

Vol. 822
No. 6



Wednesday
18 May 2022

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)

HOUSE OF LORDS

OFFICIAL REPORT

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The following abbreviations are used to show a Member's party affiliation:

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

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House of Lords

Wednesday 18 May 2022

3 pm

Prayers—read by the Lord Bishop of London.

House of Lords: Appointments Question

3.07 pm

Asked by **Lord Grocott**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have, if any, to reform the current system of appointments to the House of Lords.

The Minister of State, Cabinet Office (Lord True) (Con): My Lords, there are no plans to make changes to the current system of appointments.

Lord Grocott (Lab): My Lords, on Monday, at Questions, the Minister gave a clear indication that there might be. He said that because of the number of government defeats in the Lords there might well be some more Tory Peers on the way, even more than at present. Can he confirm at least the facts, which are as follows: that the number of Tory Peers today as a proportion of the whole House is 33%, which is far higher than when the last Labour Government were in power, and that the Government now have an absolute majority of the political parties over Labour and the Liberal Democrats combined, something we could only dream about when a Labour Government were in power? So if despite all these advantages that this Tory Government have got the Prime Minister is worrying about losing votes, is it not clear that the problem is not the shortage of Tory Peers but a Government who simply cannot get their act together?

Lord True (Con): My Lords, there are a lot of questions there. The original Question, which I answered, was whether there are plans to reform the current system of appointments to this House, and I repeat that there are not. So far as numbers are concerned, I did not notice the noble Lord being reticent when he was advising Mr Tony Blair on appointing Labour Peers.

Lord Fowler (CB): My Lords, I would like to ask a question about hereditary by-elections. Can it be right that membership of this House can be by an exclusive back door marked "hereditary Peers only"? Why will the Government not introduce the kind of legislation that the noble Lord, Lord Grocott, was talking about? Reforming legislation to remove anomalies like that would be widely welcomed, not least by this House.

Lord True (Con): My Lords, my noble friend refers to a back door. The back door is actually the law of the land, a statute passed by Parliament. Hereditary Peers continue to contribute to the work of your

Lordships' House through committee memberships and in debates in the Chamber, and I think they do so in an outstanding manner.

Lord Beith (LD): The Minister said that there were no plans. There are of course plans and they have had the general approval of this House. They were plans put forward by the Burns committee to enable an orderly system of retirement and replacement on a one-for-two basis, with a proper arrangement for representation of the various parties and groups in the House. Why does the Minister still set his face against those plans?

Lord True (Con): My Lords, the previous Prime Minister and the current Prime Minister have made it clear that they do not accept the principle that a cap should be placed on the size of your Lordships' House. Such an event with an appointed House would mean that the appointed House was impervious to any response from the House of Commons in a constitutional crisis.

Lord Collins of Highbury (Lab): My Lords, I wonder if the Minister can help the House. On 18 November, in talking about the Appointments Commission, he said he was happy with the current procedure whereby the commission is able to recommend non-party-political appointments as well as advising on propriety. Could he tell us in what circumstances a recommendation of the Appointments Commission can be rejected by the Prime Minister and what justification there is for that?

Lord True (Con): My Lords, the commission's role is an advisory one. The Prime Minister continues to place great weight on the commission's careful and considered advice. We believe that the commission plays an important role and performs it well. Noble Lords keep returning to an individual case. The Prime Minister said he saw the case of my noble friend as a clear and rare exception, and we have no plans to change the status of HOLAC.

Lord Cormack (Con): Has my noble friend noticed that our noble friend Lord Norton is introducing a Private Member's Bill that would put the Appointments Commission on a statutory basis? Would he at least agree to talk with my noble friend Lord Norton with a view to the Government accepting this eminently sensible, modest measure?

Lord True (Con): My Lords, it is my habit and pleasure always to talk to Members of your Lordships' House, and that would certainly include my noble friend Lord Norton of Louth. If his Bill comes forward then I will certainly respond to it, but the Government have no plans to change the status of HOLAC. We do not agree that it should be placed on a statutory basis. It is an independent committee, and we consider its advice carefully.

Baroness Hayman (CB): My Lords, in his carefully-worded reply earlier, the Minister suggested that the present Prime Minister and the previous one were

[BARONESS HAYMAN]

absolutely at one about not imposing a cap on the size of the House. However, is it not true that in fact they take diametrically different positions on reducing the size of the House, and that the previous Prime Minister, implementing the policy set out in the Conservative Party manifesto to reduce the size of the House, took a self-denying ordinance and helped to take forward the Burns review proposals, which has absolutely been turned on its head by the present Prime Minister?

Lord True (Con): My Lords, with respect, I do not agree that if one looks at the historical record one finds that this Prime Minister has appointed Peers at a rate that is, say, faster than that of Mr Tony Blair. I think it is agreed in this House, and it is implicit in some of the comments made by your Lordships with which I agree, that retirement has a place in your Lordships' House. The corollary of that is that the House also needs refreshment, and that must continue.

Lord Foulkes of Cumnock (Lab Co-op): My Lords, does the Minister agree that it is rather sinister that the Prime Minister refuses to publish the security evidence given to him when he wanted, and proceeded, to appoint the son of a KGB agent as a Member of this House?

Lord True (Con): No, my Lords. The noble Lord knows that I have the greatest esteem for him, and that normally disclosures relating to national security matters are not made. Generally, for any appointment, from the lowest in the land to the highest, data protection and freedom of information applies. But in this case, information has been provided separately to the Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament, which illustrates that the Government are acting in good faith in responding to Parliament's requests.

Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb (GP): My Lords, during lockdown, there were all sorts of laws of the land about gatherings and yet No. 10—the Prime Minister and his Cabinet colleagues—broke those laws. Why are there some laws that they respect and some they feel free to break?

Lord True (Con): My Lords, that is rather wide of the Question. The law of the land is something that we should all respect and that includes, if I may say so, extreme campaigners for green issues.

Noble Lords: Oh!

Baroness Garden of Frogmal (LD): My Lords, the Minister keeps on citing Tony Blair. The big difference is that Tony Blair put Peers in this House from all parties, and that this Prime Minister almost exclusively puts Conservatives in.

Lord True (Con): My Lords, we could have a debate about that particular record. The principle of refreshing the House is an important one and it applies not only to Government Benches, but I do not notice the Benches over there being understocked at the moment.

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall (Lab): My Lords, on the point that the Minister has just made, can he remind the House how much refreshing has been done of the Government Benches during the last two, or perhaps two-and-a-half, years, as compared with the refreshing that has been done of other groups?

Lord True (Con): My Lords, if I may express an opinion, as I have already said, I am very aware of the feelings on the Benches of Her Majesty's Opposition about the case for refreshment of those Benches. I will say no more than that, but I think it is a strong case.

Lord Bird (CB): Can I make a very unpopular suggestion? There is one way that we could really sort this out: that it does not matter how you get into the House; we should base it on what you do in the House. To me, that is the most important thing, and I think we have a lot of people in this House who do not actually engage. Why do we not ask them to move on, so that the other people who want to do something with this mighty House and this mighty democracy can get on with it?

Lord True (Con): My Lords, the whole House has great affection for the noble Lord, Lord Bird, but I would say that there are many Members of your Lordships' House who may not come frequently but, when they do, your Lordships listen very carefully to their voice.

Heritage Steam Sector: Coal

Question

3.18 pm

Asked by **Lord Faulkner of Worcester**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to support the heritage steam sector in the light of the current interruption to coal supplies.

Lord Faulkner of Worcester (Lab): My Lords, I beg leave to ask the Question standing in my name on the Order Paper and refer the House to my heritage interests in the register.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay) (Con): My Lords, Her Majesty's Government appreciate the unique importance of the heritage steam industry both in promoting the UK's rich industrial heritage and for the wider visitor economy. We acknowledge the difficult circumstances facing the sector in light of the rising cost of coal on the international commodity markets and are in regular communication with the sector to explore how we may be able to assist. The Government have invested approximately £18 million in heritage steam organisations over recent years through the Culture Recovery Fund.

Lord Faulkner of Worcester (Lab): My Lords, the Minister will be aware that during the passage of the Environment Bill his noble friend Lady Bloomfield, whom I am delighted to see in her place, made clear the Government's support for this sector and that there would be no curb on the burning of coal by

steam trains, not least because only 0.02% of CO₂ emissions are caused by heritage steam. But imports of coal from Russia have now stopped and virtually every coal mine in Great Britain has closed; as a result, stocks are at a dangerously low level. Will the Minister agree to meet representatives of the sector and me, and is he able to offer any other hope of where future coal stocks will come from?

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay (Con): The noble Lord is absolutely right to remind your Lordships' House of the commitment made by my noble friend in respect of the Environment Act. In respect of Russia, in response to President Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine, the Government have rightly committed to phasing out Russian coal imports by the end of 2022. We think that gives enough time to find alternative suppliers, but we understand and appreciate the pressures on the heritage rail sector, particularly as it faces a crucial year recovering from the pandemic. We have been pleased to discuss this—my honourable friend the heritage Minister has done so with the sector—and we would be very happy to continue to do so as the year unfolds.

Lord Kirkhope of Harrogate (Con): My Lords, can I raise a wider question with my noble friend? Not only are we talking about steam engines on rail, but about a very big element in society for steam traction engines and other vehicles of this kind. The key point is that the nature of the coal is almost as important as the amount. The amount of sulphur in the coal, for instance, is critical to the safe operation of steam engines on rail, all these other steam-powered vehicles, and indeed those things in showgrounds that we all love to see.

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay (Con): My noble friend is absolutely right; this is important for traction engines, maritime steam, industrial museums, blacksmiths and many more. I had the pleasure of discussing this with the director of the National Railway Museum last week at the Science Museum. Despite encouraging research trials by a number of partners in the UK to produce an artificial coal alternative, it is still very much in the research and development stage, with no alternative sources at present. So we continue to discuss this with the sector.

Baroness Finlay of Llandaff (CB): My Lords, do the Government recognise that it is a very particular type of coal that is suitable for use in steam engines? The Ffos-y-fran mine in Merthyr Tydfil has been producing such coal, but it has not been reprieved from closure. Therefore, will the Government negotiate with the Welsh Government to see whether there is a way that that mine can be retained to maintain our own domestic supply, specifically for use in these very special steam engines?

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay (Con): My Lords, there is no policy from Her Majesty's Government to shut down existing coal mines. Any proposals for new coal mining projects or the extension of existing contracts would be assessed in accordance with the current statutory requirements, including at Ffos-y-fran.

Lord Blunkett (Lab): My Lords—

The Lord Speaker (Lord McFall of Alcluith): My Lords, we have a virtual contribution from the noble Lord, Lord Jones of Cheltenham.

Lord Jones of Cheltenham (LD) [V]: My Lords, the closure of the Ffos-y-fran colliery and the ban on importing coal from Russia make things very difficult. The Gloucestershire Warwickshire Steam Railway says that the problem of future coal supplies and uncertainty about passenger numbers because of the financial squeeze mean that development projects are being put on hold. Will the Minister bear in mind that bringing coal from overseas is not only more expensive but has a huge carbon footprint?

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay (Con): I will certainly acknowledge that; the noble Lord makes an important point. Obviously, the situation vis-à-vis Russia and Ukraine has a particular short-term impact. We are very happy to discuss that with the sector to make sure that it can get the fuel it needs. But, ultimately, the question of where in the world the fuel is sourced from is a matter for the private institutions and companies involved.

Lord Blunkett (Lab): My Lords, I do not often make a mistake on these occasions, so forgive me. Can I make a suggestion to the Minister, which struck me when I went to the National Coal Mining Museum in Wakefield? Why do we not make the obtaining of the necessary coal, for the heritage purposes described this afternoon, part of the heritage? Why do we not invest in that, including making it accessible to the public as we take out the coal required for this very specific purpose?

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay (Con): The noble Lord makes a very interesting point. Obviously, a number of the coal seams are no longer able to be exploited, including where we have heritage museums rightly reminding us of our mining heritage. As a grandson from a mining family, I am very aware of that. I will certainly take back the suggestion he makes to the department and discuss it.

Lord Wigley (PC): My Lords, the noble Baroness, Lady Finlay, took some of the words out of my mouth regarding Ffos-y-fran's location. Would the Minister link up with the Welsh Government to see whether there is any possibility of being able to get appropriate coal from Ffos-y-fran near Merthyr Tydfil? Of course, some of this coal can be reclamation coal, which perhaps makes it easier. In those circumstances, would this not be a way forward for the small train business and tourism sector throughout the UK?

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay (Con): My Lords, we are not aware whether the operators of the mine at Ffos-y-fran are considering replacing their screening equipment or appropriating either the Welsh Government or the Coal Authority. However, I will certainly take that point back to discuss with my honourable friend.

Lord Forsyth of Drumlean (Con): My Lords, I declare my interests as the president of the Steam Boat Association, an owner of a steamboat and a customer of the Welsh mine which the noble Lord has just mentioned. Can we take this very seriously indeed? If the Government really believe that we need to improve our security of supply, we have Welsh steam coal, which is the best in the world and vital not just for steamboats, but, as has been said, for tourism industries and the rest. It seems completely mad to argue that we should import coal from elsewhere, with all the green negative consequences.

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay (Con): My noble friend gives a very good example of the wealth of experience in your Lordships' House. He is right about the importance of this issue. Obviously, there is a particular short-term factor here regarding the situation in Russia and Ukraine, but we are very mindful too that this is an important year for the sector as it recovers from the period of closure during the pandemic. That is why, through our tourism recovery plan, we are supporting not just the heritage steam industry but the wider visitor economy, and why we are continuing to discuss this with the sector.

Lord Lee of Trafford (LD): My Lords, I declare an interest as the president of the Association of Leading Visitor Attractions. Would not the heritage steam sector, like all other tourist activities, benefit from double summer time or something similar? Is it not time that the Government set up an independent commission to look at the merits of greater daylight usage, which is supported by so many organisations, particularly now, given the increased pressure of energy costs?

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay (Con): The noble Lord makes an interesting point. The Government have set up an interministerial group on the visitor economy, and I will direct the noble Lord's point to my ministerial colleagues.

