs unions and the like can be determined without knowing the detail of the trade agreement; yet the trade agreement is for the future—it is a future relationship.

I strongly take the view that we must try to work in accordance with Article 50. We are not here to make up a new basis for leaving the European Union; that has been very clearly specified. For a legal document, it is extremely clear and makes the very important distinction that I have tried to press between what goes into the withdrawal agreement—which reflects the present situation—and determining the future relationship. Agreeing, for example, what is to happen about paying money, and to people from other parts of the Union who are in the UK and people from the UK who are in other parts of the Union, has to be determined at the time of the withdrawal agreement. That having been done, the withdrawing member is then independent and able to seek agreement on the lines of future relationships.

I understood at the time of the initial discussion on this matter that the European Union had said it was not prepared to discuss the future relationship until the withdrawal agreement was settled. Instead, the two appear to have been amalgamated in a way that makes for extreme difficulty. I think it is very important that we keep Article 50 in mind. I regard it as a tribute to my Scottish colleague that he was responsible for the draft.

4.11 pm

The Lord Bishop of Coventry: My Lords, the Queen's Speech made clear the Government's intention,

"to work towards a new partnership with the European Union based on free trade and friendly co-operation".

As we have heard, the noble Baroness the Leader of the House spoke yesterday of the Government forging,

"a new relationship with our partners in the EU that will cement our reputation as a strong and reliable neighbour".—[*Official Report*, 14/10/19; col. 19.]

I declare a very personal interest in such friendly co-operation: a hope that we may indeed be a strong and reliable—good—neighbour with the sort of obligations and responsibilities noted by the noble Baroness, Lady Hayter.

Last Tuesday morning, my German daughter-in-law gave birth to her first child in Cologne. I have spoken in your Lordships' House before about her wedding to our son in the ruins of Coventry Cathedral: a place once desecrated by hatred and violence, sanctified by their vows of love, and witnessed—most movingly, I found—by their grandmothers, whose fathers and husbands had fought to kill each other in the First and Second World Wars. It was the fulfilment in two families of a 1940 Christmas Day commitment, broadcast by the BBC from the ruins of the bombed cathedral, to find a way to reach out to enemies and turn them into friends.

There is no doubt that friendship between the UK and other countries of the EU has been under much strain since the referendum, especially in recent weeks. On Sunday night, I spoke with the chairman of the German board of the Community of the Cross of Nails, which emanates from Coventry and works for reconciliation in places of conflict in every land. He told me how he could not help feeling personally rejected by the UK and how troubled he was by the violence being done to language, with truth, he said, being bent for domestic political ends, releasing anti-German sentiment in popular discourse. We agreed that the work on European reconciliation, which we had thought was largely done, has become an urgent priority again.

I ask the Minister: what is the strategy for repairing the damage done to our relationships with European partners, not only in government but at every other level of society? How are the Government encouraging civil society to get ready for Brexit by shoring up relationships and friendships between cities, organisations and schools, just as we are in the churches? Will the Government commit to making every effort to ease the flow of interaction in the future between people, not only for the exchange of goods and services but for human exchanges of every sort including, critically, those between young people and schools? Will they give detailed attention to that in future legislation? Moreover, although there has been some toning down of the military language avowed even by the Prime Minister himself, are the Government determined to ensure that the language and methods of the final stages of negotiation of a deal will allow what John Henry Newman, canonised in Rome on Sunday, described as the "parting of friends" when he moved on from the Church of England?

When the result of the referendum was heard in Dresden, the main act of a large festival was interrupted by a spontaneous outburst from the crowd singing, "You say goodbye, we say hello". For the sake of my granddaughter, alive today because of the friendships built between our nations after the enmity of the past, I pray that the future between her two countries will begin with a new hello, perhaps marked by some form of powerful national symbolic gesture, and that it will be sustained by the virtues of friendship and good

neighbourliness: reliability, mutual concern, commitment to each other's interests, loyalty, truth, kindness, crossing to the side of the road where there is need, binding up wounds and the like.

A new partnership, "based on free trade and friendly co-operation", will, as we have heard, raise questions about the relationship between competition and co-operation. How do we safeguard our commitment to friendship from erosion by our quest for economic advantage? It is a particular form of challenge for our foreign policy that will loom large right across our international trade negotiations post Brexit. Will we be as resolute as the noble Baroness, Lady Berridge, was in a previous debate on this subject—I know this is also very much the Minister's intention—in ensuring that the values, including those on human rights of every sort which underlie our nation, will be carried into the negotiating room and not left at the door?

If Brexit has taught us one thing, it must be that the money god is an unreliable master. The EU has shown that it has higher ideals than money and it has remained impressively faithful to them. People who want to leave the EU have shown that they care about more than money and are prepared to bear economic cost for the gain of other prizes. Perhaps that sets a vision for our nation's place in the world: to be a champion of goods and values, principles and purposes, that have a higher price than gold; to provide financial, legal and commercial services and manufacturing products of the highest income-generating capacity, but in a way that serves the common good of humanity by being a good neighbour and a reliable friend.

In conclusion, does the Minister agree that the way to fulfil the noble aspiration to be a moral lantern in the world is to be the sort of friend and neighbour who is truly concerned with not only our interests but the interests and the good of others, and that that is tested by our attitude to our nearest neighbours?

4.19 pm

Lord Grocott (Lab): My Lords, one thing which we can all agree upon, I think, is that not for decades has there been such an acute period of political and constitutional uncertainty as that which we are experiencing at present. We do not know whether there will be a general election, whether there will be a vote of no confidence or whether we will leave the EU. Our constitutional conventions are threatened, our courts are increasingly involved, our political parties are divided, Parliament is paralysed, and public confidence in and respect for Parliament is diminishing by the day.

Inevitably, as a result of all this, political debate is course and bitter. I would even go so far as to say that our political culture, the accepted norms of our national debate and decision-making processes are seriously threatened.

The symptoms are complex, but the cause of all our present difficulties is not complex at all. It is incredibly simple. In 2016, both Houses of Parliament voted, virtually without dissent, that the issue of whether we should remain in the European Union was something that should be decided not by the House of Commons but by the British people in a referendum. We, the

parliamentarians, also decided the precise rules under which the referendum would be conducted and the precise question that would be on the ballot paper.

We all know what happened next. Leave won, and ever since, a significant number of parliamentarians, though by no means all remainers—I certainly do not put everyone in the same category—have used every possible procedure to obstruct, delay or even try to reverse the result of a referendum which, I repeat, almost all of us voted for.

There is no point whatsoever in holding referendums if those responsible for implementing them—the parliamentarians—will only do so if they agree with the result. That also applies to any suggested second referendum. Why on earth would I, who voted leave, agree to a second referendum, when I know from bitter experience that even if I win, it may not make any difference?

We have all heard the excuses for not implementing the referendum result. We are told it was not clear what leave meant. Well, it is crystal clear to everyone outside "Confused of Westminster". If you leave any organisation, at the very minimum you do not have to obey the rules of the organisation and you certainly do not have to pay the subscription.

In any case, two can play at the "What does it mean?" game. What does remain mean? Does remain mean continuing to pay our current subscription? Does remain mean joining a European army? Does it mean ever closer union, with more laws to obey over which we have no control? Does it mean losing our rebate? Does it mean ever greater dominance and control from those members of the EU who are members of the eurozone? The truth is that the future is uncertain, whether we remain or leave. It is always uncertain. Life is uncertain.

The tactics of the unreconcilable remainers have at least evolved over time. First, we were told that the referendum did not really mean anything, that it was purely advisory and that it would be fine for the Government to ignore it. Then it was said that the real choice was not between remain and leave, but between a hard Brexit—or even the hardest of hard Brexits—and a soft Brexit. However, when Mrs May offered the softest of soft Brexits, they said: "No, thank you very much", by a large majority. Their next tactic was saying: "What we want is a People's Vote". In the finest Orwellian tradition, the purpose of the people's vote would be to reverse the 2016 vote of the people, but there was no agreement as to what question should be put to the vote, or even how many questions there should be, except, of course, that remain must be on the ballot paper.

The latest tactic is the so-called Benn Act, in which a majority of the Commons were united in the view that our departure from the EU should be delayed for a further three months. The problem is, of course, that that was all they were united on. Ask them what the three months' delay is actually for and they are all over the place.

The most bizarre suggestion, from some, is that they want what they call a Government of national unity. It would of course be a Government of national unity with a passionate remainder as Prime Minister and a Cabinet full of remainers, so the losers in the 2016 referendum would achieve national unity for us all by excluding

[LORD GROCOTT]

the leavers and reversing the referendum result. The mind boggles at the logistics of it all. Who would be the Prime Minister? Who would be the leader of the Opposition? Would Her Majesty be required to make another Queen's Speech? What about the Chamber in which we sit? Presumably, for a Government of national unity we would all have to sit on the same side.

There are yet more severe remainers who want to go even further. They want to revoke Article 50 by a simple vote in Parliament, so that the votes of 17.4 million people in a referendum could be overturned by 326 votes in the House of Commons. It may be democracy, Jim, but not as we know it. These people who want to revoke Article 50 seem to believe that we can all pretend that the last three years, including the referendum, never really happened.

I can just imagine the letter that a revoking Prime Minister would have to send to the EU. "Dear Monsieur Barnier", it would say, "First, let me apologise unreservedly for all the inconvenience to which we have put you during the past three years. It was all the result of a dreadful mistake that we made when we asked the British public whether we should remain in or leave the European Union. I can assure you that, in the future, there will be no more nonsense about consulting the people".

This Parliament is enveloped in a political and constitutional quagmire. The cause, as I have said, is very simple: the failure of Parliament to honour the referendum. All the parliamentary and constitutional shenanigans are a direct result of this. Unpalatable as it may be to many in this House there is only one solution to this problem, and that is to leave the European Union. I voted leave but, in a spirit of national unity, I would like to end my remarks with the words of a remainer. This is Sir Anthony Meyer, writing in this week's *Sunday Times*. He said:

"I voted to remain but believe that it is a moral and political imperative to honour the referendum result".

Well, so do I, and I know that millions of our fellow citizens, leavers and remainers, think exactly the same.

Lord Anderson of Swansea (Lab): If I may correct my noble friend on one thing, Sir Anthony Meyer was my former boss in the Foreign Office and a former Conservative MP for Eton and Slough. My noble friend means Sir Christopher Meyer.

Lord Grocott: Yes, I did.

4.28 pm

Baroness Miller of Chilthorne Domer (LD): My Lords, the gracious Speech shows just how out of touch with people this Conservative Government are because outside Westminster—in London, Bristol, Leeds and small towns up and down the country—people, but especially the young, are really worried about climate change. It is a lot more than just a worry; as they realise, it is indeed a crisis.

Does climate change feature as a major issue in the gracious Speech? No. Does it appear in paragraphs one, two or three? No. Not in fact until paragraph 21 does a small throwaway phrase appear, saying that the Government,

"will prioritise tackling climate change".

Your Lordships can imagine the conversation that went on. Someone read the gracious Speech and said, "Oh no, we haven't mentioned climate change". The other person then said, "Oh, just stick it in at the end and say it is a priority", which is really not good enough. The Minister, in his normal charming way, went some way to filling in a bit of detail on the Government's thinking about climate change. However, the gracious Speech lays out the Government's priorities, and it is simply not there.

On a happier note, and before I address the main substance of my remarks, I give warm congratulations—I am sure other noble Lords will join me—to the Ethiopian Prime Minister, Abiy Ahmed, on receiving the Nobel Peace Prize recognising his critical role in building long-term peace in the war-torn Horn of Africa. I had the privilege of being part of a parliamentary delegation to Ethiopia and, some years later, meeting many Eritrean refugees. His work is very welcome and we should recognise it warmly.

I turn to the less happy subject of Brexit and the preparations for a no deal, a report on which the Government published yesterday. I will talk particularly about UK nationals in the EU. I declare an interest as someone who lives and works in France. Last week, I went to an outreach meeting in Bergerac in the Dordogne, organised by the British embassy. A couple of hundred people were there, but their worries represented those of many thousands, ranging from healthcare to pensions, reciprocal qualifications to driving licences.

Running through the meeting was a fundamental bewilderment. These people had moved to France when the UK was a member of the EU and they thought they were coming to a permanent arrangement—not like someone moving to a third country who knows that things are going to be different. They had no say in what was happening; many did not even get a vote in the referendum, despite the Conservatives' promise of a vote for life being in at least two of their manifestos. That is an utterly broken promise. If we have an election now, will they again be promised the right to vote, only to find that those are more hollow words?

These people are angry, bewildered and very worried. At its well organised outreach meeting, the embassy's staff tried to answer as many questions as they could. They had invited the directrice of citizens' rights for the Dordogne—a French functionary—to address the concerns of those present. What could she and the embassy staff say? She said that the French Government's intention is to make life as smooth as possible for UK citizens needing to apply for residency. However, neither the staff nor the French Government still have any idea whether they are working to a no-deal scenario, a deal, or a bilateral reciprocal arrangement.

When the House of Commons was bitterly divided, the one unifying item was the Costa amendment: that citizens' rights should be agreed, regardless of whatever happens otherwise. When it was clear to the Government that this was not going to happen, why did they not pursue the issue on a bilateral basis? They have only done it in a piecemeal way. They have signed bilateral reciprocal arrangements with Spain, Portugal and Luxembourg but not with any other member states. When no deal seemed even a vague possibility, the Government

could have worked flat out to secure as many bilateral agreements as possible, especially with member states which number several thousand Brits as residents. Why did they not take that approach? They took it with EFTA states and just got on with reciprocal agreements.

The Government say they have spent £11 million providing clear factual information to UK nationals in the EU, but with so many doubts and things undecided and unresolved there are almost no clear facts. If your Lordships look at the Government's *No-Deal Readiness Report* from yesterday, on page 46 alone there are many examples of non-facts:

"UK nationals intending to drive in the EU may need to obtain an International Driving Permit ... EU Member States may no longer recognise prescriptions issued by UK",

doctors. Healthcare reciprocal arrangements will last for only six months after Brexit and during registration "if necessary", as it says on page 43. But who will decide whether it is necessary? Registration times may vary widely from country to country. What if your cancer appears in month five? Will you get only one month of treatment? These are very real worries.