Lord Bassam of Brighton (Lab): My Lords, I live not far from the Bluebell Railway which, later this year, will play host to the iconic "Flying Scotsman". That line places specific emphasis on the educational value of our heritage steam sector, and I wonder whether the Government should be investing more in this. Perhaps, as part of the discussions with the heritage steam sector, they could take forward some further thinking to increase the country's knowledge of the value and importance of steam and its part in our great Industrial Revolution.

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay (Con): Absolutely. Coming from the north-east, the cradle of the railways and the birthplace of George and Robert Stephenson, I am very mindful of the approaching bicentenary of the first passenger rail. We are already discussing that with the National Railway Museum and others in the sector. It is very important that we continue to inspire people about our industrial past, as well as turning their minds to scientific challenges for the future—not least looking at clean coal and other energies.

Lord Grocott (Lab): My Lords, I think that the Minister appreciates that we are talking about very small amounts—relatively speaking—of coal towards a heritage sector that simply cannot function without it. So I would like him to give an answer on the principle of this: for these very small amounts, is it not surely better to acquire them somewhere on these islands than to bring them here from long distances abroad? I declare an interest as the president of the Telford Steam Railway.

Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay (Con): I pay tribute to the noble Lord in that important capacity. He is right. We discussed this with the sector and, as has been noted by other noble Lords, the coal must be of the right type and suitably bituminous. That cannot always be provided from the British Isles, but we will continue to discuss this with the sector to ensure that they have the supplies they need.

Touring Hauliers: Arts Organisations

Question

3.29 pm

Asked by **Lord Clement-Jones**

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to their announcement on 6 May regarding "dual registration" for specialist touring hauliers, what assessment they have made of the impact this will have on artists and organisations which tour in their own vehicles and operate under "own account"; and whether they have considered support for smaller hauliers operating which do not have the resources to operate dual registration.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Transport (Baroness Vere of Norbiton) (Con): My Lords, specialist touring hauliers operating under "own account" can utilise the dual-registration measure if they have a standard international operator licence, which they must apply for, and a base in Great Britain and another country. Operators will need to make their own decisions on whether they choose to do so based on business need and resources available to them.

Lord Clement-Jones (LD): My Lords, this is all very much half a loaf. If a comprehensive solution is not found, the damage to the UK music industry and the events support industry will be massive. The Prime Minister has assured us that the Government are working "flat out" on the touring issue. Can the Minister assure the House that her department is urgently working on finding a wider solution, such as an exemption from cabotage for all trucks engaged on cultural events?

Baroness Vere of Norbiton (Con): Certainly, the department has worked incredibly hard on this and continues to do so. We had a public consultation back in February, and we are deeply engaged with the industry, particularly the specialist haulage industry, which is so important. We know that about one in five hauliers has already set up within the EU, and many more have plans to do so. We recognise that the

dual-registration system will not benefit absolutely everybody. However, it is the case under the TCA that many hauliers will be able to make use of their two cross-trades within the bilateral EU-UK movements that they can make. So it does not mean that all touring is off the table. We believe that, at the moment, we have the best possible solution, in light of the current response from the EU.

Baroness Bull (CB): The Minister will be aware that, alongside cabotage, CITES and carnet regulations are adding further cost and complexity to post-Brexit touring. Last week at the EU-UK Parliamentary Partnership Assembly in Brussels, there was welcome support for my argument that, given that both sides say that they offered a deal that the other rejected, it means that we have common cause—and it is an issue that we could, in fact, resolve quickly, unlike some of the more complicated issues on the table. Does the Minister agree and, if so, will the Government consider a cultural exemption for all three Cs—cabotage, carnets and CITES—as the most practical solution to a problem that we all want to resolve?

Baroness Vere of Norbiton (Con): The noble Baroness raises some important points, and I shall ensure that my department and the Government make sure that we make the most of the areas where we already have agreement. However, I am afraid that we know that the EU will not accept greater amounts of cabotage.

The Earl of Clancarty (CB): My Lords, does the Minister acknowledge that there is a precedent in the temporary cabotage exemption negotiated for international hauliers working in the UK to provide support for supply chains while addressing the shortage of HGV drivers? At the very least, an own account exemption could be negotiated, which would be a great help.

Baroness Vere of Norbiton (Con): Those two things are not the same, in that the cabotage easement that we put in place was for EU hauliers coming to the UK, which meant that they could do unlimited cabotage within the 14 days. The EU did not reciprocate; it did not change its cabotage arrangements at all for UK-registered hauliers, who can do only one cabotage movement within the EU, and one cross-trade.

Lord Storey (LD): I am sure that the Minister is aware that those performers most affected are those at the lower and middle part of the industry. How will they be helped by these cabotage provisions, which will be of use only to the biggest specialist hauliers?

Baroness Vere of Norbiton (Con): The cabotage conditions will, of course, apply to everybody, unless they have an EU base. As for the smaller hauliers and those operating on their own account, as I said previously, they can operate if they have the standard international operator licence. They can also get an ECMT international road haulage permit, which gives an extra cross-trade. So an organisation based in the UK could travel to the EU and do events in three separate countries, all within the current regulations.

Lord Aberdare (CB): My Lords, further to the Minister's reply to the noble Lord, Lord Clement-Jones, many orchestras have their own vehicles for touring in Europe, specially fitted out at considerable expense to meet their specific needs. As I understand it, these are now virtually unusable as a result of the own account exemption being excluded from the trade and co-operation agreement. Can the Minister enlighten me? She seemed to imply that that was not the case, whereas the orchestras concerned feel that they cannot use their own vehicles for touring in Europe.

Baroness Vere of Norbiton (Con): They can use their own vehicles for touring in Europe if they have a standard operator licence. They still have to remain within the requirements set out in the TCA, which is either two cross-trades or one cross-trade and one cabotage. However, as I have said previously, they can get an ECMT permit to do three cross-trades. We recognise the challenges for those operating on their own account, because they have to operate within those particular requirements. However, if they are of a significant size, they may wish to set up an organisation in the EU, and then they would have slightly greater, although not unlimited, flexibility—but it might be helpful.

Lord Tunnicliffe (Lab): My Lords, it seems to me that the Minister is saying that the Government have done as much as they intend to do. It is equally clear from the industry press that the industry feels that this is a really serious problem for small and medium-sized performers. I do not understand the industry very well, but I would imagine that big bands come from little bands and that the importance of the industry over time is that the small successes are able to grow. Surely this whole situation is sufficiently serious for the department to continue pressure to try to devise a system that works for the smaller operators.

Baroness Vere of Norbiton (Con): My Lords, I reassure all noble Lords that we have thought long and hard about this. We have engaged with the EU but, when we did so, the exemption for specialist hauliers was rejected. Our door remains open for discussing alternative exemptions. There is a limit to what we can do on a unilateral basis. This was the best idea that came up both from my officials working on this and from our consultation with industry—68% were in favour of this. When it comes to smaller operators and those operating on their own account, the other option would be for them to go into partnership with an EU haulier and thereby provide that continuity across the system.

The Earl of Kinnoull (CB): My Lords, I back up what the noble Baroness, Lady Bull, was saying about a good body of opinion among the MEPs that we met at the Parliamentary Partnership Assembly last week, which was very sympathetic to this problem. It is very much a problem designed to be discussed by the trade-specialised committees of the trade and co-operation agreement. Can the Minister tell us which specialised committee will be tackling it and when that committee will next meet?

Baroness Vere of Norbiton (Con): Unfortunately, I will have to write to the noble Earl; I do not have that with me today.

Lord Hannay of Chiswick (CB): My Lords, the Minister suggests that things are getting better, but we are starved of any information about the damage that has been done to this sector over the last two or three years. Would she be so kind as to provide the House with some statistics showing how many of these operators have been able to tour and have got cabotage rights, carnets and so on over the last, say, four years? That would be a great help.

Baroness Vere of Norbiton (Con): It is a very complex picture. As I mentioned earlier, one in five has already set up with an EU base and a further 6% plan to do so. However, as I also mentioned, it is the case that many tours can already go ahead depending on how many different stops that particular event will have within the EU. If I can find any further details from the industry, I will certainly write to the noble Lord.

Viscount Stansgate (Lab): My Lords, further to the Minister's answer to the noble Lord, can she give any encouragement or hope to youth orchestras? It is not just professional orchestras that are finding it difficult to tour. Youth orchestras are vital for the experience gained by the young people—I admit that both my children spent years touring and playing all over Europe and had enormous experience with the Stoneleigh Youth Orchestra—but I fear that these in particular are falling completely by the wayside. Can the Minister offer any hope or encouragement for them?

Baroness Vere of Norbiton (Con): I am not aware that there is a particular issue here for youth orchestras. Like any orchestra, if a youth orchestra does not have its own vehicles, it can of course contract with an appropriate haulier which is able to operate within the regime that is set up in the UK and in the EU. It will depend on the sort of tour that youth orchestras want to do and how many countries they will be visiting as to the rules and regulations and which licences will need to be held by the haulier with which they choose to contract.

Lord Clement-Jones (LD): My Lords, is the gist of what the Minister has said today that everything is satisfactory and nothing further needs to be done?

Baroness Vere of Norbiton (Con): I completely reject that—that is not what I am saying at all. The Government absolutely recognise that the measures that we have put in place help the sector and mean that a large proportion of the UK industry can continue to operate, but we acknowledge that not all specialist operators will be in a position to establish a base overseas. As I have said before, our door remains open; we would wish to discuss this with the EU but so far, unfortunately, it has not wanted to do so.

St George's Hospital: Patient Deaths

Question

3.39 pm

Asked by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the coroner's ruling on patient deaths at St George's Hospital which found that deaths

were "unnecessary" and the result of "inadequate" NHS-led investigations; and what steps they will take to prevent such failings in future.

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath (Lab): My Lords, I beg leave to ask the Question standing in my name on the Order Paper and in so doing declare an interest as a member of the GMC.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care (Lord Kamall) (Con): NHS England and Improvement will review the coroner's prevention of future death reports and respond within the agreed timescales. The coroner's investigations are ongoing. The Government are committed to improving the standard of investigations into serious patient safety incidents in the NHS to create a culture of learning from mistakes and to improve patient safety.

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath (Lab): I am grateful to the Minister. This is a serious issue. An independent review into cardiac surgery at St George's Hospital found evidence of shortcomings and a number of avoidable deaths. This finding has been totally contradicted by the senior coroner for inner west London, who found the methodology used in the review completely flawed and said of a particular case that the coroner was dealing with that the doctor's approach had been without reproach. Given the review that will now be undertaken, does the Minister accept that, if the coroner is right, the whole method used by the NHS for these reviews will come under question?

Lord Kamall (Con): I understand the premise behind the assertion and the Question but, as I explained to the noble Lord yesterday, a number of issues are ongoing—the coroner's inquest, an employment tribunal and a number of other reviews—which, sadly, I am not allowed to comment on. However, I can say at the moment that we are committed to improving the standard of patient safety investigations. We have set up the independent patient safety investigation service and HSSIB to look at this, as the noble Lord will know from the Bill, and we have a number of independent investigations guidance for standard operating procedures by NHS England and Improvement for teams to use.

Baroness Finlay of Llandaff (CB): In the light of the criticisms levelled by the coroner over the structured judgment review in particular, will the Government undertake to require the royal colleges and the new bodies set up to look at the procedure used? Although it looked at case notes, it included neither full oversight of previous medical history nor direct observation of clinical procedures, surgical technique—including anaesthesia—and post-operative nursing, all of which have an impact on outcomes. We all know that clinical opinion varies; the point at which a procedure is judged as high risk versus futile varies from centre to centre and can vary within them from one surgeon to another.

Lord Kamall (Con): The noble Baroness clearly draws on her own experience of this. First, we have to wait for all the coroners' inquests to finish; I think 36 have been completed at the moment. There will then

be reviews, to which there is a statutory guideline on when they have to be responded to. However, it is also important to recognise the differences between the coroners' inquests and the work of the independent mortality review, which was not undertaken to determine the cause of death in individual cases or attribute blame to individual clinicians—it was looking at a number of procedures.

Lord Suri (Con): My Lords, it is nice of the noble Lord, Lord Hunt, to put this Question to the House. It is a very serious matter that patient deaths at St George's Hospital were unnecessary. Having digested the comments, we must take the appropriate steps so that such negligence is not repeated. Hospitals are meant to save the lives of patients, not end them. Human life is very important.

Lord Kamall (Con): My noble friend makes very important points which I am sure many noble Lords will agree with. It is about understanding what went wrong in places and learning from that. NHS England and Improvement is committed to improving the standard of patient safety investigations. It set up a new patient safety investigations team; as many noble Lords will know, HSSIB and a number of other panels and investigations are also looking to learn. In addition, NHS England and Improvement will have to respond to the coroners' reports.

The Lord Speaker (Lord McFall of Alcluith): My Lords, we have a virtual contribution from the noble Baroness, Lady Brinton.

Baroness Brinton (LD) [V]: My Lords, the coroner noted that the NHSI investigation had not used expert investigators and in some cases used only desktop research, looking at case papers, failing to interview key staff witnesses and take a longer view. Given that HSIB uses independent specialist teams and provides a safe space for staff and whistleblowers to talk, is there not a case for asking HSIB now to do its own investigation into this?

Lord Kamall (Con): The noble Baroness raises a very important question, and it was one of the questions I asked when I was being briefed on this. Unfortunately, when HSIB was established, it did not investigate to historical cases. The future HSSIB will also not be able to investigate such cases; it will undertake only cases that are brought to it in the future.

Lord Kakkar (CB): My Lords, I draw noble Lords' attention to my registered interests. The Minister rightly identifies that the NHS, and indeed all healthcare systems, must be committed to ensuring the best clinical outcomes and securing patient safety. Clinical failings are subjected currently to a number of different potential investigations, such as local employer investigation, professional regulatory investigation, systems regulator investigation, civil litigation and potential criminal prosecution and interrogation. How do Her Majesty's Government ensure that these multiple routes for investigating a clinical failing are properly co-ordinated to ensure that immediate learnings from such failings are applied to drive system improvement?

Lord Kamall (Con): The noble Lord raises a very important point about the complexity of having a number of investigating bodies. When I was being briefed yesterday, I was surprised by the number of ongoing investigations. We acknowledge that there needs to be a consistent approach to establishing and running investigations and inquiries. We are currently looking to develop an effective and user-friendly guide to handling inquiries and involving DHSC policy procurement IT colleagues in the development of a framework. We are working also with the Cabinet Office to ensure consistency across government, so that whatever we do in health is consistent with other investigations.

Lord Sentamu (CB): My Lords, the murder of Stephen Lawrence really caused a lot of trouble. The Met had a review and another review—and another review. The last person to do an apparently thorough review, Sir William Macpherson, turned up at the inquiry and said, “Your evidence is so awful we cannot listen to it any more.” Kent Constabulary carried out a review, but it did not uncover all the stuff that the Stephen Lawrence inquiry found. It was therefore suggested that there must be an independent police inquiry body so that the police are not marking their own homework. I wonder whether the same thing is happening here and whether this new independent review will uncover all that is required.

Lord Kamall (Con): The noble and right reverend Lord raises a number of important points about consistency and the number of investigations. Their remits are often different, which can confuse the picture, and sometimes some of the investigating bodies are seen to extend beyond their remit, causing further confusion. In this case it is important to recognise the difference between the coroner's inquest and the work of the independent mortality review. Coroners' inquests are different, and an independent mortality review was not undertaken to determine the cause of death in individual cases or to attribute blame. It was all about processes, procedures and culture.

Baroness Merron (Lab): My Lords, it is hard to imagine the trauma and pain that bereaved families have suffered, and the terrible impact on surgeons, the staff team and patients. It is concerning to read reports that junior doctors have been prevented from returning to work at the unit to keep them out of a toxic culture of inappropriate behaviour. Can the Minister tell your Lordships' House what is being done to stamp out toxicity, not just in these tragic circumstances but in NHS workplaces more generally, and what assessment has been made of the problem?

Lord Kamall (Con): Let me begin by agreeing with the noble Baroness on how important it is to recognise the impact that this has had on the bereaved families, and the uncertainty they have experienced. They thought it was going in one direction; clearly that was addressed by the coroner and now the coroner may apologise. When I was looking at this in more detail, I was sadly told not to discuss the culture because of ongoing investigations, but I commit to write to the noble

[LORD KAMALL]

Baroness, to make sure that I am not breaking any legal principles and that I give her a proper response rather than an inappropriate one now.

Queen's Speech *Debate (6th Day)*

3.50 pm

Moved on Tuesday 10 May by Lord Sherbourne of Didsbury

That a 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 was addressed to both Houses of Parliament”.

The Minister of State, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and Department for International Trade (Lord Grimstone of Boscobel) (Con): My Lords, it is a great honour to open this debate on Her Majesty’s gracious Speech on the important issues of foreign affairs, defence and trade. I am also delighted to be joined by my noble friend Lord Ahmad, who I know will employ his trademark expertise and erudition to good effect.

When my noble friends Lady Goldie and Lord Ahmad stood at this Dispatch Box a year ago to open and close the same debate, they spoke of a changing global dynamic: a world recovering from a pandemic that changed everything; a world of rapidly advancing technology; and a new era of systemic competition. They warned that with this changing dynamic has come an increasingly divided and unstable world. They warned of an increasingly assertive Russia, in a world where hostile states sought to destabilise the international order. They warned of a world with increased militarisation, and a world facing the ever-growing impacts of climate change. This is the world we see around us today.

We are witnessing the illegal, and utterly brutal, invasion of Ukraine by the Putin regime. Day after day, we hear of Russian forces’ war crimes: family homes turned to rubble; murdered civilians in mass graves; and despicable testimonies of rape and torture. These acts reverberate far beyond Ukraine—they threaten the security of Europe and the world. The aggressors must fail, and that is why we have been resolute in our response. The Government are using all their diplomatic, defence, humanitarian and trade levers to support Ukraine, and we will keep going until they prevail.

When it comes to defence, our personnel have been delivering across the world. Last year, Royal Navy sailors travelled 40,000 nautical miles to the Indo-Pacific on our carrier strike group’s maiden mission, projecting influence and engaging with allies. In May, UK troops on the UN’s peacekeeping mission in Mali seized crucial weapons from suspected Daesh terrorists, and in August, our aviators undertook the largest airlift since Berlin to help evacuate thousands of people from Afghanistan. But those events now seem to belong to a different era, confronted as we are by Putin’s brutal war in Ukraine.

The integrated review identified Russia as a primary threat, and that has proved true. In response, we have donated more defensive weapons to Ukraine than any other European country, as well as providing logistics support for international aid. More broadly, we are reinforcing NATO allies understandably alarmed at the savagery occurring mere miles from their border. We have doubled our troops in Estonia to 1,700, sent personnel to support Lithuanian intelligence and reconnaissance efforts, deployed 350 Royal Marines in Poland, increased our presence in the skies over south-eastern Europe and sent offshore patrol vessels and destroyers to the eastern Mediterranean. Closer to home, the Navy is now leading the operational response to small boats in the channel, ensuring control of our borders and cracking down on people smugglers.

Looking to the future, defence is modernising to counter these multiplying threats. We are investing an extra £24 billion over four years in our forces, providing them with state-of-the-art tanks, sixth-generation fighter jets and Dreadnought nuclear submarines. We have also launched the first space command in Wycombe, set up the National Cyber Force in Preston and opened an artificial intelligence hub in Newcastle. Meanwhile, we have ring-fenced £6.6 billion of defence spending for research and development so we can fast-track the most cutting-edge technologies. However, our greatest capability remains our people. That is why we are upgrading our estate, investing in healthcare and training and recruiting talent which truly reflects the diverse society we serve. Taken together, this is the most significant transformation in UK defence since the end of the Cold War. In an ever more dangerous world, it has never been more necessary.

Alongside military support to Ukraine, we are leading the way in the diplomatic response. Our package of humanitarian, economic and military support is worth \$2 billion. We are isolating Putin on the world stage. The UN General Assembly voted to suspend Russia from the Human Rights Council and 141 UN member states voted to condemn Russia’s actions in Ukraine. Putin and his forces will be held to account for their barbarity. Our state party referral of the situation to the International Criminal Court is now backed by 40 states. We are cutting funding to Putin’s war chest through sanctions and crippling his war machine. The UK is introducing the most severe economic sanctions that Russia has ever faced, covering a record 1,600 individuals, entities and subsidiaries.

Putin can be in no doubt: his illegal war has strengthened European unity, strengthened NATO unity and strengthened the very idea of what it means to be Ukrainian. Putin has forged a resolve among democratic countries to remove the tentacles of Russian influence and interference. He has created an alliance in support of Ukraine that is determined to face down tyranny, in Russia and beyond. Putin’s war challenges us to find a model for international partnerships that is more cogent and more equitable, a model that stands up to aggressors, in defence of sovereignty and self-determination.

The Foreign Secretary describes those alliances as a network of liberty. This Government will strengthen that network in the years ahead, to demonstrate that respect for the rule of law, fair play, free trade and co-operation is the surest route to peace. We will do

this by shoring up our collective defence, galvanising our economic security and deepening our alliances around the world. We will do it with the billions we spend each year to help the world's poorest, with humanitarian aid, development assistance and support for women's inclusion and, most importantly, girls' education. We will do it by helping countries rebuild from the pandemic and grow resilient for the future. And we will do it by promoting British values and standing up for human rights. Partnerships such as NATO, the G7 and the Commonwealth are at the heart of this effort. Partnerships are of course living things, which grow and evolve over time.

In Northern Ireland, our first priority is to uphold the Belfast/Good Friday agreement in all its dimensions: it is a triumph of compromise after decades of instability. However, the practical problems of the Northern Ireland protocol weigh heavily and are upsetting that balance. The UK has proposed what we believe to be a comprehensive and reasonable solution that would meet both our and the EU's original objectives for the protocol. It would address the frictions in east-west trade while protecting the EU single market.

However, the challenge is that this solution requires a change to the protocol itself. Our preference, of course—we have made this very clear—remains a negotiated solution, but we must allow the Executive to be restored and assure peace and stability. That is why, yesterday, the Foreign Secretary announced our intention to legislate for changes to the protocol in the coming weeks, protecting the elements that work and fixing those that do not.

This legislation is lawful. Proceeding with this Bill is consistent with our obligations in international law—and in support of our prior obligations to the Belfast/Good Friday agreement. We are crystal clear that the EU will not be negatively impacted in any way. However, we must live up to our commitments to all the communities of Northern Ireland, and we must reframe the protocol with an equal respect for both unions: the UK and the EU.

To return to the war in Ukraine, our trade relationships are our absolute lifeblood, and the Department for International Trade knows that the same is true of Russia. The work the FCDO and the MoD are doing cannot be done in isolation. The DIT is also doing its part in weakening Putin's war machine. We announced further sanctions on 8 May, targeting £1.7 billion-worth of trade. Those sanctions included import tariffs and export bans, with the import tariffs covering £1.4 billion-worth of goods, hampering Putin's ability to fund his war effort. Meanwhile, the export bans intend to hit more than £250 million-worth of goods in sectors of the Russian economy most dependent on UK goods. It has brought the total value of products on which full or partial import and export sanctions will apply to more than £4 billion.

Of course, the actions we have taken require a collective approach with partners, and my department has sought to strengthen the relationships we have as an independent member of the WTO and through our FTA programme. In 2021 we signed our agreement with Australia and the EEA/EFTA countries, and this year we have signed our FTA with New Zealand

and our digital economy agreement with Singapore. Additionally, we launched negotiations with Canada in March. We will be continuing negotiations to join the Trans-Pacific Partnership and have completed three rounds of negotiations with India. We are also preparing to begin negotiations on new trade deals with Mexico and the Gulf Cooperation Council. It is our objective to put the UK at the centre of a network of modern deals spanning the Americas and Indo-Pacific. We have also tabled legislation required for the Australia and New Zealand free trade agreements to eventually enter into force.

The Trade (Australia and New Zealand) Bill provides a power to make changes to UK procurement regulations to implement the obligations in the government procurement chapters of the Australia and New Zealand FTAs. The Bill delivers on a key Brexit benefit of having our own independent trade policy and of course supports the Government's levelling-up agenda, with all nations and regions of the UK set to benefit from the deals.

However, FTAs are not the only tool my department is using to support the Government's levelling-up agenda. In November last year, the Trade Secretary announced a refreshed cross-government export strategy for the whole of the UK, at the UK's first International Trade Week. In my own ministerial portfolio, the Office for Investment has been working tirelessly to attract big strategic investment into the parts of the UK that need it most.

In conclusion, the world faces significant challenges, and the UK is stepping up on the international stage to tackle them with our partners and friends. As I look around the House, with distinguished former Foreign and Defence Ministers present, not to mention an illustrious miscellany of noble Lords with acknowledged expertise in these areas, I look forward to today's debate.

4.05 pm

Lord Collins of Highbury (Lab): My Lords, I welcome the opportunity we have today to debate the many issues confronting the world, but I cannot hide my disappointment that I will be spending more time talking about what is missing from the gracious Speech than what is present. Russia's invasion of Ukraine represents an unprecedented geopolitical situation, yet this Government's Queen's Speech barely addressed it and the MoD is not even mentioned.

Last year's integrated review of security, defence, development and foreign policy highlighted the need for the UK to play an active role in ensuring that open societies and economies can flourish across the world by championing free trade and global co-operation, tackling conflict and instability and standing up for democracy and human rights, yet the international development strategy promised in that review and published this week makes no explicit prioritisation to do this. All we got was a vague reference. I hope that when he responds, the noble Lord, Lord Ahmad, can confirm whether the Government have reneged on this commitment and, if they have not, how they will address the issues driving conflict and defending human rights in line with the integrated review?

[LORD COLLINS OF HIGHBURY]

Turning to Ukraine and defence first, there are no plans to reboot defence plans in response to Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine or rethink Army cuts. Despite promising to

“invest in our gallant Armed Forces”,

Ministers are pushing ahead with a £1.7 billion cut to day-to-day MoD spending, which means less money for forces' pay, recruitment and families. More than a dozen European countries are now rebooting security plans and looking again at defence spending, so why are our Government not doing so?

The Procurement Bill fails to ensure greater protection of jobs in the defence sector by adopting a British-built-by-default approach intended to boost manufacturing within the UK supply chain. When we reach the appropriate stage in the Bill's passage, I hope the Government will support an opposition amendment to deliver this boost to our economy. There is no commitment to bring forward the national resilience strategy to boost homeland defences. We have been waiting for this strategy for 14 months. When will we get it? We need a new security White Paper to revise our defence plans to deal with the new threats to UK and European security, and to halt cuts to the Army. Are the Government considering this?

A key part of defending democracy, the international rules-based order, the rule of law and human rights in Ukraine and elsewhere is, of course, as the Minister said in his introduction, through international co-operation, whether it be NATO or other forums such as the G7, the United Nations or the Commonwealth. Our shared commitment to strengthening partnerships and to engaging diplomatically and constructively with international organisations from a unified position is unshakeable.

However, Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine has highlighted how misguided many of the Government's strategic assumptions about foreign policy have been. I cannot agree with the Minister about the integrated review, which wrongly de-emphasised the importance of European security. Also on European security, the key recommendations of the Intelligence and Security Committee's report on Russia remain unimplemented. Tackling and challenging Russia's political, economic and military reach is imperative to European security, and the work must start at home. The United Kingdom must stop acting as a hiding place and service industry for criminals and their money.

Although our current focus is rightly on Ukraine and Russia, it is far from the only global crisis. Many countries have experienced almost non-stop conflict over the past decade. Our support for Ukraine, including humanitarian assistance, should not come out of ODA. The poorest in the world should not have to pay the price of Russian aggression. There are currently multiple crises of nutrition that will only get worse with increasing conflict and the negative effects of climate change.

Yesterday, UNICEF published a short report on the state of malnutrition. It shows that, in spite of rising levels of severe wasting in children and rising costs of treatment, global financing towards nutrition does not match the need, making up just 0.2% of ODA globally. East African countries are dependent on Ukraine and Russia for 90% of their grain imports

and parts of the region are also experiencing severe drought. Worldwide, at least 13.6 million children aged under five suffer from severe wasting, with two in three of these children—roughly 10 million—not being reached for treatment, resulting in one in five deaths among this age group.