There are also worries that may seem smaller to your Lordships but which are very real to those people.

"Pet owners ... may need to take additional steps",

say the Government. Also, what sort of change in the status of professional qualifications will there be? That will undermine people's ability to earn a living. Those in receipt of a state pension will receive it, but upgrades are guaranteed only until 2023. After that, UK nationals in the EU will be at the mercy of the Treasury—not a comfortable place to be. How can withholding upgrades be even the slightest bit fair to people who have spent a lifetime contributing? Active British members who live in the EU will no longer be able to vote or stand as councillors in their local community, except in countries where the Government have come to a reciprocal agreement. All in all, nothing is at all clear or factual except that British embassies, if they are really going to help UK nationals, will need considerable extra resources.

The most vulnerable, those with severe illnesses such as cancer or who are going through a crisis such as divorce or death of a partner, will have their nightmares increased enormously. They will be dealing with that nightmare in a foreign language and without any really clear guidance. What scale of resource is the Government intending to devote to vulnerable UK nationals in the EU in the event of no deal? The Government talked in the report yesterday of outsourcing some of the work to a third-party supplier if times get busy. That really leaves you with a bit of a chill—will it be, "Press 2 if your partner has just died, or, press 3 if they have dementia or need help of some sort"?

The Government have a duty of care to UK nationals in the EU. In the event of no deal, they will have to increase resources to embassies exponentially to deal with the next few months. Let us hope that we do not get to that stage. There is a long bit of this game yet to play, but I heard those worries and I think they are very real.

4.37 pm

Lord Jopling (Con): My Lords, it is 55 years almost to the day since I was first elected to serve in this building. While making allowances for myself as a grumpy old man, I am bound to say to your Lordships that never in peacetime—and I remember the war very well—have I been so gloomy and anxious about the state of the world, of the nation, of Parliament and of my party. I agreed very much with the first few sentences of my old friend the noble Lord, Lord Grocott, who talked about uncertainty. I did not agree with many other things he said, but I will leave that aside.

I spent last weekend at the conference centre across Parliament Square at the annual meeting of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, with which I have been heavily involved for many years. I was struck by the overwhelming criticism there of Turkey's recent invasion of Syria. I have to ask myself: how can our belief in a world order fail to be shattered when the United States leadership one week gives Turkey the green light to invade Syria, which is what it did, and then, when it does, imposes sanctions on what is supposed to be a fellow NATO member? It seems that President Trump has taken lessons from the Grand Old Duke of York.

My concerns about the state of the nation, of Parliament and of my own party are, of course, centred principally around the Brexit situation. I cannot disguise—this is well known to many of your Lordships—that I have a profound feeling that the nation took leave of its senses when it voted for Brexit. But of course I accept the decision to leave. For three years I have been trying to point out to your Lordships the folly of Mrs May's Administration saying soon after the referendum that we would be leaving the single market and the customs union. I believe that she was led by the nose by the early negotiators, whose enthusiasm for a hard Brexit was matched only by their incompetence as negotiators.

Certainly in this House, many of us have warned repeatedly about the double whammy of having, on the one hand, our industry—I refer your Lordships in passing to my interests as a farmer—exposed to a flood of cheaper imports and, on the other hand, our exports to the European Union having to pay the penalty of the extra cost of the common external tariff. This is a major double whammy and I have never got a coherent comment from the Government on the implications of these two man-traps. I have no idea whether that is because my colleagues in government do not understand the dangers of this double whammy or because they are deliberately not talking about its implications.

That takes me to this week's crucial negotiations. One of the more sensible recent comments came, surprisingly, from Mr Rees-Mogg, who said that there must be compromises. Indeed there must be. Having had some experience of Brussels negotiations many years ago, I hope that a compromise can be worked out in the hours that lie ahead. They are well used to stopping the clock in Brussels when there are critical negotiations. Years ago I held the record—I do not know whether I still do—as president of the Agriculture Council for keeping that council in a continual sitting for 91 hours before getting an agreement at around 4 am on the following Monday morning.

[LORD JOPLING]

There is one way that a great many of the current arguments could be resolved. That would be to thrash out a version of the Norway agreement. I know that some people will feel that this has been considered before, but I still think it would be possible to build a compromise on the Norway agreement. It would, at a stroke, resolve the Northern Ireland problem. It could still be done; it would be hated by the extremist caucus within the Conservative Party, but it could be the basis of an agreement. If only Mrs May had not foolishly put her head into this noose of leaving the single market and the customs union, the whole issue of Brexit could have been settled months ago.

I tackled the Minister only two weeks ago or so—he is now sitting on the Front Bench—when he said to us that the Government hoped very much to get a deal but that, “We shall be leaving on 31 October”. I do not understand the logic of making those two statements. If we cannot get a deal and we say that we shall be leaving on the 31 October, that clearly would be against the law, and action would have to be taken in the courts to make sure that the law was upheld.

This whole suicidal tragedy has caused lasting damage to Parliament and to my party. It was an extraordinary act of party management to take the Whip away from those 21 Members—an action by a governmental faction who themselves as individuals were well used to voting against the Government. It seemed an extraordinary act of party management, especially when the government majority hung by only a fragile thread. In my four years as the Government Chief Whip, I never took the Whip away from anyone—although I am bound to say I was sorely tempted. It only makes martyrs of those from whom you take the Whip, and, in party-political terms, it runs the almost certain danger that, if they run again as independents, you will lose that seat to another party.

So, while I am not enthusiastic about or sympathetic towards Brexit, I hope that we can thrash out a deal this week. If Parliament were to agree, I would not be averse to putting it to the electorate again, with the option of remain, in another referendum. However, I find it intensely irritating when people talk about the prospect of a “second referendum”, as we should recall that it would in fact be a third referendum. The first referendum was the one we had five years after we joined the European Community, in the mid-1970s. It was widely agreed at the time that that referendum would put the whole issue to bed for the future. But some people niggled on, wanting a second one, which they succeeded in getting in 2016. They got it then, but the same people now say that if we were to have a third referendum in the months or the year or so ahead of us, it would be a travesty—yet they were the people who could not accept the first one we had in the 1970s.

I hope that we can get a deal and put this whole thing behind us, one way or another. I believe that there are possibilities for getting a deal in line with the suggestions I have made to your Lordships this evening.

4.48 pm

Lord Kerr of Kinlochard (CB): It is always a pleasure to follow the noble Lord. I was not planning to speak about Brexit at all today, on the grounds that my views on Brexit are very well known to the House, and I rather suspect that whatever I say today will not greatly affect the negotiation in Brussels—although I am sure they are following our debate intently.

The third reason I was against speaking about Brexit is because I am sure that we will have plenty of time. It is impossible that by 31 October there will be a completed treaty ready for ratification by the two Parliaments: this Parliament and the European Parliament. It is also, in my view, inconceivable that our Government will have acted illegally and against the Benn Act. It follows that we will have plenty of time.

I want to talk about foreign affairs. I am, however, tempted by the noble Lord, Lord Grocott, and invited by the noble and learned Lord, Lord Mackay, so I will touch lightly on Brexit at the end. Your Lordships may leave before the end.

On foreign policy, I am struck by the tone and the content of the Speech. Of course, it says very little about foreign policy and of course that is wholly understandable because this is not a legislative programme or a programme for a Parliament; this is an election manifesto, and elections are not usually won on foreign policy, so of course there is not much there. What is there, however, is much less than is traditionally there.

I have been thinking about why, and I would like to go back into history a bit. In April 1991, John Major persuaded the European Council, meeting in Luxembourg, to declare a safe haven in Kurdistan. The Kurds were then under attack by Saddam Hussein and hundreds of thousands of them were fleeing into the mountains. It was a major humanitarian disaster. John Major persuaded the European Union that it should not stand idly by and that we would be prepared to send forces. The United States did not react. John Major spoke to the President of the United States. Three days later the United States came on board the initiative. US, British, Australian, French, Spanish and Italian forces went in, and the RAF flew in the skies, as did the US Air Force. Some 450,000 Kurds returned to their homes within three months. The operation was a remarkable success.

What is happening today? The General Affairs Council met in Luxembourg yesterday. Did the Foreign Secretary come up with an initiative? Well, actually, he did not go. He sent Dr Andrew Murrison, who is, I understand, a junior Minister in the Foreign Office. I have seen no reports of what he said. At the General Affairs Council, Foreign Ministers listened to the Foreign Minister of Ukraine talking about the continuing occupation and civil war in part of his country, fomented and funded by Moscow. I have seen no reports of what Dr Murrison said to him. Some in Ukraine remember the Budapest Memorandum of 1994, drafted by the British and agreed by John Major with his Russian, American and Ukrainian counterparts. In exchange for the Ukrainians giving up their nuclear weapons, we guaranteed the territorial integrity and political independence of Ukraine. Some in Ukraine remember that now. The negotiations, such as they are, over

Ukraine's future now take place in what is known as the Normandy format. We are not a party to it. The negotiations on our side are led by Chancellor Merkel, with President Macron. I find this rather shaming. We have excluded ourselves.

Then we read in the Speech that,

“my Government will ensure that it continues to play a leading role in global affairs, defending its interests and promoting its values ... My Government will be at the forefront of efforts to solve the most complex international security issues. It will champion global free trade and work alongside international partners to solve the most pressing global challenges”.

I am not sure we are playing a leading role. I am not sure how we could ensure that we continued to do so unless we changed our views.

On Hong Kong, I very much agree with what the Foreign Secretary said in the other place on 26 September:

“Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy is what guarantees its future prosperity and success”.—[*Official Report, Commons, 26/9/19; col. 864.*]

But in Hong Kong they are saying: what are the UK signatories of the 1984 joint declaration doing—as distinct from saying—to help preserve that autonomy? Are we playing a leading role? Hardly.

“Time hath, my lord, a wallet at his back,
Wherein he puts alms for oblivion ...
Those scraps are good deeds past
... perseverance, dear my lord,
Keeps honour bright”.

How persevering are we now and how persevering can we be, despite the hubris of this Speech, as the twin pillars of our foreign policy crumble?

We say that we will champion free trade, but the greatest challenge to the global trading system is President Trump's attack on the WTO and his belief that trade wars are good and easy to win. We say that we will be at the forefront of efforts to solve the most complex international security issues, but what are we doing to stop President Trump's dismantling of the international arms control architecture which his predecessors—mainly his Republican Party predecessors—built? What are we doing to persuade him that alliances are not transactional but based on trust, and that NATO still matters to all of us, including America? Or that concerted action against global warming is not a conspiracy against America, but deserves American support? Or that help to Ukraine should not be held hostage to digging dirt on a political rival? Or that the Kurds should not be betrayed—or, come to that, that the Turks should not be totally destroyed and obliterated, according to the whim of his “great and unmatched wisdom”, to cite his weekend tweet? Of course, our apparent inability to influence a capricious White House may not be for want of trying—heroic efforts may be being made behind the scenes—but I wonder whether they are enough:

“perseverance, dear my lord,
Keeps honour bright”.

On 13 November 2016—just after the presidential election, President Trump's victory—European Foreign Ministers met informally at an extra meeting to discuss the likely foreign policy consequences of the election. They thought them potentially serious. Our Foreign Secretary, Mr Johnson, chose not to go and denounced the meeting in public as a “collective whingearama”.

Why? Perhaps he thought—wrongly, as it has turned out—that his colleagues' worries were unnecessary, in which case, it should have been his duty to attend the meeting to persuade them of that. Perhaps he thought that deliberate distancing from continental Europe would bring future rewards in Washington. Perhaps it was the mirage of a generous free trade agreement with mercantilist Mr Trump. If so, it was a serious misjudgment. Whatever the reason, the fact is that we cut less ice in Washington today than at any time since Suez.

So too in Europe, where deliberate distancing from continental partners continues. We now have a senior adviser in No. 10 who feels licensed to tell the 27 that if they do not give us the Brexit terms we need we shall withdraw defence and security co-operation. That is an extraordinary statement. We boycotted the September General Affairs Council. We do not know what Mr Murrison said this week about the Kurds or Ukraine, but I do not think he put forward any initiatives. Are we really playing the leading role that the Speech tells us that we do?

Of course, a continuing aspiration towards a leading role in global affairs, even if we are not up for it, is perhaps a good thing, but ambition has to be matched by ability. We have chosen not to be centre stage in Brussels. If we leave the stage altogether we will have even less influence on policy decisions there. The twin pillars were mutually reinforcing: America listened because America believed that we could move Europe; Europe listened because we stuck by our friends and were thought to have America's ear. I worry that the economic damage of Brexit will be accompanied by a further enforced retreat from a global leadership role into a truculent, transactional mercantilism in this country.

Perhaps the country is weary of well-doing. Perhaps perseverance is passive. Perhaps we do not care about keeping honour bright. I hope not, but what are the great global challenges that we should address if we are to live up to what the Speech says? I would say that the three biggest are: defending democracy and human rights in an age of authoritarianism; integrating China, the new economic superpower whose economy doubled in the previous decade, into the rules-based system; and maintaining our societies as open societies while climate change drives major population moves.

Clearly, we can do little against any of those three challenges on our own, so we need multipliers. We need to use the Commonwealth; curiously, it was not mentioned in the Speech, despite the Queen being the Head of the Commonwealth. We need to use what position we can still salvage in Europe and recreate that position in the United States. Then again, we might be able to make a contribution commensurate with our Security Council status, although I hope that we will talk about that less hubristically when it is real than we do now, in this Speech, while it is unreal.

I was almost invited to speak about Brexit by the noble and learned Lord, Lord Mackay. His reading of Article 50 is, of course, absolutely correct. The divorce negotiators are to take account of the framework for the future relationship; by definition, that is a separate document and a separate issue. However, if they were

[LORD KERR OF KINLOCHARD]

to take account of it, it follows that it should have existed and come first in the sequencing. Like Sir Ivan Rogers and Mr David Davis, I spoke up for not triggering Article 50 until we had some agreement on the future relationship—at least on what we wanted it to be. That advice was not followed so we ended up with an unsatisfactory, non-binding political declaration and the phrase about taking account of the framework was ignored in practice. Both sides of the negotiation were wrong in that, but I must say this to the noble and learned Lord: I fear that we are where we are and we cannot expect the negotiators to down tools and go back.