After the Nutrition for Growth summit, I welcomed the Government's commitment to spending at least £1.5 billion on addressing global malnutrition over the next eight years. I also welcomed their commitment to adopting the OECD DAC nutrition policy marker across their programmes. Sadly, Monday's strategy did not include a specific prioritisation of nutrition. We still do not know how this money will be spent between nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive programming, nor when the money will begin to be disbursed.

The reason I make this point is because building a good foundation of nutrition is absolutely essential for achieving the Government's stated objectives of empowering women and girls, providing life-saving humanitarian assistance and advancing work on climate change, nature and global health. I hope that the Minister will today reiterate the Government's previous commitment of reaching 50 million children, women and adolescent girls with nutrition-relevant programmes by 2025.

I could list all the countries we are focused on at the moment in terms of nutrition. In Afghanistan, 25 million people are in need. In Ethiopia, a further 25 million people are in need, with 4 million people displaced. Two-thirds of the population of Yemen are in need after years of conflict. Nigeria faces growing insecurity and, in South Sudan, more than three-quarters of the population are in need after a decade of conflict. We also should not forget Colombia, which remains the most dangerous place in the world to be a human rights defender, with more than 60 activists killed in the first four months of 2022.

Rather than restoring the UK's development expertise, targeting aid on poverty reduction and prioritising climate, conflict and health funding, the Government instead prioritise a naïve, aid-for-trade approach that simply will not work. This is an approach that takes us back to the 1980s and corruption scandals such as the Pergau dam.

The plan to reduce the proportion of aid spending to multilaterals from 40% today to just 25% by 2025 could result in huge cuts to life-saving programmes. I hope that the Minister will confirm that the Global Fund will be protected from any funding cuts and that the United Kingdom will join our greatest ally, the United States, in making a strong pledge at its seventh replenishment. I also hope that the Government will reconsider a much swifter return to the 0.7% target and using the aid budget to help those most in need, and not trade favours with big corporations.

Finally, I turn to trade, the part of this debate that had at least some substance in the Queen's Speech, as the Minister mentioned, through the electronic trade documents Bill, which has the potential to ease burdens on businesses and save billions at the same time. The noble Lord mentioned the Trade (Australia and New Zealand) Bill, which will facilitate agreements that the Government claim will boost the economy by over

£3 billion. So far, the Government are failing to use British negotiating clout around the world to promote those principles in the integrated review; the principles of high standards, from workers' rights to trade union freedom and climate commitments. I hope that we will see something different. At the centre of this Queen's Speech should have been a plan to ensure that trade delivers for businesses and communities, especially at this time of a cost of living crisis.

4.17 pm

Baroness Smith of Newnham (LD): My Lords, as the noble Lord, Lord Collins, has pointed out, the gracious Speech was in many ways rather lacking in the themes of today's debate. That is very common. There is very little in the legislative sphere that your Lordships' House is requested to opine upon in the course of the annual year or parliamentary Session. However, I suspect that the noble Lord, Lord Ahmad, thinks that he spends more time in your Lordships' House answering questions than many other Ministers. That is precisely because there are so many issues of vital importance to this country, and globally, linked to his portfolio—which every time we hear from him seems to have expanded to another part of the world and another set of issues. Today, he has the undoubted pleasure of responding to the debate on foreign affairs, international development—which is still part of FCDO—defence, trade and Europe. Europe is of course the dog that does not bark at the moment, and received very few words in the gracious Speech.

However, if today's debate has very little to do with legislation, that might come as a relief. As the noble Lord, Lord Sherbourne of Didsbury, put it in his witty moving of the humble Address, an earlier Lord Mancroft had bemoaned that we have been overlegislated in this country. That was 70 years ago, at the start of Her Majesty's reign. The noble Lord, Lord Sherbourne, seemed to think that this would be of particular interest to the Opposition Benches; that for some reason we would think that there was too much legislation in the world. I have the advantage, in sitting on the Liberal Democrat Benches, of seeing the faces of the government party, and in particular the Conservative Privy Council Bench. I assure your Lordships that nobody looked more delighted at the idea that there was too much legislation than the noble Lord, Lord Forsyth of Drumlean.

We are all very happy to have a debate and discuss policy that does not necessarily link to legislation but, as the noble Lord, Lord Collins, pointed out, some areas of the gracious Speech were perhaps lacking. In his opening remarks, the Minister began to flesh out some of these areas and there are others that we will need to probe during this Session that link to defence expenditure. The rhetoric is one thing, but the reality might be different. Indeed, the noble Lord, Lord Sherbourne, pointed out that some people ask whether we can afford to spend so much on defence; his response, as is that of these Benches in many ways, given the crisis in Ukraine, is whether we can afford not to make that expenditure.

The gracious Speech talked about the Government playing a leading role in defending democracy and freedom across the world, including by continuing to

support the people of Ukraine. In his opening remarks, the Minister spent much of his time explaining the Government's commitment to Ukraine, which is very welcome, but he also made some comments that were a little unexpected, suggesting that Vladimir Putin has done nothing more than to foster European unity. If that is the case, do we really need a Brexit freedoms Bill or should we be looking at ways in which the United Kingdom can reunite with Europe? I am intrigued by the Minister's comments in that regard, because there is clearly a need for greater co-operation with our allies in Europe and beyond.

I would like to press the noble Lord, Lord Ahmad, who will be responding, on the sorts of initiatives Her Majesty's Government are taking beyond defence support for Ukraine. That is clear and welcome, but we have seen the Prime Minister go to Finland and Sweden and offer bilateral security commitments. That could be seen as very brave, but is it credible? What commitments is the Prime Minister offering that go beyond membership of NATO, and have Her Majesty's Government thought through the implications of the words of our Prime Minister, occasionally, and of the Secretary of State for Defence and the Foreign Secretary, who do not always seem to be singing from the same hymn sheet? Their words could be seen as inflammatory in a way that perhaps is not intended. I would like to hear a little more about the extent to which the United Kingdom is working with NATO allies and prospective NATO allies, and to consider how far our commitments are credible and the United Kingdom can be a reliable partner.

That very much fits with some of the concerns raised by the noble Lord, Lord Collins: what are we doing on defence? It is easy for Ministers to say that we have made this major commitment to defence expenditure, but one of the biggest problems in the world today is inflation. One of the knowns about defence expenditure is that defence inflation is normally higher than the retail prices index. So will the Minister tell the House what calculations Her Majesty's Government are making to assess whether the defence expenditure commitment is high enough? The rhetoric means nothing at all if we do not see something concrete emerging. I am sure the noble Lord, Lord West of Spithead, will raise various questions, perhaps about shipping and our capability in that sphere—I could be wrong; he may talk about something entirely different—but this is a very serious issue. Rhetoric is one thing; delivery is another.

This takes me to one of the Bills that was mentioned in the gracious Speech and on which we have been given a briefing: the Procurement Bill. It does not necessarily sound like something that fits in foreign affairs, but defence has been particularly lacking in this area and it is very clear that defence is included in the new Procurement Bill. It is all very well to legislate and have a wonderful procurement policy, and it may be that Her Majesty's Government will bring forward legislation and we will amend it in such a way that all Members of your Lordships' House will say, "What a fantastic Act the Procurement Act 2022 or 2023 is."

However, an Act of Parliament is no use whatever if people engaged in procurement are not able to use it effectively, so what advice and comfort can Her Majesty's Government give, particularly in the defence sphere, that defence procurement is going to improve and that

[BARONESS SMITH OF NEWNHAM]

we are going to see defence equipment delivered on time and within budget? That is an issue not of legislation but of good governance, and we need to see more of it.

The gracious Speech also talks about the benefits of Brexit. It will not surprise your Lordships to hear that, speaking from the Liberal Democrat Front Bench, I have found it quite difficult to find any benefit from Brexit. Apparently it is going to lead to growth. The noble Lord, Lord Frost, is looking across the Chamber, and he will be speaking shortly. I am sure he will disagree with me and will suggest that there are many benefits of Brexit. But so far, we are seeing not growth but labour shortages, raging inflation and stagflation. I admit that that is not all because of Brexit. Some of it is coming from war and the sanctions on Ukraine. When we had the emergency debate on Ukraine in the previous Session, I very strongly made the point, which I reiterate today, that however much we support sanctions against Russia associated with the war in Ukraine, it is important to be clear to the British public about some of the implications of sanctions because they do not affect Russia alone. We need to be clearer about that.

In winding up, I turn to the advice we have been given on the Brexit freedoms Bill. It suggests that a review has found about 1,000 pieces of legislation that could be looked at again, that all this legislation was rapidly negotiated in the past and had inadequate scrutiny, and that much of the law coming from the European Union was

“imposed and changed with minimal parliamentary scrutiny in the past”.

The briefing goes on to say, rather ironically:

“The Bill will significantly reduce the amount of time needed to make retained EU legislation fit for the UK, meaning the Government can more quickly implement the benefits of Brexit.”

Can the Minister explain to the House how it is better to be changing legislation so rapidly, seemingly with even less scrutiny than the retained legislation had in the first place? Surely the point of taking back control is to ensure that Parliament has a greater say and that we are not airbrushed. The echoes of Thomas Cromwell and Henry VIII should surely be excised from forthcoming legislation.

4.28 pm

Lord Ricketts (CB): My Lords, wars simplify and clarify. They oblige every country involved to make choices about what its essential interests are and how to protect them. Speaking of clarity, it must be increasingly clear, even to President Putin, that he has made a massive strategic error in launching the largest armed conflict in Europe since World War II. The myth of Russian military prowess has exploded. Putin's only hope now is to avoid total humiliation and find some outcome that his propaganda machine can present as justifying his gamble. The President and people of the other combatant, Ukraine, have been magnificent. However this ends, renewed, pro-western Ukrainian nationalism will be a big factor in European politics from this time on.

I want to concentrate on the choices that western countries face as they step up to this Russian barbarism. President Biden has made an important policy shift by

putting America back into leadership in deterring Russia and supporting democracy in Europe. Finland and Sweden formally applied today to join NATO. I have known that organisation since joining the UK delegation to NATO in 1978 and it has never felt more united or more purposeful. When I was the permanent representative to NATO in the early 2000s, Sweden and Finland were by far the most effective partner nations—serious defence nations but proud of their neutrality and non-alignment. However, faced with Putin's war, each has made a profound decision based on an impressive national debate and decided to join.

Germany too has made an amazing shift in its security policy, greater than anything I can remember in the last 40 years. It will take that country time to change its pacifist culture and to re-equip the Bundeswehr, but its recognition of the need to shoulder hard-power responsibilities shows a real capacity to adapt and is a major change in the European security landscape.

Germany and other EU countries are also facing up to the disastrous policy of dependence on Russian oil and gas. Weaning themselves off that will be a long and expensive operation, but it will remove Russia's biggest leverage over its western neighbours. The EU too has moved a long way in the last three months in stepping up to the security responsibilities to go with its economic power.

How do I think Britain is performing in reassessing our vital national interests in the new circumstances? The answer, frankly, is mixed. I give full credit to the national security response. The clear warnings from the intelligence community and our leading role in NATO and in arming Ukraine's military—all this has been surefooted. In other areas, though, our response has been much less impressive. The Government insist on treating women and children fleeing Ukraine as potential security threats requiring the full panoply of visa controls, rather than welcoming them as refugees as Poland and Hungary have.

Putin's war should be the perfect opportunity to put behind us the rows with the EU in the interests of a truly united western response to this massive European security threat. I gather that the discussions between the EU and the UK on sanctions against Russia have been positive and constructive; the Government have not said much about them but it is good to know that they are going on. We should push out that bridgehead to wider aspects of the crisis, including energy policy and a joint campaign to bring other countries beyond Europe to accept that their interests are at stake as well and that they too should be supporting western sanctions.

In my view, though, Ministers still seem to wear ideological blinkers that make it impossible for them ever to acknowledge that the EU does anything positive or constructive. The EU does not even seem to figure in the Foreign Secretary's “network of liberty”, from reading her Guildhall speech; nor does it figure as a partner in our new international development strategy. I think we are in the process of missing the key opportunity to build closer working relations with the EU on international policy.

Perhaps the Minister will surprise me and tell the House that indeed we are planning to work more closely with the EU on these issues in future—but

what would make that impossible would be for the Government to pursue their plan to have powers to disable part of the Northern Ireland protocol. Seen from the perspective of a major war in Europe, both the substance and timing of that are massively ill judged. If pursued, it will confirm the view in European capitals that Britain is not to be trusted. It will therefore ensure that this country has no influence in shaping the EU's political, economic and security priorities.

I make this appeal to the Government: like Germany, Finland and Sweden, let us be bold and recognise that Putin's war has clarified where our vital interests lie. Let us back down from the brink of a major breach with the EU and work together with EU countries for peace and stability in Europe.

4.33 pm

Lord King of Bridgwater (Con): My Lords, I am delighted to follow the noble Lord, Lord Ricketts, who drew on his 44 years of experience in NATO for the benefit of the House. I have great sympathy with the comment by the noble Baroness, Lady Smith, about trying to open for an opposition party on the Queen's Speech at this time with the unbelievable range of subjects that might be covered. In my brief five minutes I shall talk about just one. I do so against as grave a situation globally at the present time as I can remember.

It is incredible that, with the new events that have taken place, we have almost forgotten the global pandemic that threatens everybody. With global warming, the explosion of methane in the Arctic is accelerating the rate of climate change—another great drama that is coming for us. I agreed with the Governor of the Bank of England when he used the word “apocalyptic”. He used it about the scale of inflation; I shall use it about the question of food supply. The noble Lord, Lord Collins, talked about global malnutrition. There is no question that, however many people Vladimir Putin kills in his efforts in Ukraine, it is nothing compared to the millions he may kill because of the blockage of Odessa and the prevention of proper circulation of food around the world. The number of countries now desperately worried is enormous. I understand that at the moment 25 million tonnes of grain is sitting blocked in Odessa and neighbouring areas.

Previously, grain was being shipped out at the rate of 5 million tonnes per month, so think of those countries and regions expecting to get it. I have a list: Egypt—which will now be hard-hit—Algeria, Morocco, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Yemen, the Sahel, sub-Saharan Africa, Somalia and Syrian refugees in Iraq. There are riots in Iran, where food prices have gone up by 300%. You can now list the number of places that face the most serious problems. We had been worried about the threat but thought we could get supplies to them. It is now not a question of money but of whether the supplies even exist.

Against that background, who can help? One of the countries people turn to, the second-largest exporter of corn, is India. India has had very bad weather for its harvest and is now blocking all exports. Indonesia, a great source of palm oil, is now worried about supplies. Now it is blocking any exports as well. It is against that background that one sees the really serious

situation. The question then is: how can we sort it out? This is where I had hoped the noble Lord, Lord Ricketts, would give us an immediate answer with all his experience.

At the moment, we have to stick to the road we are on and try every way we can to get the message through to all the decent people in Russia—of whom there are millions, as I know from my experience and pleasure in visiting there in my official capacity—who are absolutely horrified. If I take one bit of recent encouragement, it is from the comments on Russian official television by Colonel Khodarenok, in which he spelled out exactly why one can admire Ukraine. The story we hear is that Putin thinks Ukraine is a fake country with no right to exist. Colonel Khodarenok said that it showed very clearly that the people of Ukraine see themselves as defending their motherland. Their commitment to that shows why they are doing so much better against many Russians who do not have the slightest idea why they are there and meant to be fighting.

The other serious consequence is that with starvation comes migration. Many countries have been worried about the amount of migration—and mass migration—in the world. That may be as nothing compared to what is about to happen, because there are simply not the supplies. Food supplies are blocked and countries that were already on the edge will go over it; if you do not get out of those countries, you have not got a hope for your lives and futures.

I am sorry to give rather a sombre speech, but I believe that the lead the United Kingdom Government have given with other allies shows that we have to face Ukraine; we have to give it all the support we can. We have to reopen Odessa and make Russia sufficiently ashamed of what it is doing—murdering millions of people in the rest of the world. We must get some real impact out of that as well.

4.39 pm

Lord Browne of Ladyton (Lab): My Lords, in less than three months of fighting Russia has lost one-third of the ground combat force it committed to the invasion of Ukraine. Every wrecked Russian tank—taken out by light anti-tank weapons deployed with minimum training, unslung in seconds from the shoulder and deadly accurate—is further evidence that traditional armies can no longer expect to dominate simply because they have more troops, weapons and money. As weapons have become smaller, more effective and widely dispersed, it has become harder and harder for traditional militaries effectively to achieve their aims through brute force, as they meet resistance at every turn. Resistance in this case includes information warfare, hacking and cyber-attacks, as well as social media, which President Zelensky excels at, casting the conflict in terms of good and evil and projecting an aura of invincibility.

Our own experience in Iraq and Afghanistan underscores the reality of contemporary warfare: that invasion and occupation is more expensive and temporary than it is quick and permanent. As always, the future belongs to those who embrace it and, in this context, who empower the decentralisation of weapons technology, information currency and individual ingenuity and courage.

[LORD BROWNE OF LADYTON]

Less has been said about the use of artificial intelligence in the Ukraine war than about anti-tank missiles but in April, a senior Defense Department official said that the Pentagon—quietly—is using AI and machine-learning tools to analyse vast amounts of data, generate useful battlefield intelligence and learn about Russian tactics and strategy. Just how much the US is passing to Ukraine is a matter for conjecture and I shall not do that. A powerful Russian drone with AI capabilities has been spotted in Ukraine. Meanwhile, Ukraine has itself employed the use of a controversial facial recognition technology. Prime Minister Fedorov told Reuters that it had been using Clearview AI—software that uses facial recognition—to discover the social media profiles of deceased Russian soldiers, which authorities then use to notify their relatives and offer arrangements for their bodies to be recovered.

If the technology can be used to identify live as well as dead enemy soldiers, it could also be incorporated into systems that use automated decision-making to direct lethal force. This is not a remote possibility; last year, the UN reported that an autonomous drone had killed people in Libya in 2020. There are unconfirmed reports of autonomous weapons already being used in Ukraine. We are seeing a rapid trend towards increasing autonomy in weapons systems. AI and computational methods are allowing machines to make more and more decisions themselves.

Our Government see AI as playing an important role in the future of warfighting. The integrated review, presenting AI and other scientific advances as “battle-winning technologies”, set out their priority for

“identifying, funding, developing and deploying new technologies and capabilities faster than our potential adversaries”.

There is an urgent need for strategic leadership by government and for scrutiny by Parliament, as AI plays an increasing role in the changing landscape of war. We need UK leadership to establish, domestically and internationally, when it is ethically and legally appropriate to delegate to a machine autonomous decision-making about when to take an individual's life.

The development of LAWS is not inevitable, and an international legal instrument would play a major role in controlling their use. In the absence of an international ban, it is inevitable that, eventually, these weapons will be used against UK citizens or soldiers. Advocating international regulation would not be abandoning the military potential of new technology; it is needed on AWS to give our industry guidance to be a sci-tech superpower without undermining our security and values. Weapons that are not aligned with our values must not be used to defend our values. We should not be asking our honourable service personnel to use immoral weapons.

The war in Ukraine has brought home the tragic human consequences of ongoing conflict. The use of LAWS in future conflicts and the lack of clear accountability for the decisions made pose serious complications and challenges for post-conflict resolution and peacebuilding. The way in which these weapons might be used and the human rights challenges they present are novel and unknown; the existing laws of war were not designed to cope with such situations and, on their own, are not enough to control the use of future autonomous weapons systems.

The integrated review pledged to “publish a Defence AI strategy”.

More than a year later, there is still no sign of it. The Government's delay in publishing the strategy while the technology is outpacing us means that the UK is unprepared to deal with the ethical, legal and practical challenges presented by autonomous weapons systems today.

4.44 pm

Lord Taverne (LD): My Lords, I will discuss trade and our relations with the European Union, matters which are integral to our domestic, economic and political health, as well as the wider international picture.

Some Labour voices urge us to stop talking about Brexit. Why on earth would we do that? Brexit is not done; it was a profound mistake, the dire consequences of which are becoming more evident every day. According to the polls, the public now increasingly recognises this. The Office for Budget Responsibility's assessment is that UK-EU imports and exports have suffered a 15% cut since Brexit—as one would expect after leaving our biggest and most profitable market. Other authoritative forecasts are even more pessimistic. The effect of this will be to further increase inflation—already forecast to rise to a disastrous 10%—weaken the pound, force an increase in interest rates, lower investment and likely worsen our depressingly low productivity. Any valuable opportunities of international co-operation have been, or will be, lost, such as the Erasmus programme. Brexit has not only severely weakened our economy and influence in the world, but, to a lesser extent, that of the EU as a whole. At a time of Russian aggression, the growing influence of China and uncertainties about the future leadership of the United States, a strong EU is needed to play a vital part in supporting freedom and justice in the world.

Macron has made an imaginative proposal to build a stronger Europe based on a political community, and we should show that we share this aim. What, then, should our policy be? Applying to re-join the European Union tomorrow is clearly unrealistic, but we should start to rebuild the closest possible relationships with it. As part of this, I believe that we should propose a bold move: to re-join the European single market. This would have profound and important political implications. The biggest immediate advantage of re-joining the European single market is that it would solve the apparently insoluble problem of the Northern Ireland protocol. It is not surprising that there is such a strong reaction to a border in the Irish Sea in Northern Ireland, as well as among British businesses. Johnson vowed that no British Prime Minister would ever impose a border; then he did so and boasted that the protocol was a great deal. Re-joining the European single market would avoid borders between any part of the UK and the Republic of Ireland because we would all be members of the European single market. Furthermore, it would save the Good Friday agreement.

However, this will need a sea change in government: no more contempt for the rule of law, domestic as well as international, and no more threats to repeal international treaties we have solemnly signed—although

it seems that the Government are about to legislate to make such threats a reality, which can only exacerbate our relationship with the EU. By contrast, re-joining the European single market would symbolise a new relationship with the European Union and demonstrate that we are serious about Macron's aim of a stronger Europe. We desperately need a new Government. As the *Observer* pointed out on Sunday, the best hope for this, in light of the recent elections, is a Labour Government with strong support from the Liberal Democrats and Greens—and possibly even from dissident Tory remainers. This would not be another coalition but a pro-European alliance. Re-joining the European single market should be a central part of the strategy of this alliance.

4.48 pm

Lord Stirrup (CB): My Lords, I imagine that, a few months ago, many people would have expected the debate on this year's gracious Speech to be conducted in air of optimism as we emerged from the shadow of Covid and looked forward to continuing economic recovery. Instead, we find ourselves confronted by a war in Europe and its consequences for our own security. However, I fear that at the moment we are not paying sufficient attention to those consequences. We are rightly focused on providing all possible assistance to Ukraine as it resists Russian aggression, but we cannot postpone a consideration of the wider lessons of the invasion. The implications for our future security are far too profound for us to delay such an analysis.

To my mind, there are three strategic conclusions that we should draw from the events of recent months. The first is, alas, an old lesson—the unbounded capacity of the future to surprise us, usually in very unpleasant ways. International crises, and the armed conflicts that sometimes flow from them, have seldom been anticipated, nor have we been well prepared to meet them. Since no one has a functioning crystal ball, we will no doubt continue to make wrong judgments about the future, so we must expect to be surprised by it and develop military structures and capabilities that will provide us with sufficient agility, adaptability and sustainability to cope with the unforeseen. But we can do that only if we are prepared to make the necessary level of investment—something we are currently failing to do. Despite recent increases, our defence expenditure as a percentage of GDP has not even recovered to its 2010 level, and current rates of inflation will rapidly erode its effectiveness. In such a dangerous world, we simply have to do better.

The second issue that I want to touch on is the security impact of globalisation. The drive for commercial advantage that led to lean manufacturing, just-in-time logistics, outsourcing and offshoring and many other such developments has brought significant benefits to western consumers. But we are seeing now how such dependence can constrain our actions in a crisis. In an interconnected world, security cannot be about just military power and economic strength. It must also be about our ability to sustain our economic and social structures in the face of severe disruption to global connections. We have to strike a much better balance between short-term economic advantage and sustained national resilience. As a starting point, perhaps we

should consider introducing a national equivalent to the kinds of stress tests that were mandated for banks in the wake of the global financial crisis.

The final lesson—another one that we seem to have to relearn every few decades—is that autocracies are very dangerous things. The lack of constraint on their leaders means that they can, at least in the short term, act very quickly in ways that create huge threats to peace and stability. Putin is therefore not just a dangerous individual; he is a personification of the risks we run if we fail to confront autocracies from the outset. For too many years, we pandered to him, and we are now paying the price. We should not make the same mistake with other regimes.

The elephant in this particular room is clearly China, which is moving back along the road to autocracy. At the same time, it is engaged in a sustained effort to reshape the international order to its own advantage. As some have observed, China is seeking to make the world safe for autocracy. When it seeks to unbalance the rules on which we rely for our own security and prosperity, we must be prepared to contest it. But, if we are to do that successfully, we must expect China to respond vigorously in support of what it sees as its own national interest. Those responses may well include the use of draconian economic, commercial and technological measures intended to sway and possibly coerce those on the other side of the argument. Again, therefore, we must ensure that we have the necessary resilience within our societies to withstand such assaults.

The Government must act on these lessons, and they must act immediately. I hope that, in winding up, the Minister will commit to this. We do of course face many domestic challenges, but, if the Government fail in their first duty to provide for the security of their citizens, all else will be for naught. The challenge on that front is here and now; it needs to be met here and now.

4.54 pm

Lord Cormack (Con): My Lords, it is a very real privilege to follow a very wise speech, and I would hope that the Prime Minister has on his desk even now a piece of paper with three words on it: “belt”, “road” and “Solomon Islands”—although Solomon Islands is two words. The threat to which the noble and gallant Lord has just referred is the underlying real threat that we should all bear in mind.

When I listened to the Speech, with some sympathy for the Prince of Wales, last week, I was reminded of the famous story of Churchill being presented with a pudding at a great dinner at the Savoy and saying, “Take it away—it has no theme”. Yet as I read the Speech, and as I listened to the very remarkable speech made by the noble and learned Lord, Lord Judge, on Thursday, I realised that of course there is an underlying theme: a shift in the balance between Parliament and the Executive—and that is something of which we have to be ever aware. As the Bills come before us—38 of them—and the baubles are hung on these Christmas tree Bills, we have a particular duty in your Lordships' House. That duty, really, is to sustain the rule of law.

My noble friend Lord Grimstone, in a very agreeable opening speech, referred to the importance of the rule of law, and then made some references to Northern

[LORD CORMACK]

Ireland. You cannot be an exemplar of the rule of law if you ignore it, abrogate it, or amend it in an arbitrary fashion. There is a particular responsibility here, which we have had before during the passage of a certain European Bill in your Lordships' House, and we have to be very aware of that. The Prime Minister very rightly wants this country to be looked on as a leader. A leader has to be an exemplar. We have to show that we are worthy of leadership, and to be worthy of leadership we have to set an example of being a country that always upholds the rule of law—that does the very things that Mr Putin would never think of doing.

We have to listen to what President Zelensky—that remarkable clown turned into a great national leader—says, and we have to give him every assistance we can, as we are doing. I am grateful to the Government for that; we all are. There is wholesale unity in this House and the other place on that. But, in making sure, insofar as we are able, that President Zelensky is not defeated, we also have to heed those very wise words in yesterday's *Times* leader, which said, in effect, that we cannot and must not dictate to President Zelensky as and when the time is right for peace negotiations. That is not our duty. We must encourage and sustain, and we must always have in mind realistic possibilities. At the very least, we must make sure, as far as we can, that President Zelensky is able to retain the frontiers that existed on 23 February this year. If he is able to go beyond that, we support him, but we have to be very careful.

It is very good that NATO is about to expand. I have a great love for Finland, and although I do not know Sweden so well—I have been several times—they are wonderful exemplars of freedom themselves. They will bring a great deal to NATO, and we must welcome them with open arms. But we must again remember that we have to accept the logic of NATO expansion, which is—as the noble and gallant Lord, Lord Stirrup, made plain in his speech—a greater defence expenditure. Security does not come on the cheap. The prime duty of any Government, member of a great alliance or not, is to ensure the safety of its people, and we would be neglecting our duty if we did not urge the Government to increase defence expenditure wisely and give them every possible support if they heed that call.