Lord Butler of Brockwell (CB): Would it not be possible, if an agreement appears to emerge this week but cannot be put into legal form, to go ahead with the departure agreement, which leaves out that aspect, and thus satisfy the requirement to leave by 31 October? That seems to be the very valuable conclusion of the point made by the noble and learned Lord, Lord Mackay.

Lord Kerr of Kinlochard: It would not be wise, on either side, or feasible to depart on the basis of an understanding that was being turned into a legal agreement but without that legal agreement existing. Legally, we would move into a very strange status. It is perfectly possible to envisage a deal that can be turned into a legal agreement during an extension period but it is impossible to do that by 31 October and it is unwise—I do not think that either side would want to do so—to go on the basis of a political understanding with no validity in law. I am afraid that I do not agree with the noble Lord.

On the point made by the noble Lord, Lord Grocott, the idea that a 2016 vote, three Prime Ministers ago, can be permanently determinate does not seem to be the will of the people today. You can ask, “Do you want to be consulted or do you want to leave it to Parliament?” If you assume that there is a deal and you ask, “Do you want to be consulted?”, they say by a margin of almost two to one, “Yes, we want to be consulted”. If you assume that there is no deal and ask, “Do you want to be consulted or should it be left to Parliament?”, they say, “Yes, we want to be consulted”, by a margin of more than two to one. Moreover, it is a fact that since September 2017, the opinion polls have consistently shown that the country is now of the view that it would prefer to remain. This year more than 70 polls have been taken of which one gave a victory for leaving. I do not think that a second referendum is just the least worst way out of this fix; it is now the will of the people.

Lord Grocott: If the noble Lord is justifying a second referendum on the basis that public opinion has changed, of course while it can change, I think his bona fides would be absolutely crystal clear to everyone if he said that three years after the second referendum, public opinion could change again and we should then have a further referendum. You cannot hold referendums every five minutes. Even general elections are now legislated for every five years. We had 41 years between what the noble Lord, Lord Jopling, rightly referred to as the first referendum and the second referendum. People were asking for a second referendum after the 2016 vote in 2016.

Lord Kerr of Kinlochard: I entirely agree with the noble Lord. I think that a second referendum, if or, more likely, when it comes, should be mandatory. It should not be advisory.

Lord West of Spithead (Lab): Does the noble Lord agree that to have a robust foreign policy—I agree with everything he says on those issues—we need to have some hard power? Unfortunately, successive Governments have put us in a position where we are probably unable to put blood where our mouth is or to put in sufficient power as a permanent member of the Security Council. We need to have that if we are to fulfil our proper role.

Lord Kerr of Kinlochard: I agree entirely with the noble Lord.

5.06 pm

Lord Liddle (Lab): My Lords, it is difficult to follow such a brilliant speech from the noble Lord, Lord Kerr, but it has brought home to me what a privilege it is to be a Member of this House and I thank him for it. Boris Johnson's Queen's Speech, because that is what it is, is important because it marks a fundamental change in the national strategy of this country. Unlike his predecessor Mrs May, he really has bought into the notion of global Britain and it is that which I would like to explore in my speech.

The idea of a national strategy was first advanced by Alan Milward in his history of how Britain came to accept EU membership in the early 1960s. He described how the post-war national strategy was seen to be failing after Suez. Macmillan then developed a strategy based on joining the European Community for two main reasons. The first was that a close attachment to Europe's markets and being part of what eventually became the single market would provide a very competitive framework for business and a sound basis for investment by the rest of the world. Secondly, if we were to maintain the pretensions of being the closest ally of the United States, politically the key to British influence was that we would have to be at the same time part of the developing European unity, because without it Washington would not take London seriously. That national strategy, which has worked until now with some ups and downs, has delivered for the United Kingdom. The 2016 referendum result was therefore—as I remember the noble Lord, Lord Butler, describing it in the first debate we had after the referendum—a dagger to the heart of everything we thought we had been doing in this country for the previous half-century.

I agree with the noble Lord, Lord Jopling, that Mrs May had an opportunity to build a national consensus immediately after the referendum by taking us out of the European Union but keeping us in the Common Market. That could have been done, and would have won a lot of support and kept us in a very close relationship with our European friends. But that opportunity was not taken, and in the first year of her premiership we heard a lot of jargon. We had the Lancaster House speech and this constant reiteration that “Brexit means Brexit”, without explaining what Brexit meant.

However, I think that Mrs May, as she went deeper and deeper and got more experienced in European questions, basically wanted to save what she could from our membership of the European Union. Economically, she sought the closest possible alignment with the European single market, as long as we could escape from free movement. Politically, she emphasised a continuing wish to work closely with our EU partners on questions such as Russia, Iran, the Middle East and China.

Mr Johnson has opted for something quite different: a different concept of how Britain succeeds and a fundamentally different vision of Britain's place in the world. I do not think this "global Britain" idea is based just on imperial nostalgia. In fact, I recommend to all your Lordships a brilliant article in this week's *New Statesman* by Robert Saunders, a Queen Mary historian, titled "Myths from a Small Island". He thinks that the Brexiteers, including Mr Johnson, have taken on board the myth of the Britain with the buccaneering spirit, the free-trading nation that can conquer the world, and that this lies behind so many of the statements of Jacob Rees-Mogg, Liam Fox and the Prime Minister himself. Quoting Liam Fox, he summed this up perfectly:

"A 'small island perched on the edge of Europe' had become 'the world's largest and most powerful trading nation', not through its military or naval power, but through 'a history steeped in innovation and endeavour'".

This is what Dr Fox sees as our global future, as does Mr Johnson.

Dr Saunders points out how fatally flawed this vision is. First, when Britain dominated the world economically, it was because there were structural conditions that favoured it. We were the workshop of the world and generated enormous wealth that enabled us to have a Royal Navy that ruled the waves. That does not apply today. Secondly, it is very dangerous to perpetuate the myth that, by standing alone, Britain achieves its historical purpose and is at its best. We all buy too much into the Dunkirk myth. The truth is that what won the Second World War was the grand alliance with the United States and the power of the Red Army. Thirdly, Mr Johnson's vision of the world relies so much on what we might describe as the power of positive thinking—the ability to brush aside the harsh realities—

Lord Framlingham (Con): What part does the noble Lord think the Battle of Britain played in the Second World War?

Lord Liddle: The Battle of Britain was clearly important in keeping Britain in the war and keeping the flame of democracy alive. But I said that what won the war was not the Battle of Britain but the alliance with the United States and the power of the Red Army, and I think that that is true.

The power of positive thinking is very important to Mr Johnson and it leads to a kind of hubris that will inevitably lead to nemesis. We see that in the Queen's Speech because three elements of the government strategy do not add up. The first is that we will transform Britain's economic performance through a programme of deregulation, as my noble friend Lady Hayter put it. He says that we will tear away the bureaucratic red tape and release talent, innovation

and chutzpah. Let us hear more about how that will be done. The fact is that the most innovative parts of our economy—the digital economy and the pharmaceutical companies—are desperate to stay in the framework of the single market. They do not want to be liberated from it: they want to be part of a common regulatory zone. The more that the Government present this unappealing vision to our European partners of a Singapore on the Thames, the more difficult it will be to secure preferential access to the single market. We can already see that in the negotiations presently taking place in Brussels.

The second contradiction is that Mr Johnson believes that he can sustain political support for this programme of deregulation through what he calls one-nation policies—addressing the people's priorities of health, education, social care, crime and so forth. He will have great difficulty in doing that because, as the IFS pointed out this week, the forecast for the public sector deficit this year is already some £50 billion. Such policies might be achieved by combining them with increases in taxation, but Mr Johnson wants to slash taxes as well. The one-nation approach that he puts forward is not at all sustainable or likely to last.

The third contradiction is that the Prime Minister strongly believes that Britain can play this world role as a soft superpower, detached from the European Union. But if we are to do that, we need to recognise the Brexit headwinds that we will face. Every serious piece of economic analysis has shown that the kind of deal that Mr Johnson envisages will result in a loss of potential of something of the order of 7.5% of GDP. On that basis, you cannot build many of my noble friend Lord West's frigates or play a leading role in world institutions, and we will find that we cannot pursue a strong foreign policy. If we go down this "global Britain" road, we face a future of great insecurity and uncertainty, and I hope that we can stop this madness before we are locked into it.

5.20 pm

Lord Sterling of Plaistow (Con): My Lords, before I start, I shall say how much I and, I am sure, all those in this House who are or have been involved in defence matters, would like to put on record the splendid contribution made by my noble friend Lord Howe in his role as Minister for Defence over many years. His help, advice, briefings and, if I may say so, in particular his style have been highly appreciated by us all. I am sure my noble friend Lady Goldie, the current Defence Minister, will develop the role in her own unique way. Her excellent, pertinent quips in all her previous roles were enjoyed by the whole House.

Over the weekend I reread the contributions that I and others have made on defence in your Lordships' House, particularly since the 2010 review. The extreme cost-cutting exercise which followed that review was so harsh and ill-considered that to this very day our Armed Forces have still not truly recovered. I was very involved, working with the then Secretary of State, Liam Fox, who fought a strong rearguard action, but the coalition Government would not change their policy. This, I suggest, played a key part in undermining morale and certainly had an adverse effect on the strategic thinking of those in command up to very recent times.

[LORD STERLING OF PLAISTOW]

At last the need for transformation and innovation is now entering the bloodstream of our Armed Forces, led by the Chief of the Defence Staff Sir Nicholas Carter and the other chiefs, but it still has quite a way to go before the mindset of all sleeps and breathes this key attitude of mind in order to transform the future capability of our Armed Forces. The right leadership and a sense of urgency are crucial for these goals to be met and, of course, it is a continuous process. We have unquestionably fallen behind some of our possible adversaries. For example, the Russians have invested heavily in their underwater capabilities, including nuclear submarines. Such activity is the highest it has been in decades. The Chinese aspire to have a five-carrier navy by 2035. One has to ask: for what purpose? Some of our allies, in particular the United States, have substantially increased their defence budget and are way ahead in transformation terms.

We welcomed the statement in the Queen's Speech about our gallant Armed Forces and honouring the NATO commitment to spend at least 2% of national income on defence. Serious extra financial resource is necessary in order strongly to enhance our conventional forces. New moneys will be required to finance areas such as intelligence, cyber, space and other new technologies, which will be increasingly involved in future warfare. It goes without saying that a strong economy is crucial, but it is a matter of choice. The best deterrent to prevent conflict is having the most up-to-date and appropriate capability, taking account of our future global role. Of course, we will have the finest young men and women, highly trained and kitted out with the finest equipment, totally prepared to respond rapidly to the unexpected.

I know that smaller and eastern European member states of the European Union wish us to be the strongest member of NATO in Europe, and this should be an important factor in the Brexit negotiations. I have no doubt that enhancement of our capability would be much welcomed by the Commonwealth.

Although many would say that the world has been a safer place with vastly fewer major conflicts since the last century, or indeed during the last 75 years, many of us would agree with Con Coughlin in last Saturday's *Daily Telegraph*, of 12 October, that the world has become a much more dangerous place, particularly since President Obama started to become isolationist during his term and, now, President Trump is suggesting that the United States is no longer prepared to play the role of world policeman and is fed up with many countries which are not prepared to pay towards the cost of blood and money, as America has done for many years. Although President Trump's very recent decisions with regard to Turkey's attacks have been, to say the least, highly erratic, he still wishes to ensure that the United States' conventional armed forces should be the most lethal in the world on the back of the strongest economy. This latent fire power is a key factor when political negotiations take place with dictatorially run countries such as China and Russia. I believe that if, for example, this country and Europe came under serious attack, President Trump would be the first to direct his military capability to help us out.

I reread the gracious Speech of 27 May 2015 and shall repeat a sentence that Her Majesty stated. She said that,

"my Government will continue to play a leading role in global affairs, using their presence all over the world to re-engage".

I was very curious about who put in the word "re-engage", because noble Lords might remember that at that time we seemed to be disengaging on many fronts. As a matter of interest, I checked with Buckingham Palace, No. 10 and the Ministry of Defence but was never able to find the answer. I considered it to be a key word in the Speech, and it will undoubtedly be key with regard to the future role and responsibility of this great nation in the years to come. I shall repeat some of what I said in that debate four years ago following Her Majesty's reference to re-engaging:

"We are sadly very diminished in world terms. What is more, for the first time people reckon that we have diminished ourselves ... Wherever I go, whether to the United States, China, India, Australia and so on, there is a feeling that somehow or other we are opting out. Frankly, given that my interests over all my working life have been totally international, I find that pretty sad because in practice, wherever I travel, people still look to us as a country for—to use an old-fashioned term—moral leadership, while a huge number of small countries look to us for help and advice".—[*Official Report*, 28/5/15; col. 108.]

That was then; what about now?

The only thing fixed, post Brexit, will be our geography. We will still be an island nation hugely involved and dependent on maritime trade, as we have been for hundreds of years. Global Britain will need all its defence capabilities—in particular, the Royal Navy, which is the only persistent globally deployed force. Defence is like an insurance: the policy pays out dependent on the premium that you pay. Currently, we are paying for value insurance but expecting a "gold solution". However, value comes from spending money more wisely. Transformation is not, I emphasise, an option and cannot wait. Many of the technologies are available now, with some acceptance of risk, but we must speed up and rapidly enhance our capabilities.

Because of my role, I am more familiar with the action being taken in the Royal Navy than I am with that taking place in the Army or the Royal Air Force. I know that the First Sea Lord, Admiral Radakin, the Second Sea Lord, Vice Admiral Hine, and the Fleet Commander, Vice Admiral Kyd, popularly known as "the Trinity", are determined to deliver the transformation process. Indeed, the First Sea Lord said in his very recent public statement that this transformation requires a significant unlocking of departmental policy freedoms to achieve the full potential that allows defence and the Navy to regain the ability to move faster and achieve increased relevance in a rapidly changing world. A fundamental shift in the culture and philosophy across the defence enterprise is required. We need to remove unnecessary and stifling processes that both constrain practical improvement and curtail imagination and innovation. Defence needs to generate incentive, excitement and an imperative for change that it currently lacks.

Key to all the above is a question. I took great note of the comments made by the noble Lord, Lord Kerr, which concentrated on areas covered by that question. What is our long-term foreign policy? Are we going to choose our destiny or will we have it thrust upon us? A full defence review is a must.

I finish by strongly suggesting to my noble friend the Minister that he finds the appropriate time for a major defence debate including, of course, on foreign policy. Such a debate will be most timely and highly welcomed by all political parties and many on the Cross Benches in his House.

5.31 pm

Lord Anderson of Swansea (Lab): My Lords, I fully agree with the well-deserved tribute that the noble Lord has paid to the noble Earl, Lord Howe. I recall from when he has talked about our naval power that, some 25 years or so ago, we were debating 40 frigates and destroyers within our fleet. We now have about 20 and yet, somehow, we still talk of enhancing our “global role”—in which, surely, the Royal Navy should be playing a leading part. How can we play such an enhanced role if our fleet has been reduced to such an extent? The question surely answers itself.

Some 200 years ago, Shelley was looking at the state of England, observing the turmoil, writing his poem in anger and, indeed, sadness. Some of that same anger and sadness must surely be seen by so many of our friends as they look at the United Kingdom today. We all take pride in our constitution. Like many noble Lords, I have addressed conferences about the virtues of our unwritten constitution, its flexibility and the pragmatism of the British people. But, alas, over the past three years, we have failed the stress test of our constitution. Many shortcomings have appeared and many questions, which were under the surface, now appear almost paramount.

The current state of the UK has renewed the debate about constitutional reform by means of a constitutional convention or otherwise including the possibility of a written constitution, and it has boosted our discussion about further devolution or, indeed, independence. Noble Lords may have noticed the poll in last week's *Sunday Times*, which said that 50% of Scottish people would now favour independence. I hear a “Hear, hear!” from my noble friend. As he well knows, we in Wales often have a sort of “Me too” or “Follow the leader” position about Scotland. I know where he would stand on that. It is rather surprising that the unionist party, by its own actions, has created greater discussion about, and support for, Scottish independence and, possibly, according to recent polls, greater support for the independence of Wales—which, in my judgment, if it comes at all, is something far off—as well as more talk about a united Ireland. We must remember, although we would not know this from listening to the contributions from our Northern Irish colleagues, that Northern Ireland—Ulster—voted to remain.

I begin with two preliminary reflections. First, we have as a country been here before. I have just read Claire Tomalin's wonderful biography of Samuel Pepys, and my first reflection is that our situation reminds me of the period of the restoration of the monarchy from 1658 to 1660. So many of the most ardent Parliamentarians at the time suddenly discovered that they were Royalists after all. Could we not apply that to some Cabinet members, in particular, who are now saying stridently and ardently that they are now strong Brexiteers? It is perhaps a sad commentary on human nature that, rather like those Parliamentarians at the

end of the Cromwellite rule, so many Conservative politicians are now discovering that they were indeed Brexiteers.

My second reflection is this. In the 1630s, there were two concepts about the source of authority of government—two concepts that collided in the Civil War. On the one hand, there was the divine right of kings; on the other, there was the sovereignty of Parliament. Now, it was not God but the people who spoke three years ago. The mantra today is, “The people have spoken: long live the people”. Are we seriously suggesting that one snapshot three years ago at one point in time has determined the position of this country, across the board, on foreign and domestic affairs, for as far ahead as is planned? It was well said, I think by the noble Lord, Lord Kerr, that, if there were a poll today, the people would have changed their minds. Are people not allowed to change their minds? Some people give the parallel of a general election, but a general election lasts at most five years and people can then change their minds. We are stuck with one snapshot, taken three years ago, which would change if there was a new referendum.

It is interesting that those who in the past called for the supremacy of Parliament against the foreign power of the European Union have now changed their tune and are rather downplaying the sovereignty of Parliament. The Prime Minister uses the terms “surrender” and “the surrender Act”—a mantra repeated again and again by his followers—yet one surrenders to an enemy. One can hardly properly debate and negotiate with the European Union if one truly thinks of them as the enemy.

Turning to the Queen's Speech itself, and to foreign affairs and trade, it was claimed that we will be free of these shackles and enter the world stage boldly as global Britain. Looking at our resources, it is in part a pipe dream. It is certain that our clout internationally will be diminished. Our status will be diminished, as will respect for us overseas. We will be in a waiting room, waiting for decisions to come to us from the European Union. As for links with President Trump's America, we saw how the Prime Minister kept silent on the Kim Darroch affair, for example, and did not rally to support a member of the Foreign Office at that time. The latest example is of course the dumping of the Kurds. I may be wrong, but I understand that we were not consulted in any way. Giving good warning of a policy change of this sort must surely be a test of a true ally. The only winners in this are President Putin, who gets a boost in terms of Russia's long-standing policy in the Middle East, and, alas, ISIS, as the camps will not be guarded by the Kurds. That is the inevitable consequence of President Trump's unpredictable, capricious decision, which has so dismayed his allies.

As for trade, our comparative weight in and out of the EU must be a major factor. Our market in the UK is 60 million, while the EU is 450 million. Whereas Mr Fox talked about glittering trade deals, he has achieved none. His policy collided with reality. Of course, sentiment plays no role in trade deals. India, for example, will demand concessions on visas and, as the excellent former US ambassador, Ray Seitz, reminded us, the UK is important to the US largely as a bridge

[LORD ANDERSON OF SWANSEA]

to the European Union. Congress has a key role in terms of protectionism by America and pork-barrel politics. We would seek a deal in financial services, but the regulators and lobbies would stand in our way. That “America first” policy was shown in the US-Canada-Mexico agreement and, with US regulatory standards in food, animal welfare and food safety will prove a major difficulty. Our major market is clearly our neighbours in the European Union and, as an outsider, our weight there will be considerably reduced.

I make only this comparison between our Prime Minister and the President. Both obviously have problems with women, but that is not relevant. What is relevant is that both are prepared to use their authority for their own personal ends, as with President Trump in Ukraine seeking to dish the dirt on a potential rival, and the Prime Minister favouring a girlfriend when allocating public money. This is well attested, however much it is denied.

It is crystal clear that we in the UK are living in most uncertain and troubled times—perhaps the most troubled times since just before the First World War and *The Strange Death of Liberal England*. Our constitution is fundamentally under scrutiny; our very existence as a United Kingdom is being challenged at a time when our global weight will be reduced. Navigating this uncertainty requires great statesmanship. I ask a question which again answers itself: does anyone seriously expect that statesmanship to come from our Prime Minister?

5.43 pm

Viscount Ridley (Con): My Lords, I welcome this gracious Speech, especially its emphasis on innovation and science. I would have liked to speak on those topics, but I cannot be here on Thursday, so I will speak on Brexit. Who knows, perhaps this is the last chance to speak on Brexit in the future tense.

Over the past few months, I am sure I am not alone in being told by people elsewhere in the country, “You sit in Parliament—you must know what is going to happen about Brexit”. Fortunately, back in February I was given a perfect riposte to this statement by a sheep farmer in Teesdale, which I have used to deflect it ever since. He said that there are two kinds of people: those who do not know what is going to happen, and those who do not know that they do not know what is going to happen. I think I am in the former category, at least, so I am not going to speculate about what is going to happen this weekend. Instead, I will try to emphasise a simple philosophical truth: that uncertainty is never a reason for not taking risks or for inaction.

Yesterday, we heard from both sides of this House pleas for more understanding of each other's points of view. I am not sure either Front Bench necessarily got the memo, judging by today's contributions, but we must try in this respect. I voted to leave the EU and I hope we do leave. I think it is the right thing to do and I think we will be better off in the long run if we leave, with or without a licence. However, I do not know these things to be true for sure—of course I do not—and most Members opposite do not know that leaving is foolish, that remaining is sensible or that leaving with

no deal is cataclysmic. They cannot possibly know these things with the certainty that they often express. The economy is a complex system with multiple causes, consequences and feedback loops, and so is civil society. Such systems are genuinely unpredictable because of the way in which small changes in initial conditions can lead to large changes in outcome, and the way in which consequences can also become causes.

The inventor and writer Jim Lovelock, whose 100th birthday party I was fortunate enough to attend earlier this year, once said:

“I think anyone that tries to predict more than five to ten years ahead is a bit of an idiot, so many things can change unexpectedly”.

This is why, as Professor Philip Tetlock has shown, in economic forecasting experts generally do less well than taxi drivers. Professor Tetlock ran a tournament testing 28,000 specific predictions from 284 experts over 20 years, starting in the 1980s. He found that, on average, expert forecasters were only slightly more reliable than chance, and that the more famous the forecaster, the worse his or her performance. If we did not know this before, we surely know it now. The forecasts made during the referendum campaign by the Treasury, the Bank of England and the IMF for what would happen to unemployment, the public finances, the stock market and growth if we voted to leave were not just wrong; they were upside down. They foresaw things getting worse when in fact they got better.

Does this opacity of the future not therefore argue that we should not let go of nurse, for fear of finding something worse? Emphatically not. Taking decisions under uncertainty is the dilemma that all human beings face all the time. Staying under the bed is not the best way to get ahead in life. Doing nothing might be even more risky than doing something. In the present case, for instance, the European Union's general direction of travel has grown more centralising since the referendum, especially since the appointment of Ursula von der Leyen, so remaining—or rejoining—will not be on the same terms as those we had in 2016. Therefore, the status quo is also a risky option. As Andrew Lilico recently wrote:

“The EU is not a trade area. It is a political union, with EU citizens, an EU currency, a Parliament, a system of presidents, a civil service, a central bank, an army and border guards. In due course there will be EU taxes, EU debts and EU political parties who have policies for EU spending. The UK does not want to do any of these things. We are just in the way. The EU has tolerated us slowing everything down for far too long”.

Becoming a province in a nascent empire is as big a risk as becoming an independent state again. I used to avoid using the word “empire” about the EU, because it seemed too provocative, but now that we have heard Guy Verhofstadt using the word at the Lib Dem conference again and again—and with fervent approval—I do not see that there can be any doubt as to who the fervent imperialists are in this debate.

There is no risk-free future. We heard yesterday, from my noble friend Lord Dobbs and the noble Baroness, Lady Smith, and today from my noble friend Lord Ahmad, calls for more optimism. This Prime Minister is indeed an optimist. One of the features of a rational optimist is that people like us notice that people tend to be far too pessimistic about the world. Let me give you a couple of quotations from when I

was a teenager and very pessimistic about the world. The economist Robert Heilbroner wrote a bestseller in 1973 in which he argued that:

“The outlook for man, I believe, is painful, difficult, perhaps desperate, and the hope that can be held out for his future prospects seems to be very slim indeed”.

The ecologist Paul Ehrlich, speaking in 1971, said:

“If I were a gambler, I would take even money that England will not exist in the year 2000”.

If we had listened to such people and batted down the economic hatches, opting for de-growth—which I argued for at the time as a precocious teenage idealist—we would have missed out on the greatest increase in human prosperity and welfare any generation has ever experienced, and the greatest decline in poverty, violence and ill health, globally and nationally. Remember what the media said about the Y2K computer bug? A few days before the new millennium, the *Sunday Times* wrote:

“This is not a prediction, it is a certainty: there will be serious disruption in the world's financial services industry... It's going to be ugly”.

So, yes, I am as sure as I can be that the predictions of doom if we leave the EU are exaggerated—because predictions of doom nearly always are—and that the comforts of staying are also exaggerated. I beg this procrastinating Parliament to take the risk of leaving, rather than run the risk of staying, to step into the future and grasp the opportunities of change.

5.50 pm

Baroness Cox (CB): My Lords, during Her Majesty's most gracious Speech, we were reminded of the UK's commitment to be at the forefront of efforts to solve the most complex international security issues and to work alongside international partners to solve the most pressing global challenges. Yet I regret that, in reality, many aspects of British foreign policy have caused more harm than good, as I have personally witnessed in Nigeria, Syria and Sudan.

In Nigeria, the 12 northern states and the Plateau state have suffered for many years from religious persecution. I have visited many of the worst-affected areas, where in recent years increasing numbers of Fulani militia have adopted a strategic land-grabbing policy, attacking local villages, killing innocent civilians, driving farmers off their land and settling in their place. The Nigerian House of Representatives has declared recent killings to be genocide, and the statistics are certainly compatible with this definition—yet time and again our Government have ignored the cry for help from people suffering from Fulani aggression. They provided some help for victims of Boko Haram, but not Fulani.

The Fulani militia are engaged in a well-documented strategic land-grabbing policy. They are demonstrably motivated by an extremist ideology and are equipped with sophisticated weaponry, which has led to thousands of people being massacred and to the permanent displacement of vulnerable rural, predominantly Christian, communities. It is surely too simplistic to label—as previous Ministers have done—such blatant religious persecution as driven by desertification, population growth or competition for resources. They may be factors, but none is the primary factor. Will the

Minister therefore revisit Her Majesty's Government's characterisation of this violence? The longer we continue to minimise the ideological aspects of persecution, the more we deprive those persecuted by the Fulani of the help they so desperately need.

Secondly, I turn to Syria. I am not going to raise the current tragedies of the war in northern Syria, which have been discussed this afternoon already. But, during my visits to Syria, local people consistently emphasised their profound concern over the devastating impact of British foreign policy, including the horrendous effects of sanctions. The Syrian doctors' society in Aleppo told me that these greatly harm civilians, who find it very difficult to obtain adequate supplies of food, medicines and medical equipment.

The situation has worsened devastatingly since the crisis was highlighted in the *Lancet* in May 2015. As far back as that, the medical journal said:

“Life expectancy has been reduced from 75.9 years in 2010 ... to 55.7 years in 2014—a loss of 20 years”,

in life expectancy. The article pointed out:

“The cost of basic food items has risen six-fold since 2010 ... Economic sanctions have not removed the President”,

yet they are,

“among the biggest causes of suffering for the people of Syria”.

Civilians must not be used as a means of applying political pressure on a targeted Government—but, as we speak, it is innocent civilians who are bearing the brutal brunt of sanctions in Syria.