4.59 pm

Lord Frost (Con): My Lords, it is a great pleasure to take part in this debate and to follow my noble friend Lord Cormack in what is my first opportunity to speak in this Chamber since my departure from government in December. I begin by endorsing the Government's intention, as set out in the gracious Speech, to “address the most pressing global security challenges” and, in particular, to “continue to invest in Her Majesty's gallant Armed Forces”. The world is an unusually dangerous place at the moment, as many have said, and the contribution of this country is crucial.

I make two points on the issues regarding Brexit that have been raised by many noble Lords. First, before we left the European Union, many argued that we would inevitably be marginalised in global affairs

after Brexit—I think that they have been proven wrong, and I give just a few examples. We have raised defence spending well above the 2% of GDP limit; I agree with those who have said that more needs to come, I think it should and I expect that it will. We have moved our policy on China significantly to a much tougher place though, again, there is probably further to go there. We have taken the lead, given our historical responsibilities to Hong Kong, in offering very generous resettlement to people from Hong Kong. The AUKUS arrangements show that we still bring strength and capabilities to foreign and defence policy that many other countries do not.

We got it right on Ukraine earlier than most; we judged correctly that arming Ukraine would make a difference to the outcome. In fact, the UK is the second largest donor of military aid behind only the US; we are the biggest in Europe. With our friends in central and eastern Europe, we have spoken up clearly about the principles involved in this war, such as that of resisting Russian aggression, in contrast to the equivocation that we have seen from some other places. The agreements that we reached last week with Sweden and Finland show that British policies, British capabilities and British influence still count for a lot.

On trade policy, despite the many predictions that we would not be able to establish a national trade policy, the Government have in fact rolled over nearly all the EU trade agreements, improving some, and negotiated two new agreements with Australia and New Zealand, with more to come. I hope that we will be a member of the CPTPP very soon. There is also the real prospect, I hope, of an agreement with India.

I always argued that, on foreign policy and in trade, the gain from being able to act decisively and quickly around clear principles and to lead and encourage others would outweigh any loss of influence on the EU's collective policy—I think that has been proven. We have not had to spend endless hours in the EU's foreign policy, trade and energy Councils seeking vainly to persuade others and then submitting ourselves to a lowest common denominator policy. We have acted quickly and, very often, others have followed us.

Secondly, on Northern Ireland, which again many noble Lords have raised, I just want to make a few points. We are told that fixing very obvious problems with the Northern Ireland protocol will cause huge and irreparable damage to our foreign relations and international reputation. I do not agree with that, of course. Any observer can see that the protocol is undermining the Belfast agreement and weakening the Government's ability to govern Northern Ireland. Any observer can see that it needs fixing. There is no need for a trade war; if it comes, it will not be our choice, I guess. Some argue that the war in Ukraine makes it the wrong moment to address this question; on the contrary, the great events that are under way make it all the more important for us to fix the issues that are dividing western countries. To me, it makes it all the more surprising and disappointing that the EU will not help us to solve this problem and continues to be so unconstructive.

I therefore welcome the Statement made by my right honourable friend the Foreign Secretary in the other place yesterday. There is no alternative to proceeding

as she suggests. I urge the Government to move quickly with the proposed legislation, and I hope that this House will not frustrate it when it is so important to the unity of this country. Of course it is right that we should remain open to negotiation. A negotiated settlement would still be better but, in my experience, only clarity about objectives and robustness in presenting them gets results. Knowing the Foreign Secretary, I am sure that that is how she will intend to proceed.

To conclude, under this Government we are standing up for our country's unity, its integrity and its international reputation. A free Britain counts for something in the world again and long may it remain so.

5.04 pm

Lord West of Spithead (Lab): My Lords, commenting on last year's Queen's Speech, I expressed delight that the Government said they would increase the size of the Royal Navy and appeared to be taking shipbuilding seriously. Since then, there have been no ship orders. Yes, a refreshed shipbuilding strategy was produced, but without orders and action our fleet will continue to shrink and UK shipbuilding to decline. There is no doubt the Royal Navy is too small. The Government have admitted it. The number of frigates, already dangerously low, will continue to fall year on year for another five years.

The three fleet solid support ships that we were told in the gracious Speech three years ago were about to be ordered have still not been. Can the Minister confirm that they will be built in British yards? The crucial ocean research ship has still not been ordered. Ditto the national flagship. What of replacements for RFA "Argus" and HMS "Scott"? Will they be ordered in the UK? The UK shipbuilding enterprise requires a strong order book to be able to invest for the long term and improve its competitiveness. It needs a rolling programme and a more strategic approach to procurement, facilitating access to finance. At the moment, I am afraid, it is just words.

Seven years ago, I spoke in this House about Russia: Putin's unacceptable actions in Crimea and Ukraine, threats to the Baltic states, cyberattacks against NATO nations, aggressive intrusion into NATO airspace and Russian nuclear submarines threatening our ballistic missile submarines. I expressed concern over Putin's loose talk about nuclear weapons. I stressed that he understood hard power and looked very carefully at who was actually purchasing it. Western nations, including the UK, seemed to be giving up their hard-power capability. Putin noticed that and drew conclusions about lack of defence spending and a consequent lack of willingness to fight for what the West believed in.

There seems to be a belief in government that future wars will be fought solely in cyberspace, using advanced technologies such as AI and quantum computing, and that there is no need for military equipment and numbers. That is dangerously simplistic nonsense. Clearly, those new things are very important to the way we fight, but you need more than that. Many of us who have warned of chronic underfunding have been told time and again that we were wrong. The reality is that our Armed Forces are too weak to prevent war—which is the important thing about armed

forces; that they prevent war if they are strong enough—and when war happens, which I am afraid it will, they will lack the equipment and manpower to keep us safe. Our Navy, Army and Air Force are too small. They lack the ability to withstand inevitable attrition and are insufficiently equipped with state-of-the-art, fully maintained weapons and sufficient war stocks for the inevitably high war usage rates that we know happen, as we can see in Ukraine at the moment.

There is now war in Europe and there are big promises in this Queen's Speech:

"Her Majesty's Government will lead the way in championing security around the world"

and

"play a leading role in defending democracy and freedom ... including continuing to support the people of Ukraine"—

which I think we have done well—and ensuring

"the integrity of the United Kingdom's borders and ... the safety of its people."

Goodness me—it is quite a thing to achieve all that. How do the Government intend to do it in what has become a highly dangerous world, possibly on the brink of world war? I quote, as has been said already:

"It will continue to invest in Her Majesty's gallant Armed Forces."

Wow. With war in Europe, how underwhelming is that?

If Ministers get defence wrong, the nation will never forgive them. The costs in blood and treasure are enormous. Studies have shown that the plan to pay off HMS "Endurance" for a saving of £16 million in 1981 prompted the Argentinians to invade the Falkland Islands, at a final cost to our country of £6 billion and 300 people killed. The Government have a choice over whether we spend what is required to ensure the safety of our nation in defence terms—to look after our dependencies and our people—or not. At present, I believe they are getting the choice wrong. In 1990, with a GDP 46% less than today, the Royal Navy was three times as large. The decline in military capability is a choice—and not one we should have made in a highly chaotic and dangerous world. With war raging in Europe, there is a need for an immediate uplift in defence spending to at least 3% of GDP. I believe the Government should act now.

5.09 pm

Baroness Northover (LD): My Lords, I think the best thing that the noble Lord, Lord Ahmad, could do is grant the noble Lord, Lord West, some more boats. He has made a very cogent case.

Noble Lords: Ships!

A noble Lord: And submarines.

Baroness Northover (LD): Ships—and submarines, if you like.

It is an honour to follow a few speakers behind my noble friend Lord Taverne. His career has been marked by bravery, not his own political advancement. He always recognised the EU as a project for peace. How right he was and is. That peace project remains vital still on our continent, as we have heard. I note that Ukraine had no desire to join Russia, even before

[BARONESS NORTHOVER]

Putin's aggression. It looks towards the EU and NATO for its future. It also recognises that there is only so much a sovereign nation, however brave, can do by itself.

We have seen what can happen when you have an unchallenged and brutal autocrat in power. It is not surprising that people have drawn parallels to Hitler and now sound warnings about the Chinese leadership. However, while the reaction of Europeans, the US and others has been remarkable, we need to bear in mind that in some parts of the world they shrug their shoulders and wonder why their own plight, for example in Syria, never got such engagement. Yet, as the noble Lord, Lord King, so rightly said, they are likely to be affected by increasing famine.

The Queen's Speech states that the Government "will play a leading role in defending democracy and freedom across the world".

How do they plan to do that? Or, in reality, having pulled out of Afghanistan, unable to stay when the US went home, powerless in Hong Kong despite a treaty lodged at the UN giving us rights and responsibilities, and with decreasing support at the UN as a result of leaving the EU, how feasible is the Government's so-called pivot to the Pacific? How trusted can we be as a partner when countries, not just Lib Dems, are sure that we are threatening to break international law over the Northern Ireland protocol—an agreement which the Prime Minister said was part of his oven-ready Brexit, an excellent deal?

Consistency is not a feature of this Government. We hear that we will seize opportunities from leaving the EU but thus far the result is increased trade friction. We say we champion international trade, and we support free trade arrangements across Africa modelled on the EU, and yet we left the world's most successful trading bloc. We hear that we will build on our scientific successes, but the Government fail to recognise the long-term damage we are doing to that sector, international in its essence. Why did they think we would be able to cherry pick with Horizon, for example, when leading scientists warned otherwise?

We certainly need innovation. We face the existential threat of climate change. Yet there is little evidence that this is recognised right across government, to judge by the submissions received by your Lordships' Select Committee on climate change, on which I serve. The BEIS unit is being scaled back post COP 26 and moved to the FCDO, where it seems it will form part of the attempt to increase the UK's influence rather than focus on what is required globally. This is of course in keeping with the Government's new international development strategy, which was not introduced by a Minister in Parliament but just delayed and then dropped in on us.

Development should be focused on the long term, promoting global security, stability and prosperity, not donors' short-term political interests. Yet, as the noble Lord, Lord Collins, pointed out, in effect this strategy links aid and trade. It uses aid as a foreign policy instrument even though we deplore, for example, China's such use. It leads the Government to emphasise the bilateral over the multilateral, even though multilateral organisations can have the most impact, prioritising

need and not whether a trade deal is better secured. It was a strand of Conservative thinking in 2010 that multilateral institutions were a waste of money. Andrew Mitchell commissioned a review, and it was those multilateral institutions that scored the highest.

Clearly, the Government should be judged by their actions, not words. That is why, when the Queen's Speech said that the Government would defend the constitution, the noble and learned Lord, Lord Judge, gave a rather hollow laugh. I therefore look forward to the Minister's reply.

5.15 pm

Baroness Coussins (CB): My Lords, sometimes the success of foreign policy, defence or international trade will depend on people using their foreign language skills, either as an integral part of their main job, such as diplomats, or as specialist translators and interpreters. I declare my interest as co-chair of the APPG on Modern Languages and vice-president of the Chartered Institute of Linguists.

It is to the UK's credit that linguistic expertise is seen as a particular strength of British diplomacy, with about 500 speaker slots attracting training in 46 languages. This investment is paying off, with exam passes at C1 level increasing substantially. Will the Minister confirm that this investment will be sustained and that we will respond to the need for language skills in development as well as in diplomacy?

I pay tribute to the work of Translators without Borders, TWB, the world's largest network of humanitarian linguists. Its current work in Ukraine has exposed language gaps in official communications on critical issues such as safe travel routes and asylum procedures, which people may need in Ukrainian or Russian, or indeed in more than a dozen minority languages of Ukraine. TWB conveys accurate information in the right languages but also identifies deliberate misinformation intended to confuse or mislead. With a re-established UK embassy in Ukraine, can the Minister ensure that our staff there know about TWB and make use of its resources?

Worldwide, TWB has responded to the vulnerability of women and children to trafficking, sexual exploitation and abuse with a multilingual glossary covering 208 terms, available in 29 languages. I applaud HMG's consistent high profile on preventing sexual abuse in conflict as a central pillar of foreign policy and ask the Minister to ensure that all our officials, across the world, are aware of and use this unique TWB resource, which I suggest should be presented at the forthcoming global conference that we will host.

In relation to Ukraine, there has been criticism recently of HMG for not having enough Russian speakers on the books and that this has weakened our capacity to predict, assess and respond to events. In a Written Answer to me in February, the Minister said:

"Almost 60 FCDO staff members have passed Russian examinations at C1 ... level in the last five years."

Can he say whether in hindsight this is enough and what, if any, plans are in place to sustain or expand this expertise?

Building capacity in language skills at home is one thing, but the experience of civilian interpreters in conflict zones is another. Can the Minister update the

House on his discussions at the UN on progress towards securing a Security Council resolution on the protection of civilian interpreters in conflict zones? The plight of the Afghan interpreters brought this issue sharply to light, but the need for additional protection is not confined to Afghanistan, nor to interpreters working with the Armed Forces. As a member of the P5 and the Group of Friends of the Protection of Civilians, the UK has serious influence; I hope the Minister will assure the House that he will support the efforts of the Spanish mission at the UN at the forthcoming meeting of the Group of Friends.

Finally and briefly, on the economic value of languages for international trade, is the DIT aware of the recent research from Cambridge University showing that if the UK invested more in teaching French, Spanish, Mandarin and Arabic, we could increase our exports by up to £19 billion a year? In the SME sector, there is already good evidence that language skills add 30% in value to export growth.

The Great website has improved the profile of languages and translation services are now listed as an eligible activity for the internationalisation fund, but can the Minister say whether language and intercultural skills are an explicit priority of the remit of UK trade commissioners? There is much more to be said on the issues I have raised, but I look forward to the replies from the Minister on the ones I have had time to include today.

5.20 pm

Baroness Davidson of Lundin Links (Con): My Lords, we have heard a great deal about the situation in Ukraine and how that has affected the military, diplomatic and development assumptions on which current policy decisions have been made. I want to talk particularly about the military aspect and a specific strain within it. The noble Lord, Lord West, spoke about the size of the Navy; I want to talk about the Army.

Last year, we had an Army review called *Future Soldier*. The promotional spiel was all about increasing force “agility”, but the substance was about cutting numbers—again. We have been here before, from *Options for Change* in 1990, which cut force strength by 18%; to the 1998 strategic defence review, which shaved a quarter off the Territorial Army, reducing it to 42,000; and the *Army 2020* restructuring, brought out in 2010, with regulars cut again, down to 82,000, and another quarter off the reserves, reducing that strength to 30,000. Now we are heading for a standing Regular Army of just 73,000 troops, and the MoD’s current quarterly personnel statistics on its website tell us that the trained strength of the Army Reserve is down to 26,350 soldiers.

I am not standing here to dump on the review. Indeed, there is much in it to be recommended, such as adapting to the use of technology. There is a recognition that, as tempting as it might be for Ministers, simply sending Special Forces to do everything is not sustainable and, therefore, that—despite the highly dubious Americanism of calling them Rangers regiments—having an all-arms force that is trained and retained in a state of high readiness for deployment is logical, just as the ability of soldiers to progress their careers by moving between their own corps and such a force has obvious

benefits for professional development and troop retention. There is still a huge question over numbers and stretch. To be a good ally and world power, we need at all times to be able to deploy an expeditionary force of brigade strength at minimum.

Four years ago, the US Defense Secretary, General Jim Mattis, warned of his concern that Britain’s

“ability to continue to provide this critical military foundation for diplomatic success is at risk of erosion”.

He continued:

“A global nation like the UK, with interests and commitments around the world, will require a level of defense spending beyond what we would expect from allies with only regional interests.”

The occupants of the White House and No. 10 may have changed in the past four years, but we still need to be able to show that we are a reliable and capable partner on the world stage. That is why it matters less, frankly, what we here think of the planned troop reductions but more what those military commanders and international partners think.

That is why the intervention from the outgoing Chief of the General Staff, General Sir Mark Carleton-Smith, needs to be listened to. We need to listen when the man charged with leading the Army says that he is “not comfortable with an Army of just 73,000. It’s too small.”

It is the smallest standing Army we have had since Charles II established one in the 1660s. What I found more worrying about General Carleton-Smith’s intervention was not just the admission that it was sprung on him and Army chiefs because it was never their plan, but when he revealed the rationale for it. He says that

“it’s a bit of an arbitrary figure because it’s just a price point.”

We must be better than that. We must treat our service personnel better than that. We must live up to our international obligations with a fighting force big enough to be worthy of the name.

I know that a much-needed equipment update is happening and that that is expensive, and I agree with the Secretary of State for Defence when he says that the Army’s land fleet is “woefully behind its peers” and needs a serious upgrade. As it happens, I think Ben Wallace is one of the shining lights in this Cabinet—clear-eyed and getting on with the job. Indeed, I also praise the Prime Minister for setting and embodying our approach in supporting Ukraine in deed as well as in word. But it strikes me that part of the *Future Soldier* review was predicated on an assumption that large-scale conventional force invasion of a European ally—such as we have seen by Russia in Ukraine—was low on our risk register. Indeed, General Carleton-Smith confirmed that

“the surprise was that Putin went all-in at very significant scale”

and in a very crude, conventional, old-style manner, whereas the intelligence had suggested a more hybrid, disruptive approach of

“bots as well as boots”.

We come back to my first point, that the situation in Ukraine has changed everything. It has altered the military, diplomatic and development assumptions on which current policy decisions—many of them brought forward in the Loyal Address—have been made. It has redrawn the map and we need to respond the world as

[BARONESS DAVIDSON OF LUNDIN LINKS]

it is now, not as it was when decisions that already seem out of date were made. I contend that shaving nearly 10,000 troops from our military roll and reducing our army to its lowest number for more than 350 years is one of those decisions that needs to be revisited.

5.25 pm

Baroness Blackstone (Ind Lab): My Lords, I will focus on the need for international decarbonisation, and how the UK can have an impact abroad, largely through our overseas development aid and export finance.

We may account for only around 1% of global emissions, but nearly one-third of emissions are from countries with 1% of emissions or less, so that does not excuse us from action. Moreover, the statistics on historical emissions show that we rank fifth, after the US, China, Russia and Germany. Climate change and the heating of our planet stem from the Industrial Revolution, so although we do now emit less than some other nations, we none the less have a historic duty to take action. Self-interest also dictates that we should do so. It does not matter if a tonne of CO₂ is emitted in London, Mumbai or Shanghai; it all goes into the same atmosphere and has the same impact. That is why it is so important to rapidly use all the levers available to us to reduce emissions globally.

Traditionally, we punched higher than our weight as a large provider of overseas aid. It is now vital that this is used to tackle arguably the greatest crisis that the world has ever faced. The international development strategy published this week describes, in the first paragraph of its executive summary, climate change and biodiversity as two of the largest global challenges we face. It says we will support the recommendations of the Dasgupta review and that from 2023 ODA spending will be aligned with the Paris Agreement. This is most welcome. The strategy says that British International Investment—BII, which is the newly branded CDC and a wholly owned subsidiary of the FCDO—has set a target of 30% of new commitments over five years to be in climate finance. Of course, any money going into climate finance is extremely welcome, but can the Minister give an assurance that the other 70% of investments will not be in any way working against that 30%? Can he confirm that money will never go towards companies which are involved in environmentally damaging practices? The investment criteria for 2022-26 state that the CDC—now the BII—will not invest capital in fossil fuel subsectors that it has classified as misaligned with the Paris Agreement. This should mean we make absolutely no new investments in fossil fuels; as the International Energy Agency's analysis indicates, there can be no additional fossil fuels if we are to limit warming to 1.5 degrees. Can the Minister please confirm that this is the case?

The strategy says also that we should deliver “honest and reliable investment”, but we cannot say we are doing so if any of that investment is in assets which increase emissions instead of reducing them. Africa, where the BII invests much of its capital, will be on the front line of the ravages of climate change. It is not Africa's longer-term interest if we use taxpayers' money

to invest in the dirty technologies of the past, such as the £1 billion of UK export finance which is currently committed to the Mozambique gas pipeline.

Although it is well known that coal is the dirtiest of fuels—the coal phase-out was agreed in Glasgow last year—it is less well known that, according to the IEA, new coal infrastructure will be used for many years unless we intervene, and quickly. The average age of coal plants in Asia is currently 11 years but their usual life expectancy is 40 years, so we need to mobilise investment in clean energy in developing countries and help these nations shut down their dirty technology.

I regret the omission from the gracious Speech of a return to 0.7% of GNI for overseas development aid. I am sure the Minister will agree that, were this to happen, we could greatly increase the programmes to reduce carbon emissions and prevent climate change announced in the international development strategy published this week. I hope he will agree when he replies.

5.30 pm

Lord Campbell of Pittenweem (LD): My Lords, given the calm and cloistered nature of this debate, I cannot but reflect on the fact that, elsewhere, the medieval barbarism of Russia continues, with saturation artillery and bombing, rape, murder, looting and torture. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that Finland and Sweden wish to join NATO. They will make a contribution to our collective defence but that contribution will be mirrored by an additional responsibility for us because, in the event of an Article 5 situation, we would be obliged to go to their assistance. That is why I say that, faced with obligations of that nature, we require adequate materiel and resources to fulfil our responsibilities. I am part of the increasing group of people who say that you cannot fulfil these responsibilities on 2% of GDP. As it happens, a fortnight ago I visited the manufacturers of the F-35 in Texas. They would like to know when we will buy the nearly 100 additional F-35s that we previously indicated we intended to purchase.

The United Kingdom has been one of the most supportive actors in the fate of Ukraine. However, we must face reality here as well because we will be here for the long haul. This is not going to be over by Christmas or any similar expression of hope; this will be a long and drawn-out process. In the course of it, the fact of our support will, in a sense, turn into a continuing obligation, politically, militarily and economically. We will always try to ensure that there is no outbreak of sympathy fatigue.

Against that background, it seems rather curious that we now have this domestic political disturbance—a distraction from our major obligations, one may think, but it does have foreign policy interest. Why are the sympathetic Irish supporters of Congress following these activities so closely? We forget just how strongly the Irish connection is felt on Capitol Hill; this has foreign policy behind it. While I am talking about America, what happened to the famous trade arrangement we were promised, which was going to solve all our problems and be much more substantial and effective than anything we ever had with the European Union?

Yesterday, I sought to persuade the Minister responding to the debate that, in Belfast, the DUP has issued an ultimatum to the United Kingdom Government while, at Westminster, the United Kingdom Government have issued an ultimatum to the European Union. The Minister refused to accept that parallel. Let me put it more colloquially: if I say, “Do what we want or we’ll do what you don’t want”, that is an ultimatum—and we have two of them side by side.

There has been some reflection on the conduct of the Prime Minister in the creation of the protocol. Some have described it as ineptitude while others have called it bad faith. It matters not to me; the question is one of responsibility and the status of the document. If the EU sought to do to the United Kingdom something of a similar nature to what we are seeking to do to the EU, the Prime Minister would be shouting “*Pacta sunt servanda*” in his dreams. Unilateral change is illegal in international law. I believe that the Attorney-General has given the opposite opinion; I should rather like to see that opinion, if I may. Publish or be damned. In my view, the issue is beyond doubt because the Government have not fully explored the provisions of the treaty itself under Article 16. If we embark on the course that the Government are urging upon us, who will ever trust us again?

5.36 pm

Lord Kerr of Kinlochard (CB): The Queen’s Speech said that we

“will lead the way in championing security around the world.”

In “Yes Minister”, the Permanent Secretary would have said, “Very bold, Minister”. It is quite a bold assertion. We used to be good at understatement. Conservative Foreign Secretaries such as Alec Douglas-Home, Peter Carrington, Geoffrey Howe and Douglas Hurd tended to speak rather softly, although they still carried quite a big stick. They tended to get their way. The stick is now a little smaller, as the noble Baroness, Lady Davidson, convincingly reminded us, but we seem to be shouting rather loudly and not getting our way quite so often.

I want us to be trusted. Trust is quite a good thing to have. I want people to believe that, if they conclude a deal with us, that deal is likely to stick. This makes it easier to conclude a deal. I would like people to think it unthinkable that we would break a treaty commitment and start a trade war. I must say to the noble Lord, Lord Frost—I am sorry he is not here to hear it—that this House still champions the rule of law. I think we showed that during the passage of the then internal market Bill and, if we have to, we will show it again in connection with a Brexit Bill.

The Queen’s Speech does not say anything at all about development; the noble Lord, Lord Collins, was absolutely right to pick that up. The slick brochure published by the Foreign Office this week is unconvincing and alarming. It is alarming because it is clear that we are switching aid away from multilateral to bilateral, back to more tied aid. We will give less support to the international agencies fighting the causes of global insecurity, such as famine, disease, unrest and mass migration. Three out of every four cross-channel migrants and refugees come from a country fighting severe famine right now, but it seems from the Foreign Office

publication that we plan to cut back on what we do to stem the flow at source—although, of course, the Queen’s Speech said that we will be hard on refugees. Apart from the moral imperative, is it not in our self-interest to do more, not less, through the multilateral agencies?

The noble Lord, Lord King, was absolutely right—as he usually is—in pointing to the imminence of the global famine. It is here already, but it is going to get much worse. Before Putin’s invasion, 80% of Egypt’s wheat came from the Black Sea; 75% of Sudan’s; 75% of Lebanon’s; 50% of Libya’s; and 50% of Tunisia’s. Global stocks were already at their lowest for seven years. The World Food Programme was already telling us that we were facing an unprecedented global hunger crisis before Putin’s invasion. As the noble Lord, Lord King, pointed out, protectionism in India and Indonesia—export bans—means that it is not just wheat that will be in very short supply in the Middle East. There are 9 million people in Tigray who are starving right now. The WFP says that there will be 20 million in Sudan within three months.

Should we not be urgently doing more, not less, for the WFP, the FAO, the UNDP, the UNHCR and the WHO? The WHO says that Covid has already killed 6 million and is still killing 1,000 a day. Those are probably underestimates, because the statistics are patchy. Some 75% of us are fully vaccinated, but only 23% are in Uganda, 19% in Ghana, 6% in Tanzania and 5% in Malawi. These disparities shame and threaten us. Do we not owe it to our Commonwealth friends and to ourselves to do more to help them do better?

It is not just them. In tragic, war-torn, blockaded Yemen, only 1% of the population has been vaccinated at all. Are we using our undoubted influence in Riyadh to persuade the Saudis that lives must be saved in the Yemen? I hope so, but I do not know.

The key global responder is the WHO. Some 80% of its finance comes from voluntary national contributions. Are we up there as global leaders showing the way? No, we are way down the pack. Up at the top are Germany and Japan; we are down with New Zealand. Global Australia contributes more than global Britain; the Gates Foundation contributes more than global Britain. Should we not put that right? It is a global pandemic and, if we aspire to be champions of global security and lead the way, should we not be doing something about global insecurity and its root causes?

My last point harkens back to my first. When working in Washington and Brussels, I was lucky enough to witness a virtuous circle: the more the White House trusted us, particularly because of our policies on Northern Ireland through John Major and Tony Blair, the more our perceived influence in Washington strengthened our hand in Brussels—and the more we were seen to deliver on common purposes with our friends in Europe, the more the White House listened to us. I worry about the very real risk of a vicious circle, which works the other way. Picking fights with the 27, particularly over Northern Ireland, is the best way of losing friends in Washington. The more we drift away from both Europe and America—

Viscount Younger of Leckie (Con): My Lords, it is a very long last point and I do urge the noble Lord to conclude.

Lord Kerr of Kinlochard (CB): It is a very important last point. The more we drift away from both sides of the Atlantic, the emptier our talk of leading the way. Effective foreign relations are built on trust, perceived honesty and reliability, so it is important that deals that are done stay done deals. No one ever doubted the word of Home, Carrington, Howe or Hurd: *pacta sunt servanda*.

5.44 pm

Lord Dobbs (Con): Everything is going to plan, Mr Putin insists—the carnage, the bombings of schools and maternity units, civilian shelters, and targeting the old, the sick and the young. Yes, everything is going to his plan. He thinks it is a display of strength, of course, but it is a sign of his weakness—yet the war in Ukraine is also a sign of our own weakness.

For decades, our foreign policy has led us to intervene and, in some cases, to invade, which has given others the room to claim that they are only doing what we have done. Time and again, we have climbed to the top of the mountain, only to scuttle back down. After our catastrophic retreat from Kabul airport, Putin's opportunism became almost inevitable.