We consistently hear that President Assad and the Syrian state are guilty of numerous instances of human rights violations. I have always said that such atrocities are impossible to condone, and I do not condone them. Yet responsibility for the most brutal human suffering must be attributed predominantly to the insurgency of ISIS and other extremist groups, which have perpetrated genocidal policies and atrocities on an immense scale, including abductions into sexual slavery, torture, burning civilians alive and countless beheadings.

Whether Her Majesty's Government like it or not, the Syrian Government now control more than 80% of habitable Syria and 60% of the overall territory. Many thousands of Syrians of all faiths wish to return to their homes in these areas because they are now safe from jihadist attacks—but they desperately need help with reconstruction. Will the Minister ensure that sanctions do not continue to prohibit this, and that adequate aid will be given to the areas controlled by the Syrian Government?

Will the Minister also explain the apparent gross double standards of Her Majesty's Government's policies? For example, they were promoting good relations with Sudan—“carrots, not sticks”—while the former President, who was indicted by the International Criminal Court, was still in power. His military regime was responsible for the deaths of 3 million people, including genocidal policies in Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile—I witnessed those myself—and the displacement of 5 million people. Sadly, despite al-Bashir's removal in April, attacks by extremists on civilians have continued across Sudan, including on peaceful protesters in Khartoum and elsewhere. Noble Lords will remember

[BARONESS COX]

the brutal dispersal of protesters by the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces in June, which resulted in more than 130 deaths.

The Transitional Military Council and civilian leaders in Sudan have since signed a deal as part of a planned 39-month transition to democracy. I share the Sudanese people's hope that the new constitutional declaration will lead to the formation of a Government who can guarantee stability throughout Sudan. I am also encouraged by the UK's support for the newly appointed Prime Minister, Abdalla Hamdok, who has extensive professional experience and has made it clear that achieving a long-lasting peace agreement is the top priority for his Administration. So there is hope—but, given the complexity of managing the peace process, is the Minister able to identify what specific and immediate support the United Kingdom is prepared to offer, such as the provision of mediators, country specialists and/or technical experts?

Sudan remains in a critical state, with a fragile economy, pervasive corruption and many key sectors still controlled by Islamists. Many fear the emergence of renewed street protests, which could open the door to renewed violence by the security forces. There is an urgent need for economic assistance from Her Majesty's Government to enable the transitional Government to consolidate civilian rule and deliver better services to the people of Sudan.

The Sudan Revolutionary Front has said that it would welcome international involvement, particularly by the United Kingdom and its Troika partners. I would be grateful for an assurance that Her Majesty's Government will maintain their support for and, if necessary, apply pressure on, the interim Government, while demanding a clear timeline for a sustainable transition to democracy. Will the UK use its close historical links with Sudan—as well as its strong diplomatic ties with Gulf states, which will no doubt play a key role in the region's future—to bolster the people's yearning for peace, freedom and democracy?

Many are encouraged by the transitional Government's commitment to grant access for humanitarian organisations to Darfur and eastern Sudan. Yet it remains unclear whether this entails lifting the humanitarian embargo imposed by the al-Bashir regime on the large areas of South Kordofan and Blue Nile controlled by the Sudan People's Liberation Army-North and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North. It would be very much appreciated by the people of Sudan if Her Majesty's Government would make representations to the interim Government of Sudan, urging them to allow cross-border aid to reach the Two Areas to enable the survival of civilians now suffering from severe shortages of food and healthcare.

In conclusion, it is local, innocent civilians in Nigeria, Syria and Sudan whose suffering is too often compounded by the harsh effects of UK foreign policy. In order to be truly at the forefront of efforts to solve the most complex international humanitarian issues, as indicated in the most gracious Speech, the direction and management of aid must primarily involve local, innocent civilians who are suffering and are greatly in need of help from UK foreign policy.

5.58 pm

Lord Taverne (LD): My Lords, I want to return to one of the most important decisions that we face in the near future about the future of Britain as a whole. It is the question of whether we should hold a new referendum. I want to stress how strong the arguments are in favour of doing so.

Brexiters say that we are ignoring the people's will but they seem to assume that the people's will is the same now as it was in 2016—or will be by the time we hold a referendum. Since 2016, a lot of older people—who mainly voted leave—have died, and there will be a lot of new, young voters who will, on present evidence, mainly vote remain. Leaving aside those demographics, what matters is that we now know much more about what Brexit actually means. There have been a number of forecasts by independent bodies such as the IFS and by experts asked by the Government to assess what the future holds. These have produced strong evidence that we will be much poorer, especially after a no-deal Brexit.

I am aware that the noble Viscount, Lord Ridley, says that experts are often wrong. I have a certain bias in favour of the IFS because I was its first director. I am proud of the fact that I nursed it in its early days and acted as midwife to the infant which has now grown into a formidable adult. However, there are other cases where people make forecasts and the evidence begins to support it; we should then take note of it. I differ profoundly from the noble Viscount, who is a sceptic about climate change. There is now plenty of evidence that climate change should be taken enormously seriously.

Viscount Ridley: I draw attention to the fact that I regard the noble Lord, Lord Taverne, as a mentor, friend and ally on the issue of genetically modified crops, on which we have both said exactly the same thing.

Lord Taverne: I quite agree. I have great admiration for the noble Viscount as a scientist; he has written some excellent books about science.

The evidence produced by the IFS and many others—that the future we face from a no-deal Brexit would be disastrous and that, in any event, Brexit means we would be much poorer—is dismissed by Brexiters because any evidence that contradicts their beliefs is dismissed as more of Project Fear. Even if one disregards the forecasts of economists, it is hard to completely ignore the predictions of employers such as the car manufacturers, Airbus, the chemical industry, the pharmaceutical companies and massive numbers of small, and many large, service companies, that if there is Brexit they will move production from the United Kingdom. There are already signs of this. Many businesses have already incurred losses and face enormous costs because of the very prospect of Brexit.

Why do we also assume that most leavers just want out, and why do we pay so much attention to those who shout the loudest? People give very different reasons why they voted leave, and poll evidence is scarce. However, one significant poll of a massive sample was carried out by YouGov on the eve of the referendum. It found that one view was almost universally shared by leave voters: they saw no downside to Brexit.

They nearly all believed that, once we had cast off the shackles of Brussels, we would emerge into the sunny uplands. I fear that the evidence from business is beginning to prove that the more gloomy forecasts are likely to be right. I believe that the forecast that we will be a poorer nation will influence a vital group of leave voters to change their minds.

That raises the question of whether a new referendum should precede a general election. This must surely be a no-brainer, especially for the Labour Party. The choice in the referendum this time must be a clear one; not like saying, "Brexit means Brexit". There may be some problems about the exact wording, but the obvious choice must be between Boris Johnson's deal, if there is one—or a no-deal Brexit if there is not—and remain. How can this be clearly decided in a general election? Voters vote for different parties for a great variety of reasons; for some, Brexit may not be one of them at all. I remember the 1974 election, at the time of the three-day week and the miners' strike. Heath said it would be about who governs Britain. It was, for a few days. Then people returned to the usual issues: the cost of living, jobs, and the NHS. In no way will, or can, a general election solve the Brexit problem. Indeed, in so far as it does feature, Labour may well suffer greatly if, as seems likely, its stance on Brexit is still uncertain. We seem to be moving towards a new referendum. It must precede, and not just be part of, the coming general election.

6.05 pm

Lord Craig of Radley (CB): My Lords, our current front line lacks resilience, with too few fighting ships, inadequate numbers of operational aircraft and reduced army manning—a legacy of years of underfunding. Our forces have not been exposed to serious enemy capability in conflict, nor experienced significant losses in men and materiel, since the Falklands conflict nearly 40 years ago. We had resilience then: sufficient strength in depth to cope, and to fight the first Gulf conflict in 1991 with sizeable forces—now way beyond our reach. Resilience in conventional power is gone. If the credibility of our nuclear deterrent is to stand, conventional forces must have hitting power and sustainability to first resist aggression and demonstrate national resolve. Without this, the Prime Minister would face the starkest of choices: rapidly to go nuclear or to surrender. I therefore welcome the uplift in the defence budget, but it must be sustained and increased.

I turn to two issues facing forces personnel that have troubled me and many others for some years. The first I brigade as the fog of law. In the past decade, we have seen more and more examples of the impact of differences in the laws of conflict and human rights legislation for service personnel engaged in combat or peace enforcement operations. When this House considered the Bill that became the Human Rights Act 1998, I argued that its provisions and those of the services' Armed Forces Acts were incompatible, and that it would be better to incorporate into service legislation aspects of human rights that the services must follow and, in times of conflict, have pre-prepared derogations that could and should be observed. The then Lord Chancellor, in charge of the Bill, refused to countenance the concerns that I and others expressed.

I cannot claim to have had any detailed foresight of what has brought such legal trouble to many operating in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as in Northern Ireland during Operation Banner. Those problems have been exacerbated by the way the courts, in particular the European Court of Human Rights, have chosen to extend the reach, both temporally and territorially, of the Human Rights Act 1998 well beyond what was envisaged to retain human rights legislation in national courts.

Only recently have the Government shown determination to tackle this problem. I welcome the consultation, just completed, on whether to introduce a statute of limitation. I welcome the setting up of an office and two Ministers for veteran affairs. I welcome the various statements by successive Defence Ministers in recent months and the Conservative Party 2017 manifesto commitment to protect our Armed Forces personnel from persistent legal claims, stating that our troops will be subject to the laws of armed conflict, not the European Court of Human Rights.

These are all welcome signs of intent, but there is regrettably no mention of them in this gracious Speech. I hope that this time the Government's determination and resolve will be sustained, but if new legislation is required—I suspect that it will be—I strongly plead that it form part of the next revision of the Armed Forces Act and not be a stand-alone one which, like the Human Rights Act, may end up lacking compatibility with the Armed Forces Act.

The second personnel issue is the complex and indefensible treatment of Armed Forces pensions. By 2010 a common new pension scheme for all public servants, introduced by the Finance Act 2004, had a lifetime allowance—an individual's pension pot—of £1.8 million and an annual pension input allowance of £255,000. The Treasury has since drastically reduced these sums to around £1 million and just £40,000 respectively. Breaching the annual allowance incurs a significant—for some a multithousand pound—tax charge. This must be paid forthwith, unless, by using irrevocable scheme pays, it is off-set by a pension reduction for the rest of life. Last year almost 4,000 people, including some 400 non-commissioned ranks, breached their annual allowance.

Of further concern for Armed Forces medics working alongside NHS colleagues, as many do, is that the Department of Health is seeking flexibility to adjust the annual allowance taper for NHS clinicians who have opted to work less to abate their tax liability. It would be unacceptable to have differing tapers for service and civilian personnel. Pay review bodies have also been critical of these pension arrangements.

Treasury vacillations over allowances and tax clawback arrangements smack of serious mismanagement in setting up the scheme. It cannot be defensible morally, let alone fair under the military covenant, to seek to recoup large sums either through a tax related to pensions yet to be paid or by a lifetime reduction in pension. Heads the Treasury wins, tails the pensioner loses.

There will be great pushback from the Treasury, but it should be held accountable for a botched scheme that is having adverse stress effects on some and a premature loss of experienced others in undermanned

[LORD CRAIG OF RADLEY]

public services. The Chancellor of the Exchequer must review this nonsense—or, to use a now Oxford English Dictionary-approved word, this omnishambles.

6.13 pm

Lord Desai (Lab): My Lords, it is a great honour to follow the noble and gallant Lord, Lord Craig. I shall not speak on what he spoke about, because I have no expertise there.

I will speak about what is likely to happen in the next three or four days with Brexit. I have said before that, while I voted remain in the referendum, I believe that, if there was a majority vote for leaving, we should leave. The first time I spoke on this issue, on the Monday after the referendum, I gave the example of the feminist movement, which has said, “No means no. What part of the word ‘no’ do you not understand?” Well, what part of the word “leave” do people not understand? Leave means leave.

It is up to Parliament to have worked out the precise legislative details and negotiations of that task. As I have also said before in your Lordships’ House, the deal that Theresa May negotiated was a very good deal—or at least there was no better deal available in town. Parliament should have approved it, rather than rejecting it somewhat perversely several times. However, we are where we are.

I might be completely wrong—and I see that the noble Lord, Lord Kerr, is in his place, so I speak with some trepidation—but I believe that Boris Johnson has introduced a certain logical distinction to the Northern Ireland problem, and it is worth thinking about. That logical distinction is between the common market and the customs union. It is an attempt to say that Northern Ireland will follow common market rules, but the problem is about the customs union and maintaining the free border. Obviously, we do not know precisely what deal is being negotiated right now, but I guess that what is being said now is that, so far as the customs union problem is concerned, legally and formally Northern Ireland would remain part of the UK customs union and therefore would leave the EU customs union. Be that as it may, however, Northern Ireland could be made a free economic zone and, with mutual agreement, could be allowed to deviate from the written rules.

This is where the problem is: it is difficult to legally nail down all the details of what is and what is not allowed. In this, I follow what the noble and learned Lord, Lord Mackay of Clashfern, said: if there were an agreement in principle before 31 October that some sort of free economic zone would be admitted by both sides, the details could be worked out during the transition period. I am not a lawyer and I have not negotiated, but, if there is trust and good will on both sides, we have 18 or 21 months to work out the legal details of what rules will and will not apply and whether inspection will be necessary. If there is trust, one could say that there could be minimal inspection on this matter and so we can press on.

The second problem relates to consent—a more difficult problem than the customs union. The problem of consent has been deeply embedded in the politics of Northern Ireland for the last 100 years, through mutual

mistrust on the two sides as to which side will vote. There, I believe that the proposal for a decision every four years—although I do not know whether that is still being proposed—is too fragile. If I had the choice, I would say that at the end of the transition period—something like December 2021—there should be a referendum in Northern Ireland on whether Northern Ireland should stay in the free economic zone or whatever the arrangement is. Each of the two sides—Protestants and Catholics—should have a separate majority for approval, so neither side would have a lock on the decision, which would stand only if there were a majority in both communities. If that form of consent were adopted, it would be a good arrangement that would be likely to endure.

These are all speculations and we do not know what will happen, but if the Government were to bring such a proposal by 19 October, I dare say that I would rather have it adopted by Parliament than kicked into the long grass. The difficulty with kicking something into the long grass, according to the Benn Act, would be that it would not be the last time that it was kicked into the long grass.

Lord Berkeley of Knighton (CB): Some while back, the noble Lord made a very fine speech about trade and setting up new trade arrangements. As a complete innocent in all this, I was very interested. Does he still have the concerns that he expressed about the amount of time it takes to set up new trade deals?

Lord Desai: Yes. I believe that people are mistaken if they promise or think that setting up a free trade agreement is an absolutely simple act: you pick up the phone and call somebody and say, “Hey, let’s have a free trade agreement”. Free trade treaties actually take five years to negotiate—and they should take that long because there are very serious issues at stake. Our negotiations with the European Union might take slightly less time than that, but with America, or even with the Commonwealth, it will take a long time. Nobody should assume that the Commonwealth is panting at the other end for our attention. I have good reason to believe, having talked to people in India, that they are more interested in the EU than they are in the UK, because they know which market is bigger. They are not stupid. As someone said, they do not really have as benign an opinion of the Empire as we have—cricket or no cricket. We should not believe our own fake news.

I am sorry that that was such a long answer. But, as the noble Viscount, Lord Ridley, said—and I said before him—once the uncertainty of Brexit is over and people know the nature of the beast, the British economy is so resilient and innovative that it will recover, perhaps within six or eight quarters, and resume its prosperous path.

6.22 pm

Lord Cormack: My Lords, the noble Lord’s last words indicate not only his own wisdom but the fact that, as I have said in this House before, if we get a deal at the end of this week, we will be at the beginning of the beginning. There are years of negotiations ahead, both within Europe and outside it.

I do not know whether your Lordships have noticed it, but every Queen's Speech has one sentence in it—I have heard them all since 1970:

"I pray that the blessing of Almighty God may rest upon your counsels".

I have never said "Amen" more fervently than I did yesterday. I genuinely hope that the Prime Minister gets a deal. I also hope that he will become more realistic about 31 October, and that when he and others say that they will obey the law, they will obey both the letter and the spirit of the law. How palpably absurd it would be if we were on the verge of an acceptable deal, but because the clock reached 11 pm on 31 October, we tore it all up. That is manifest nonsense.

The noble Lord, Lord Kerr, in a very interesting and diverting speech, in effect described how Brexit has dominated the agenda for so long that it has distorted everything else. He talked about foreign policy with a knowledge that very few of us, if any, can emulate. He talked about John Major's leadership at the time of the bombing of the Kurds and about the fact that earlier this week, we did not send the Foreign Secretary to a high-level meeting of Foreign Ministers. I have absolutely nothing but praise for Dr Andrew Murrison, who did so much during the commemorations of 2018, 100 years after the end of the war. However, he is not the Foreign Secretary—his colleagues in Europe and beyond know that—and the Foreign Secretary should have been there. The noble Lord, Lord Kerr, also said how strange it was that, in a speech delivered by Her Majesty, who is the head of the Commonwealth, the Commonwealth, which comprises such an enormous proportion of the world's population, was not even mentioned. My noble friend Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon mentioned it this afternoon, and I applaud him for doing so, but there was no mention of it in the Queen's Speech. The noble Lord, Lord Desai, a few moments ago referred to the Commonwealth and how important it is that we build relations where they already exist.

Again, there was no mention of Russia in the Queen's Speech. It is a sobering thought, but when we leave the European Union, we and Russia will be the two great European countries outside the European Union. Russia is a European country. Although it does not have the sort of infrastructure of democracy that we have—we have not done too well recently—Russia bled more than any other single nation during the last century. I am not an apologist for President Putin, and I do not entirely admire his statecraft. However, think of Stalingrad, and of how the Russian people suffered. Was it not rather churlish that they were not invited to the D-day commemorations earlier this year? We should be building relations with Russia, developing our cultural relations, which are considerable, although they have suffered since the closing down of the British Council. However, we should also seek to get alongside Russian parliamentarians, to give a degree of quiet encouragement to those who are struggling for democracy in Russia. Those of us who remember the Soviet Union—I was chairman of the All-Party Parliamentary Committee for the Release of Soviet Jewry—know what a sea-change came about with Gorbachev and perestroika. We know that Russia is a country of great people with a great culture, and that, frankly, we have a lot in common.

We have nothing in common with the dictatorship or with Soviet communism—but with the Russian people, yes.

It should be a prime objective of British foreign policy, as we move out of the European Union, not only to maintain and to cultivate our relations with the European neighbours whom we are leaving but to make other friends in Europe, and to try to ensure that there is a balance and stability in our continent—it is our continent. By the middle of this century, the dominant world power will of course be China. We know what China has done, is doing and will continue to do in Africa. We know what China is seeking to do on its own continent. We know that China, which has the most ancient surviving civilization in the world, is a country of enormous human and natural resources. I am not advocating in any sense that we should not have cordial relations with China, but we should remember that we are dealing with a country that has the power to become an aggressor. An earlier speaker referred to the number of huge aircraft carriers the Chinese are building. What are they doing that for? Well, there could be a variety of reasons, but we should be aware of all of them.

With our diplomatic infrastructure—with our history—we need to play that leading role in the world, to which there is a passing reference, mentioned by the noble Lord, Lord Kerr, in the gracious Speech:

"As the United Kingdom leaves the European Union, my Government will ensure that it continues to play a leading role in global affairs, defending its interests and promoting its values".

Amen to that as well, but we are not doing that at the moment and we have to make a commitment to doing it. At the moment we are not playing a leading role. We are not even playing a bit part. I find that shaming.

I was very glad to hear the absolutely excellent speech of my noble friend Lord Jopling, who knows a thing or two about parliamentary organisation, and I agreed with virtually every word he said. Like him, I am not advocating that we do not come out. That was the result of the referendum. I regret it as deeply as he does but I acknowledge the fact. But I also acknowledge the fact that my party has behaved in a shameful and stupid way, particularly in recent weeks and months. I have referred to this before but the expulsion of 21 of the finest members of the party—in the process turning the Government into a real minority Government—was hardly sensible.

We can come together—and we must. But the most important thing of all is that we come together across this House and across the other place. In the words of the late Jo Cox, there is more that unites us than divides us across the parties and within the parties. I would like to see something that I have advocated since the Monday after the Reformation—

Noble Lords: Oh!

Lord Cormack: —not quite that long ago, but after the referendum I advocated, as noble Lords know, having a Joint Committee of both Houses looking at these things. We did not for Brexit but there is no reason why we should not do so for the future. There will have to be a lot of bridge-building in the years ahead. There will have to be a lot of compromise and

[LORD CORMACK]

mutual understanding. If what the gracious Speech says about aspirations for leadership on the world stage is to be realised, we have to play a part in this and so have all our colleagues in both Houses. If that comes about, what was an election manifesto could be transformed into a genuine national manifesto for all our people.

I wish the Prime Minister luck. I ask him to recognise the mistakes he has made. I just hope that we can start to put things into some sort of order of priorities so that Brexit does not dominate everything, as it has done for the past three years.

6.34 pm

Lord Wrigglesworth (LD): It is a pleasure to follow the noble Lord. I have been with him for a long part of his parliamentary career in the Commons and here, but I did not realise he went back as far as the Reformation.

The noble Lord referred to the speech given by his former Chief Whip. I must say to the noble Lord, Lord Jopling, that when he said he had not removed the whip from any of the members of the 1922 Committee when he was Chief Whip, it might have done us all a great favour if he had managed to remove it from Mr Bill Cash, Mr Bernard Jenkin and Mr John Redwood. That would have done both the Conservative Party and the rest of us a great favour. They are the high priests of Brexit and remain as such.

We have had quite a wide-ranging debate. I do not want to follow it all but, like the noble Lord—indeed, like my good friend, the noble Lord, Lord Liddle—I will refer to the speech of the noble Lord, Lord Kerr, which was very thoughtful but also very depressing because it reflects our modern position in the world. The only thing I would add is that for those of us who view with horror the prospect of breaking with our partners in Europe, when we see the international world developing around us—the Googles and the Facebooks and all the other enormous and rapid developments that are taking place—never has there been a time when we need more to be playing the sort of role that he hoped we would be playing, which unfortunately we are not.

In my view, the only element in this Queen's Speech which matters is, I am afraid, Brexit. Clearly, it is determining everything now and will determine everything else that takes place in the future. It is therefore what I want to address this evening, particularly, because they need to be nailed down, some of the myths that have been peddled about Brexit by the Brexiters.

The first myth, which keeps being referred to, is that the referendum was the largest democratic exercise in the United Kingdom's history. It was not: there was a bigger vote in the 1992 general election, and in any case you would expect us to have bigger votes taking place when the population has gone up to 62 million. Of course, the number of votes has gone up because the electorate is larger than it ever was. It proves absolutely nothing but it is one of those things that keep being repeated and may well impress people who are not familiar with the facts.

The biggest myth is that it was the will of the British people. In the first referendum, in 1975, which I remember very well, just over 67% of voters backed

the UK's continued membership of the European Community. Of almost 26 million valid votes cast at the time, more than 17 million voted for Britain's continued membership, whereas only just over 8 million voters opted for Britain to leave. That represented a significant margin of 34.5%. It was a truly decisive result.

In the second referendum, in 2016, just under 52% of voters backed the UK's ending membership of the European Union. Of just over 33 million valid votes cast, just over 17 million voted for leaving the European Union, whereas just over 16 million voted to remain. That represented a wafer-thin margin of only 3.8%, compared to 34.5%. It was a truly divisive result, not a decisive result.

I have been a director of a number of companies and involved in quite a lot of businesses in my time. Most companies, in their articles of association, if they are to change the statutes of the company, require a 75% vote to carry amendments. Trade union law now requires a 40% vote of members before strike action can be taken. You also need 75% of the vote of incorporated charities to change the statutes.

In most jurisdictions, major constitutional change requires a supermajority or a two-thirds majority to effect it, whether it is in a legislature or a referendum. In Switzerland, which alone among developed nations employs frequent referendums in its semi-direct democracy, major decisions require a double majority of the electorate and the cantons.

Although 51.9% of those who cast a vote in the referendum on 23 June 2016 wanted the UK to withdraw from the EU, a huge number of registered voters never showed up at the polls, so 60% of the electorate did not vote for Brexit. We need to keep repeating that to people who say that this was the will of the British people. There were 46.5 million people in the electorate, and only 17.4 million voted for Brexit; 29.1 million people did not vote for Brexit. So, 37.4% of the electorate voted for Brexit, which represents only 26.5% of the population of the United Kingdom. So much for the will of the people.

It is simply unacceptable, in my view, that a major change such as exiting the EU, with its profound effects on the country and everyone who lives in it, should be decided in that way. As has been pointed out in the debate, it is also out of date. It is now almost three years and four months since the referendum was held. In case people think that that is not very long, the average length of Governments since 1945 has been three years and 10 months, so we have had a general election at least, on average, every three years and 10 months.

As the *Evening Standard* pointed out,

“Britain has turned against Brexit and would now vote to stay in the European Union, according to the ... poll-of-polls.

The YouGov analysis for the *Evening Standard* of 300 surveys shows ‘concrete’ evidence that the country shifted against quitting the European bloc in the year after the June 2016 referendum and has steadfastly stuck to this position ever since.

One of the most striking findings is that 204 out of 226 polls since July 2017 have shown Remain ahead, with just seven for Leave, and 15 ties.

So far this year, just one poll in the series has put Leave ahead, compared to 74 for staying in the EU ... In the first six months of 2018, Remain was ahead by 52 to 48, for the rest of the year by 53 to 47.

This lead grew to 54 to 46 in the first six months of 2019”.

If you look at the facts, it is not surprising that that should be the case. As my noble friend Lord Taverne said, demographic changes have taken place: more young people have come on to the electoral register and more old people have died. Some 75% of older people voted for Brexit and 75% of younger people voted to remain—it is to be expected that that should take place. Also, there is now much greater knowledge of what the decision entails, and a lot of people have therefore turned against it.

Another myth is associated with that. It is often implicit, but explicit at times, that what we want is a clean break. This is often the argument for a no-deal Brexit: we want a clean break. There is no such thing as a clean-break Brexit. There will be years of uncertainty, years of negotiation over our relationship with the EU after we have left, years of negotiation over customs duties and trade arrangements. The idea that by having either a no-deal or an agreed Brexit, we will then put the whole issue to bed is a myth. It will carry on for years to come.

For that reason, the only clean break is to stop Brexit and revoke Article 50, and I am delighted that our leader has decided that that is what we will put to the electorate at the general election and, if we are in a position to, implement afterwards. That way, we get this argument out of the way so that people can get on with their lives in the way they did before.

6.44 pm

Lord Wigley (PC): My Lords, I am delighted to follow the noble Lord, Lord Wrigglesworth, with whom I agree on so many aspects of these matters. Yesterday, I was also delighted to hear the noble Lord, Lord Dobbs, second the Motion; he is not in his place at the moment but I think that we all enjoyed his speech. I am particularly glad to see the noble Baroness, Lady Bennett of Manor Castle, in her place for the first time. We wish her well in her work in this Chamber.

At such a critical time in the Brexit negotiations, noble Lords will not be surprised to hear that I too will focus on some of the consequences of Brexit, particularly with regard to Wales. In doing so, I recall the central purpose of the European Union: to maintain peace on our continent.

This must be just about the strangest Queen's Speech in the history of Parliament. The future of our relationship with our continent hangs in the balance; the future relationship between the four nations of these islands also depends on it. That may well have a knock-on effect on the future role of this House, if any. If this Queen's Speech has any relevance, it is presumably as a draft election manifesto. Seriously, is it now the Queen's role to participate in such a blatant party-political exercise?

This Queen's Speech is nominally relevant to Wales too, although there is no single direct reference to Wales anywhere in it. In Wales, we have been driven by the incompetence of the Tory Brexit strategy to a position unseen for centuries, with people demonstrating

in their thousands in Cardiff, Caernarfon and Merthyr Tydfil in favour of independence—not, I hasten to add, the type of independence advocated by UKIP, which seeks the UK's detachment from Europe. People seek Wales's independence because, in the wake of Brexit, it is only as an independent nation that we can become a member state of the European Union in our own right.

Brexit is driving Wales to look seriously at the independence option. We have seen the recent YouGov opinion poll indicating that more than 40% of those in Wales with an opinion on Welsh independence support it. They do so largely because they see the absolute devastation that will hit Wales if a no-deal Brexit goes through. It would undermine the dozens of international businesses that the old Welsh Development Agency successfully attracted to Wales as a base from which to sell, on a level playing field, to the European Union markets. I pay tribute to its former chairman, the noble Lord, Lord Rowe-Beddoe, who was with us a little earlier. He can take a lot of credit for the WDA's success in this regard.

Such manufacturing companies now state openly that they will reconsider their investment programmes if the Government go ahead with their no-deal Brexit threat. We have hundreds of sheep farmers at their wits' end as they face, in the event of a no-deal Brexit, a 48% tariff on their lamb exports to Europe, which will kill their industry stone dead and ruin rural Wales in the process. Little wonder that Wales has become indy-curious; if a hard Brexit goes ahead, it may well become indy-craving—a matter addressed a few moments ago by the noble Lord, Lord Anderson.

In that context, it is interesting to see the Welsh Labour Government's recent announcement that they would support holding an independence referendum in Wales if independence-supporting parties won a majority of seats in the National Assembly at the next election. I hope, incidentally, that our friends in the Scottish Labour Party are taking note. So, voters in Wales know exactly what to do; Plaid Cymru's inspiring leader, Adam Price, is rapidly gaining ground. This year, for the first time ever, Plaid Cymru overtook Labour in an election on an all-Wales level. No doubt we will hear the age-old scare-mongering: “How can you afford independence? Wales is too poor”. Oh my, here we go again, with the rich telling the poor that it is their own fault that they are in dire straits. Some things never change.

That is the very reason why we in Wales must take responsibility for our future into our own hands. It is in the absence of the tools to govern ourselves that we find ourselves perpetually in the economic doldrums. Decade after decade, Wales has lingered at the bottom of the UK prosperity league table, whether based on nations or on economic regions. In 2018, Wales had a GVA per capita of less than £20,000, compared with England's at more than £28,000 per capita—40% higher—so we are told that we cannot afford to be independent. That is what Westminster told Ireland, decade after decade, throughout the 19th century at a time when, under British rule, a million Irish men and women died of famine. Ireland now has an income per head above that of the UK. Does anyone seriously pretend

[LORD WIGLEY]

that Ireland would enjoy such prosperity if it were still under Westminster rule? Critically, Ireland has achieved its economic success because it is a member state of the European Union in its own right. Wales will secure the possibility of such economic success only by becoming a full member state of the EU in its own right. The British state has failed to secure economic parity across these islands. One can legitimately ask whether it has even tried.

I readily accept that it is not just Wales that has suffered from such economic disparity. The north-east of England also suffers and needs regional stimulus. So, I note with interest that the Queen's Speech includes a commitment to the,

"Government's ambitions for unleashing regional potential in England"—

pointedly avoiding taking any responsibility for doing anything at Westminster to help regional economic regeneration in Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland. In fact, along with Wales, Northern Ireland languishes at the bottom of the UK prosperity league table. It is little wonder that an increasing number of people there are asking themselves whether they might be better off in a united Ireland inside the European Union. The failure of successive Governments at Westminster to address the economic disparity within these islands could now be made even worse by this Government stupidly attaching themselves to a no-deal Brexit. If that happens, let there be no doubt: it will be the trigger for ending the United Kingdom in its present form. There were alternatives but it is now too late. In any case, I do not think that England is psychologically capable of making the necessary adjustments that could have facilitated an alternative way forward for Wales and Scotland.

I have been a Member of this House for eight years. I have tried to argue the case for Wales, as seen by Plaid Cymru, to the extent possible for a one-man band in an 800-seat Chamber. Others argue the Welsh case from their own perspectives here in this Chamber, as do 40 MPs in another place. But people in Wales increasingly believe that we have all failed. They are coming to the view that Westminster in its present configuration has not only failed to deliver, but is incapable of changing its approach to produce a significantly better outcome. That is why, rather than moaning for ever and a day about the failures of Westminster, people in Wales are waking up to the fact that we must look to ourselves for our salvation. It was ever thus, but the realisation of that fact is now the driver in Wales, as it is in Scotland, to find a new path to a new future which brings new hope. Hope is something that has been in precious short supply in either Chamber in Westminster in recent times. I greatly regret that this Queen's Speech does nothing to address, let alone redress, that reality.

6.53 pm

Lord Hylton (CB): My Lords, we have spent several hours debating the finer points of foreign policy and sometimes home policy, but with the honourable exception of my noble friend Lady Cox, hardly a mention has been made of the disaster unfolding itself in northern Syria. This has long been forecast and proposed by the Turkish side, but I fear that we as a country have done very little to prevent it happening.

Turkey is usually seen as an old ally and a reliable NATO partner. I am convinced that it will lose that reputation if it continues to use force in northern Syria along a good deal more than 300 miles of common frontier. Its recent attack was completely unprovoked and has already caused civilian deaths on both sides of the line, not to mention the displacement of tens of thousands of Syrian people on their side of the line. This campaign risks prolonging war in Syria and is quite likely to cause Russian retaliation. It is already driving the Kurdish people into the arms of the Assad Government.

The Syrian defence forces have no interest in attacking Turkey and a very strong incentive to prevent cross-border assaults by the PKK. Dangerous ISIS fighters are already escaping from detention and worse chaos may all too easily follow. In my view, it is unacceptable for Turkey to use refugees to put pressure on the European Union or to force refugees to go into north-east Syria against their will. Turkey should withdraw all its forces from Syria and concentrate on its own internal peace, which indeed it could have had in early 2015. It should understand that the Kurds of Turkey gave up separatism long ago and are willing to agree autonomy and language and cultural freedom. Turkey should know that Abdullah Öcalan is an icon of the Kurds, symbolising their suffering by his own almost 20 years of mainly solitary imprisonment.

What should be the response of this country? I suggest that, first, we should stop all deliveries of arms and military sales to Turkey, not just hold a review, as we heard earlier. Secondly, we should impose economic sanctions, of course in close concert with the United States and the European Union. I also agree with my noble friend Lady Cox that, simultaneously, sanctions on Syria should be relaxed to allow for reconstruction there. Finally, we should immediately take back British orphans and widows who have been in camps in Syria. Other European states have already done this and we should not delay. ISIS and other fighters should know that they may face prosecution for war crimes if they return here, but otherwise they should be free to come, subject to good behaviour and possible rehabilitation.

6.58 pm

Lord Randall of Uxbridge (Con): My Lords, this is the second opportunity I have had to address the Chamber and, given that I was prevented from being controversial on the first one, you never know what might occur. It is a great privilege to follow the noble Lord, Lord Hylton, and to listen to his exposé of the situation, one that he is right to raise. As someone who studied Serbo-Croat in what was then Yugoslavia, I can remember being incredibly surprised to see how quickly an established state can dissolve into the appalling warfare that we saw and the horrendous barbarism that took place. We must never take any of these things for granted.

It has also been a great pleasure to hear the speeches of two of my former colleagues from the other place, something I have not done for some time. I can remember that, when I was a newly appointed Whip on the Bench, we had a St David's Day debate in which the noble

Lord, Lord Wigley, spoke. Listening to the oratory of the Welsh is an experience that I always enjoy. While I cannot say that I always agree with the noble Lord, I could listen to him for ever.

I have also always enjoyed listening to my noble friend Lord Cormack. He is a fount of great wisdom—so he tells me. No, he is indeed. I take his words on Russia very seriously. Before the annexation of Crimea, I was briefly the chairman of the All-Party Group on Russia and was trying to get some degree of co-operation, but I am afraid that ended in the way it did. At the current time I do not see much opportunity, but I entirely agree with my noble friend about cultural relations being a good way forward—as indeed, of course, is sport.

I have to apologise that I missed some of the speeches because I was upstairs. The register will show that I am the vice-chairman of the trustees of the Human Trafficking Foundation. One of my fellow trustees is the noble and learned Baroness, Lady Butler-Sloss, and noble Lords will realise that missing that is worse than voting against a three-line Whip.

I noticed two things in the gracious Speech with regard to modern slavery. One was encouraging: the Bill cracking down on foreign criminals. There are still too many people involved in trafficking coming backwards and forwards. I hope we will find out what will happen at the borders following our departure from the European Union. Although people generally regard freedom of movement as a good thing, elements of it have been bad. The other thing I noted was an omission, because I hoped—although I was not holding out much hope—that the Government would announce they were going to take over my noble friend Lord McColl's Bill on victims and victim support. That will have to be for another time.

The noble Lord, Lord Anderson, spoke about changing opinions. I am not a risk-taker by nature. If I ask a financial adviser and he or she recommends the option of getting a very small percentage return or potentially a bigger return but with an element of risk, I will always go for the low-return, no-risk option. My main concern, when confronted with how to vote in the referendum, was environmental standards. As I hope noble Lords will find in due course, that is probably my main interest. I thought leaving the EU would probably result in a loss of environmental standards, so by and large I was a remainer.

The one thing that I and many fellow environmentalists, particularly conservationists, were concerned about was the common agricultural policy. That was the one thing you could point to in the EU that, by and large, was not a good thing for nature. On balance, as I say, I voted to remain. However, my concerns—you might say my cynicism—seemed to be somewhat unfounded.

I declare an interest: I was working in No. 10 as the environmental adviser to the former Prime Minister, alongside the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, when the 25-year environment plan was announced by Theresa May at the Wetland Centre in Barnes. There was nervousness over whether this was just another announcement and whether it would be followed up by any legislation. That is why I am delighted to see that the promised Environment

Bill not only is happening but is a lot tougher, if you like, than certain members of the then Cabinet were hoping to get through.

In actual fact, a lot of areas are really good. We will have legally binding targets, nature recovery networks and the inclusion of climate in the remit of the office for environmental protection. We will have to see how independent that office is—I am sure we will have discussions in this House and down the other end about that—and there is a question about fines, but these are all matters for another time.

I was also pleased to see that the Government are bringing back the Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Bill, which I was sorry to see had not been carried over. It is one of those rare areas in which there is consensus—and we all know that consensus is something we want to see—between the Countryside Alliance and the League Against Cruel Sports. That is something that does not happen on too regular a basis, although I think it is also the case on illegal hare coursing.

I am, though, an optimist. Although I can get quite concerned about the state of our politics over the last few years—I look with despair sometimes at what has been going on—I am sure that, whatever the result, the British people will get on with whatever is given to them. I agree with the noble Lord, Lord Desai: I tend to think that no means no. Although I understand all the other arguments that people have made and the myths, I think we would have a bigger problem if we did not maintain what was voted for. I also say to the noble Lord who was talking about myths—this is a personal thing—that I get a little frustrated with the expression “the People's Vote”. I just wonder who voted last time—was it the badgers?—because those were people too. I think that is a marketing ploy to try to encourage people by saying that this is the proper vote.

I have some concerns. I am delighted that the Government are giving an assurance to EU citizens about living here, and I hope the Government will continue to urge all other states to guarantee the same for our UK citizens, who I know are living in a very nervous limbo at this time. That really should be sorted out.

Talking to a lot of people, no longer as a politician but as a general member of the public, one thing that I am sure of is that most people want this Parliament to get on and sort something out. They want to get on with the things that matter to them. The gracious Speech mentioned many of those. As I said, the state of the environment is what keeps me awake. Climate change is the obvious and paramount issue. My noble friend the Minister mentioned the hosting of the COP in Glasgow next year. I rather hope that that will be when the Government announce—this is where the controversy will come in—the scrapping of Heathrow expansion. Expansion is entirely incompatible with our aims to reduce our carbon emissions. The Environment Bill mentions air quality and water. Water extraction is another big issue. These are all very important issues that we will have to deal with, but it is a good start.

Some commentators and some in the Chamber today have said that this is a list that is probably an election manifesto because an election will come sooner

[LORD RANDALL OF UXBRIDGE]

rather than later. With regard to most of the Bills coming forward—certainly the Environment Bill, the Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Bill and others—I cannot believe that a Government of any colour would not wish to introduce them. The fact that they have been mentioned in the gracious Speech should be encouragement to us all that they will happen.

Like many of my friends and neighbours, I pray that the Brexit situation is resolved sooner rather than later. To me, it is a game of Russian roulette and we know how that ends. One side or the other, if they do not compromise, will be very disappointed. But this is a good way forward. I am delighted to be here because the standard of debate seems to be worth coming up here for.

7.09 pm

Baroness Tonge (Non-Affl): My Lords, I am not going to talk about Brexit. I hope that I do not say that word again. I want to address issues concerning trade with other countries now and in the future. I apologise for having to withdraw from the debate on Thursday 3 October concerning these issues, but I just could not attend. The title of that debate intrigued me because it presupposed that we currently respect human rights in our present deals with other countries. That is simply not true. I am afraid that there was no mention of human rights and trade deals in the Queen's Speech.

I and many other Members of this House and the other place have relentlessly asked questions over the years about trade with many countries all over the world that, by any standards, do not respect human rights—questions which are brushed aside by Ministers with the usual response that, “It is only by engaging and trading with these countries that we shall change their practices, make them into better countries and get them to respect human rights”. How often have we heard that? I would like to see some examples of that approach actually working.

For example, in Kashmir now the people are suffering lockdown, brutal treatment and imprisonment after India decided to occupy their state. What is going on there? No one knows. We are not being told anything. Why are we not being told? Why are the Government not asking any questions? Do we turn a blind eye even to this because our future trade with India might be far more important than human lives and human rights in Kashmir?

Saudi Arabia seems to be immune from criticism or thought of sanctions and publicly abuses the human rights of its people still. There are some signs that, for women at least, things are getting a little easier, although I have heard from women from Saudi Arabia that that is just window dressing. But let us not forget the hundreds of people executed by that state every year and the disgusting, sickening death of Jamal Khashoggi last year in the Saudi Embassy in Turkey. Did we blink? Did we impose sanctions on Saudi Arabia? No: trade with Saudi Arabia—the arms trade in particular—seems to be one of the articles of this Government's political faith.

Of course, I must mention Israel, which has occupied Palestinian lands now for 50 years, destroying homes, land and people, and blockading Gaza, causing immense

suffering to the people of that land. Gaza, I remind noble Lords, has been deemed to be becoming uninhabitable by the United Nations, yet 2 million people are imprisoned there, denied their human rights in every respect—no clean water, scanty electricity supplies, limited food and medicines and denied access to medical and surgical treatment. Noble Lords all know the truth, even though some Members of this House turn a blind eye and do not want to know.

The Government of Israel break international law and the Geneva Convention, and deny the Palestinian people their human rights. What do our Government do—apart from blaming Hamas for everything, of course? They increase trade links and co-operation with the Israeli Government as a reward, year on year. It was fascinating to hear today that the Government immediately slapped sanctions on the arms trade with Turkey when it invaded Syria—immediately, no question about it. Yet Saudi Arabia has been doing the same thing in Yemen for years, causing terrible famine, deprivation and damage, and the Government of Israel have been causing immense suffering to the Palestinians in the land designated for them. Why do we not curb arms sales to Saudi Arabia and Israel if we do so to Turkey?

The European Union is equally guilty because the EU-Israel association trade agreement depends on Israel respecting human rights but, when challenged, EU officials merely point to countries within the EU and say they should be taking the lead. It cannot take the lead collectively. Can we hope that, once we are out of the European Union and no longer bound by the terrible tie of being in it, the UK Government will take the lead and bring the Government of Israel to order? Will our great new relationship with the United States of America perhaps enable us to bring pressure on the Government of America to stop being so subservient to the Government of Israel? I doubt it.

I have just returned from Bangladesh, where we visited the Rohingya camps at Cox's Bazar, heard the stories of the refugees and saw the effects of the atrocities committed by Myanmar soldiers on those people, denying them basic human rights. The women in particular had been horribly abused and traumatised. Yet, following the lifting of sanctions on Myanmar, trade is now on the increase. There is already advice on the website of the Department for International Trade to encourage UK investors in Myanmar, under the title “Get ready for” the word I said I would not mention. It advises how to do business in Myanmar, but in that advice there is no mention of human rights or of the Rohingya people. Shall we continue to turn a blind eye and carry on giving aid to people—women in particular—in those camps fleeing abuse in Myanmar while we trade with the very people who persecute them? I may be naive, but I just do not understand these things and I feel very ashamed of it all sometimes.

At this point, I highlight the right of women all over the world to health, reproductive health in particular. I declare an interest as chair of the All-Party Group on Population, Development and Reproductive Health. Great strides have been made in recent years, thanks in part to our Government and the people on the Benches across the Chamber. I thank them for what

they have done, but more than 200 million women still lack access to family planning, 3 million girls undergo FGM every year and, despite maternal deaths being reduced by 40%, 830 women and girls, mostly young girls, die every day in childbirth. One-third of women worldwide report sexual and gender violence, and 132 million girls are still out of school. That is why it was so good to hear the Minister talk about our emphasis on education. I know how much the Government do for women's reproductive health and for girls' education, which is crucial to development.

The International Conference on Population and Development, which was first convened in 1994 to address these issues, is holding a summit meeting in Nairobi in November. I know that our Government will be strong on these issues at that conference, but dare I hope that they will also take them seriously when negotiating trade agreements and emphasise to our future trading partners that these human rights issues are just as important as making money out of trade deals?

In conclusion, will the Minister say whether our Government will support the initiative for a United Nations binding treaty on business and human rights, based on the existing guiding principles of the United Nations? In the meantime, will they commit to full human rights impact assessments prior to the agreement of a trade deal and allow full parliamentary scrutiny of those assessments, which was mentioned in the debate on 3 October? We hope that if the Government concede that we can influence the behaviour of all Governments so that they respect human rights.

7.20 pm

Lord Loomba (CB): My Lords, I welcome the opportunity to speak during this debate on the humble Address and highlight my thoughts on the Government's proposed legislative agenda for the new Session. A lot has already been said on the pros and cons of Brexit, trade, defence and so on, so I will focus on one area of Her Majesty's Speech that was emphasised by the Government: ensuring all girls have access to 12 years of quality education to set them up for their future working lives.

Education for girls is a global issue that I value and advocate as a priority. Ensuring that girls in the developing world are able to gain the very best in learning to allow them to develop and grow is vital to global peace, security and prosperity. Many Governments and stakeholders are now acutely aware of the value that women and girls bring to the life of their countries and communities by supporting strong societies that work together for the common good and reducing conflict and strife.

According to UN Women, there are 285 million widows worldwide. If each widow has two children on average, that is upwards of half a billion children. If half of them are girls, that demonstrates that there are many fatherless girls out there needing our help and support in reducing poverty, human rights abuses and discrimination. We should do everything that we can to ensure that girls are given the tools, skills, training and education to help them forge career paths and avoid reliance on others.

While we think about education and training for girls, it should also be possible to give them useful skills to run businesses—skills that can be used to facilitate their future careers. In this way, not only do we educate girls but we are able to assist countries to gain future prosperity. This brings benefits not only for girls and their immediate families but for their wider communities. If we make sure that girls are better educated and trained in business skills, it is a win-win situation for all.

Developing countries would benefit immensely from the creation of better educational opportunities for girls. We should look to harness the creativity and dynamism of companies to support and accelerate quality education for girls, at the same time building strong, effective ties and increasing corporate social responsibility. Bringing about better education for girls will surely set the scene for greater resilience and long-lasting stability, and that will bring benefits not just for the immediate communities but for global stability.

I look forward to DfID ensuring that we can build on the pledge in Her Majesty's gracious Speech yesterday and give girls the education that they deserve so that their futures are secure and poverty and hardship are reduced. What is the Government's approach to ensuring that 12 years of quality education is deliverable in the long term?

Baroness Bloomfield of Hinton Waldrist (Con): My Lords—

7.23 pm

Lord Ricketts (CB): My Lords, noble Lords might be familiar with the Haydn symphony in which, towards the end of the last movement, one by one the musicians walk out until nobody is left—so I am very grateful to all noble Lords who will soldier through to the end of this movement, which I hope will not be too long. However, we are discussing serious issues and I want to make a brief contribution.

I shall start with a general proposition. Successful negotiations are usually those where there is a degree of confidence and mutual trust between the negotiating parties, and the gracious Speech does indeed declare at the outset the ambition for,

"a new partnership with the European Union, based on ... friendly co-operation".

That is excellent—but I fail to understand how it is compatible with the behaviour of the Government in their first two months. All the rhetoric about surrender Bills, betrayal and do or die, culminating in the memo from the Prime Minister's office to the *Spectator*, which is the most disgraceful document that I have seen emanating from No. 10 in my 45 years, sends a none-too-subtle message to our EU partners that they are enemies. They are not our enemies; they are our allies, our friends and our economic partners. They are countries for which generations of British soldiers have fought and died. We do not need to fabricate new enemies in the world; there are plenty of adversaries out there already.

Now, those same Europeans who have been treated to that language are the ones with whom the Government are seeking urgently to finalise a deal. As with the

[LORD RICKETTS]

previous Government, the closer a potential cliff edge comes, the harder the Government work to avoid it. That is welcome, but the tactics of the first two months have not made our task any easier.

A lot has been made in recent weeks in public about the preparations for a no-deal Brexit. The £100 million spent on that has brought to people's attention some of the myriad disadvantages of leaving the EU with no deal. I am sure that the National Audit Office will have some penetrating questions to ask the accounting officer who signed off on that spending, as indeed I think it will about the other £8.2 billion—I think that that was the figure the Minister mentioned in opening—that has been allocated to preparations for no deal. Personally, I doubt very much that that spending will make much difference to what will happen if we crash out of the EU with no deal. I do not believe that it bluffed the EU countries for one moment; they had worked out long ago that a no-deal departure would be far more damaging to this country than it would to the EU, although all would suffer.

So I agree with noble Lords who said that a deal is better than a no-deal crash-out—but, equally, we should be absolutely clear that what is on offer, as we understand it from what has come out of the negotiations, is a harder Brexit overall than was proposed by Theresa May's Government. Given that the level playing field provisions—the regulatory and customs provisions—seem to be on their way out, the destination is then a Canada-minus agreement, largely focused on goods, leaving the services sector to look after itself. That is so far from what was ever proposed in the referendum campaign by the leave side that I am convinced it would be right to put back to the people the option of choosing either the deal that may emerge from these negotiations in the coming days and weeks or, finally, staying in the EU.

I want to concentrate mainly on foreign policy. As so often in my career, I find that my thunder was stolen by the noble Lord, Lord Kerr, in his brilliant and wide-ranging speech. I will just add a couple of grace notes to what he said. Like him, I found that my eye was caught by the phrase in the gracious Speech that the Government,

“will ensure that it continues to play a leading role in global affairs”.

I cannot think of any major international issue at the moment where Britain is playing a leading role or, indeed, having any discernible impact at all.

The noble Lord, Lord Kerr, did not mention Iran; he left me that one issue to raise. On Iran, the united western approach that was developed rather successfully by the six powers came apart not because of anything that Britain did but because President Trump decided to pull the United States out of the nuclear deal. The only initiative that I am aware of since that time to try to bring the United States and Iran into some kind of dialogue was taken by President Macron at the G7 summit. He did get some momentum going—enough, it seems, to have worried the Revolutionary Guard sufficiently for it to have carried out its very dangerous and escalatory attack on Saudi oilfields. Remarkably, Iran seems largely to have got away with that. I fear

that the impunity that the hardliners in Iran will feel as a result of the—as they would see it—successful provocation of the international community must make the Gulf region more dangerous in the future.

Britain's contribution to the Iranian crisis, as far as one can see from the outside, has not been stellar. We detained an Iranian oil tanker in Gibraltar; then we let it go and watched powerlessly as it delivered its cargo of oil to Syria. The US “maximum pressure” strategy has failed, and I would be interested to know whether Britain has any ideas about what might replace it.

A number of noble Lords have raised the appalling events that are happening in north-eastern Syria, triggered by another of President Trump's initiatives: the withdrawal of US forces from that part of the world. I worry that the Turkish invasion is a prelude to a population movement of Syrian refugees now in Turkey into what were Kurdish areas of north-eastern Syria. If that is true, it is storing up more instability and chaos for the future. We know that the West pays the price, in relation both to refugees and terrorism, from instability in that part of the world.

The Foreign Secretary's Statement in the other place today suggests something I would welcome. I think it is playing catch-up with decisions already taken in Washington, Berlin and Paris to put sanctions on the Turkish Government. The western response so far has seemed disjointed and not very powerful. If we are a country that still has an ambition for a global role, it is perhaps time that we took the initiative to get some more coherence into western strategy. Perhaps the Foreign Secretary should invite the US, German and French Foreign Ministers for a four-power meeting in London to try to map out a rather more co-ordinated approach. Perhaps they should then involve the Russians. As other speakers have said, Russia has major interests and probably more influence in the area than any of us at the moment. This is not a straightforward crisis for Russia either. Russia is allied with President's Assad's regime but also building a relationship with Ankara, including selling it modern air defence missile systems. So, to see Turkish forces coming up against Syrian forces in north-eastern Syria is not comfortable for Russia either.

I would like to see Britain take the initiative in this area and show that we are still capable of using London as a major convening centre in trying to sort out international crises. Britain will of course continue to have a strategic relationship with Washington in areas such as defence and intelligence, but on what the gracious Speech refers to as the “most pressing global challenges” we face—whether climate, preserving free trade or the Iranian nuclear deal—actually Britain's interests have in recent months been much more in line with European interests. I find it uncomfortable that President Macron and Chancellor Merkel are now talking about European strategic autonomy. That is rather a dangerous concept if it means Europe can do without America's 70-year role in deterring Russian adventurism in this part of the world.

This idea of European strategic autonomy, taken with President Trump's rather erratic approach to NATO obligations, puts an enormous weight on the next NATO summit, which I am glad to see is being

held in London at the end of this year. I really hope that the Government will propose measures of our own to breathe life back into what looks like a rather faltering western alliance at the moment. In responding, perhaps the Minister could assure us that there will be an opportunity for a debate in this House before that summit on what Britain will propose to get NATO back on the road.

We can already see that the EU's approach to foreign and defence policy will change as Britain leaves. It is clear in the line being taken on European defence and in the signs that EU sanctions on Russia may well be relaxed in the months ahead.

The gracious Speech assured us that Britain will defend our interests and protect our values, which is something I am sure we can all agree to. However, the world will be full of difficult trade-offs for a Britain operating on its own account and constantly having to balance the need for trade agreements and investment with standing up for its interests and values. We see that at the moment with Hong Kong and balancing standing up for the rights we promised to the Hong Kong people against our commercial interests in China. That will become the norm if Britain leaves the EU and operates on its own account.

Of course, we will still have many assets as a player in the world: our Armed Forces, our diplomacy, our development, our soft power, the BBC, our culture, our sport. However, these will translate into influence only if there is real political leadership in implementing a clear strategy. We need the means to achieve that strategy, namely a well-funded Foreign Office. I wonder

whether the Minister will be able to tell us when we will have an ambassador in Washington or when we will have a full-time national security adviser, who can spend their entire time advising the Government on plotting a national strategy in the choppy waters that lie in front of us.

It is not for me to sum up, but since I am the last speaker today, I will say that it has been a privilege to sit and listen to this thoughtful and high-quality debate, ranging across the very wide canvas that the Motion invited us to address. I am very struck that, right across that landscape of defence, trade, development and foreign policy, whether and in what terms we leave the EU has a huge impact. It is therefore all the more extraordinary that this country, with our great and glorious history, is in a position in which we cannot tell foreign friends what the country's relationship with the EU will be in three months or three years. Whatever the final outcome, my conclusion is that Britain's reputation in the world has suffered real damage from the chaotic way in which the whole Brexit issue has been handled.

Baroness Bloomfield of Hinton Waldrist: I apologise to the noble Lord, Lord Ricketts, for trying to adjourn this debate prematurely. I am sure we would have all missed his thoughtful contribution. I beg to move that the debate be adjourned.

Debate adjourned until tomorrow.

House adjourned at 7.39 pm.