Thirty-five years ago, that often-underestimated man Ronald Reagan stood before the Brandenburg Gate and said:

“Mr Gorbachev, tear down this wall.”

And it was torn down—not by Mr Gorbachev but by millions of oppressed people, using their bare hands. They wanted and demanded what we had—our values and freedoms. Those values were a brilliant light that shone into the darkness. Today, that flame gutters like a candle in the storm. Young people around the world no longer look at us as an example to follow. If Indians wash their hands of this conflict, can we be surprised? A war in a faraway place between old, white, arrogant imperialists—colonial memories live long; they die hard.

So let us stop talking about the West. In itself, the description implies white hegemony and division. Let us instead talk about our free world and embrace all those vibrant democracies, such as Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Indonesia and, above all, those 1.3 billion people of India, soon to be the most populous country on the planet. A free world of democracies—east, west, north, south—can together build a clearer, cleaner future.

Perhaps we should show a little humility. For too long, we have meddled, mucked about and done much damage. That was not our intent, but that is what we did. We do not own the concept of democracy, but we can help spread it—just not at the point of a gun. Here at home, why do we use the language of violence in our own affairs, drive everything to extremes and casually call our opponents liars and scum, pouring acid over our own democracy? Without a little tolerance, all our democratic posturing becomes worthless.

Mr Putin must not win this war. Now, I do not know what “not winning” really means. I do not suppose it will mean complete and utter defeat—much of that is up to Mr Zelensky and his people to decide—but we must help show the world that Putin's lunacy has failed. He has turned Ukraine into a butcher's block, but a monument will rise from those bloody ruins, a

lasting symbol that will make sense of all the suffering. That symbol will be the freedom of those brave Ukrainians' children and grandchildren. They are fighting for our grandchildren, too, which is why we must support them. If we can find even a fraction of the courage that those ordinary Ukrainians are showing, our world will be a much safer place. Long live free Ukraine.

5.49 pm

Lord Triesman (Lab): My Lords, it was inevitable that this debate would focus on the barbaric Russian attack on Ukraine, on the unprovoked violence and war crimes now at the heart of Europe, and indeed on President Zelensky's remarkable leadership. The Government have made a significant response, which I acknowledge, although I share the reservations of the noble Lord, Lord Ricketts, and the noble and gallant Lord, Lord Stirrup, earlier in the debate.

I suggest that it is not too early to learn some immediate lessons that have long-term consequences; not least, one of those lessons is to defang Russia for at least a couple of generations. I am a lot less concerned with Putin's loss of face than with the loss of life globally that he is inflicting through war and starvation.

The case for an enhanced NATO in size and capability could not be clearer. Putin sought to divide the alliance but he has consolidated it. However, we have failed in the past to act in a timely way. Putin is a serial offender who has concluded that we lack the will or public support to respond to him. It is an error that surely cannot be repeated. I appeal to President Erdoğan to facilitate the rapid accession of Finland and Sweden to NATO, and to understand that late is almost always too late. I profoundly hope, although we have no influence on it, that the EU will also embrace Ukraine's ambitions to take part as a member state of the EU.

When a violent dictator says in terms that he means to wage war on his neighbours, threatens nuclear attack and commits unspeakable violence, we cannot assume that it is a bluff. Syria, Chechnya, Georgia, Moldova, Donbass itself and cyberaggression—none of these were bluffs. Putin and his acolytes may be psychopaths but it is unhelpful to regard an enemy as irrational; I think it leads us to conclude that we do not know what they will do next, and in that case we are powerless to change their course. In fact the geopolitical aims of Russia are undisguised ambitions, and we have to remember to be as strategic in response to these enemies and opponents as they are, and to avoid the uncomfortable delusions of *déjà vu*. This was a high-probability, high-impact development—what some people call a grey rhino.

It is imperative to resist the call for early rapprochement. The Kremlin and the oligarchs believe that we will tire of pursuing economic and personal sanctions. There can be no return to business as normal, because it never should have been normal. *Londongrad*, the copious evidence from Human Rights Watch, Bellingcat and the Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, and the extraordinary Catherine Belton and her book, among others, tell us that we cannot go on being the butler, financial facilitator and legal bastion to global bullies and corrupt individuals.

So I applaud the statements by the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary that we must finally flush out our own egregious past and concede nothing until every square inch of Ukraine is free. We have said these things before but have seldom really acted on them, so I ask the Minister to confirm today that these statements, made at the top of government, are solid promises, and that we will monitor them, detail by detail.

I turn to one other verifiable action. The Justice Secretary has pledged full support—I use his words—to build war crime cases against Putin and his military commanders. That is excellent and I applaud it. It is not easy; although the trial process for alleged murderers and rapists has started in Ukraine, evidence in other cases will none the less have to be collected and verified, people caught and a legitimate tribunal convened.

I have gone back to study the 12 so-called subsequent Nuremberg trials that followed the better-known trials of the Nazi war leaders and mass murderers. These were the trials of people such as Alfred Krupp and the leading directors in his company, the leaders of IG Farben, and Friedrich Flick. They were the industrial and financial enablers of the regime and of its mass murder, and they played essentially the same role that the oligarchs have played—the very reason why the oligarchs have been sanctioned.

Of course, at that time the ICC did not exist and no one could thwart the processes by veto, yet we, the Russians and others accepted universal jurisdiction. The cases were heard before special courts led by the most eminent United States judges, with representation by eminent counsel, transparent process and visible justice. Those found guilty were stripped of their property and served serious prison time. A Russian oligarch may be prepared to forfeit a couple of billion and a football club if he can retain \$15 billion and just walk away with it. He may decide that he will never travel to a country where he could be arrested and tried, but my bet is that this is not a price that they will be willing to pay, and nor will their successors if they are made an example.

Could the Minister confirm to the House that we will explore urgently the ways in which we can ensure that Ukraine's "subsequent Nuremberg" offenders face justice without impunity? If there is an element of history that we can learn from, it is that the enablers of horrific violence should have nowhere to hide. If we have the will, Minister, I am quite convinced that we will find a way.

5.55 pm

Baroness Ludford (LD): My Lords, Europe does not figure in the title of today's debate, or indeed of any of the five days of debate on the Queen's Speech. Europe, it seems, has been abolished.

Some Brexit-related issues were debated last Thursday, when I could not be present as I was participating in the first meeting—finally—of the UK-EU Parliamentary Partnership Assembly, set up under the TCA. That meeting was surprisingly useful. I must admit that my expectations were rather modest, fearing that it would just be a talking shop, with speeches by rote, but it was gratifyingly political and practical—not just the very spirited exchange between UK Minister Michael Ellis

and Vice-President Šefčovič over the Northern Ireland protocol, to which parliamentarians also contributed, but the calls for progress and resolution over specific issues such as touring artists, rules of origin, bivalve molluscs and citizens' rights. From our House, the noble Earl, Lord Kinnoull, vice-chaired admirably, as one has learned to expect.

Everything points to a need to repair the UK-EU relationship, with a fundamental change in the UK's approach signalling an intention to act as a good neighbour to the EU. The experience of co-operation with regard to the war in Ukraine exhibits, albeit in tragic circumstances, the potential for co-operation on security and defence, as the noble Lord, Lord Ricketts, talked about. I hope that the Government, having refused to countenance a chapter in the trade and co-operation agreement to that effect, might now reconsider. Can the Minister tell us what potential the Government saw in President Macron's recent speech on a political community in Europe with "concentric circles" of co-operation and association?

I want to talk about Brexit consequentials. Both the Brexit freedoms Bill and the Northern Ireland protocol were referred to in last Thursday's debate but they are also relevant to today. But first, a word about where we are on Brexit. It has been conclusively demonstrated that the sunlit uplands and the land of milk and honey have not materialised, but costly Brexit red tape, hits to trade and our economy, big inflationary pressures and labour shortages have, as my noble friend Lord Taverne described so well.

The Government insist that there are Brexit opportunities—we even have a Minister for them—but the National Audit Office has issued a warning that three key regulators are struggling to recruit and train enough staff to establish bespoke post-Brexit regulatory regimes after leaving the EU. They cannot recruit staff such as lawyers, veterinarians and toxicologists, so how is that going? The Liberal Democrats are right to recommend progressive steps and road maps towards a closer partnership with the EU instead of the barren and costly Brexit that we have at present, and for the UK to set out to rejoin the customs union, the single market and other EU agencies and programmes as appropriate.

The Brexit freedoms Bill is set to provide for retained EU law to be easily amended or repealed by the unamendable stroke of a ministerial pen. As my noble friend Lord Beith warned last Thursday:

"This is a profound and retrograde constitutional change".—
[*Official Report*, 12/5/22; col. 165.]

What consideration are the Government and civil servants giving to the constraints on what they can do to rid themselves of EU and other European law arising, first, from legal commitments towards Northern Ireland under the devolution settlement and the Northern Ireland protocol and, secondly, from the treaties with the EU?

In respect of Northern Ireland, the Belfast/Good Friday agreement obliges incorporation of the ECHR, which the Human Rights Act currently does, and Article 2 of the Northern Ireland protocol obliges the UK to ensure

"no diminution of rights, safeguards or equality of opportunity",

[BARONESS LUDFORD]
including under Union law—EU law—which is set out in the annexe to the protocol. Will the legal advice that we have been promised on the Northern Ireland protocol cover this very important issue and constraint on diluting the Human Rights Act?

The protocol also requires the UK to “continue to facilitate the ... work of the institutions and bodies set up” under the Belfast/Good Friday agreement, “including the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission”.

I am sorry to say that the funding and resources of the NIHRC have been so cut to the bone that its status at the UN as a category-A human rights watchdog could be at serious risk within months. That would put the UK at risk of breach of the withdrawal agreement. Are we going to be on the naughty step, like Russia? That would be hugely embarrassing as well as a legal breach. Meanwhile, any tinkering with the UK's respect for the ECHR could bring into question the justice and security co-operation we are granted under the trade and co-operation agreement.

On data protection, the noble Lord, Lord Anderson of Ipswich, warned last Thursday that if the data reform Bill, which aims to cut the burdens on business, relaxes the EU regime in the general data protection regulation so as to

“imperil our precious adequacy agreement from the European Commission”,—[*Official Report*, 12/5/22; col. 171.]

that would be not only a legal breach but a huge blow to businesses, such as finance and tech. So, instead of charging around like a bull in a china shop, causing damage, when will the Government be constructive in a partnership with the European Union?

6.01 pm

Lord Dannatt (CB): My Lords, in this wide-ranging debate on the Queen's Speech I shall focus on two particular aspects. The first is following up the reference in the gracious Speech to the legacy in Northern Ireland. I very much welcome the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill that was introduced in the House of Commons yesterday and look forward to debating it in your Lordships' House when it comes here later in the year. Many issues will be raised by that Bill, but I am sure that, in particular, we need to take the opportunity to protect the interests of veteran soldiers who served with distinction in the Province of Northern Ireland 30, 40 and 50 years ago. We owe it to them to ensure that the Government deliver on their promise, and I hope that the Minister will be able to give me some reassurance in his winding-up speech that those issues will be properly focused on and prioritised.

The second aspect on which I wish to comment is the effect of the Ukraine war on British defence policy as we reassess, as we should, last year's integrated review. The aspiration for global Britain and the tilt towards the Indo-Pacific has faced a sharp reality check from the war in Europe at the present moment. I think we all agree that the architecture of the European security structure is changing almost as we speak, as is NATO's response, not least due to Finland and Sweden wishing to join NATO, and, of course, the changed position of Germany.

Obviously and importantly, there are implications for the United Kingdom specifically. In my view, unless Her Majesty's Government wish to change their priorities which were set out in the integrated review, there is no alternative than to increase our defence budget. It is not a zero-sum game at this moment in our history. If we are going to spend more in one area, we are going to spend less in another. There is an increasing case to spend more, probably approaching a rise from 2% to 3% of our GDP.

The argument behind that increase is driven by the needs of our land forces. The war in Ukraine has shown the importance of having adequate land forces that can be employed. As a first step, I urge the Government to reconsider the cuts that have been tabled in recent defence reviews, particularly the cuts to Armed Forces manpower, particularly Army manpower, to reassess some of the proposals to take equipment out of service and to consider new programmes.

Time precludes a lengthy shopping list, and I am well aware that there are respectable arguments which point to warfare having changed as innovation has driven new technologies and that there are different ways of conducting warfare in the 21st century. That is true, but that does not mean that some of the traditional conventional methods of conducting warfare are any less valid. The sad reality that the Treasury and the Government have to accept is that a range of golf clubs is required in the bag, and just because you have a new club does not mean that you can throw away some of the old ones.

Therefore, I urge the Government and the Ministry of Defence to look at our land manoeuvre capability. That capability has been illustrated by the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. We have to ask ourselves whether having 148 main battle tanks, albeit refurbished main battle tanks, is sufficient. In the days of the Cold War, we could field four armoured divisions; now, we cannot field one armoured division. In the First and Second World Wars, we fielded countless divisions. Our capability is much reduced.

It is important to look again at the upgrade to the Warrior infantry fighting vehicle. It was decided that it was too expensive, so that programme of vehicles is being taken out of service. Why does that matter? The tank is a tracked vehicle and can manoeuvre across difficult country; the Warrior is a tracked vehicle and can manoeuvre across difficult country. It will be replaced with the Boxer, which is a wheeled vehicle. Put simply, a tractor can get across a muddy field; a saloon car cannot follow. A main battle tank can get across difficult country, as can a Warrior, but a Boxer, a wheeled vehicle, cannot follow.

We need to increase our air defence capacity, our counter-drone capability, our field and rocket artillery and our logistics sustainability. The post-Cold War mantra which changed “just in case” to “just in time” has been proved to have failed on many occasions. We must increase our logistics sustainability. The war in Ukraine is a wake-up call for us and for NATO. Previous risks taken with our defence expenditure are coming home to roost. It is our obligation to buy out some of those risks and ensure that we have a good capability, particularly a good land capability, to field in future.

6.07 pm

Lord Lilley (Con): My Lords, on the “Today” programme on Radio 4 on Friday the Irish Foreign Minister, Simon Coveney, asserted that “the EU cannot and will not renegotiate the Northern Ireland protocol”. In fact the EU can, should and must renegotiate it. It can renegotiate because any treaty can be renegotiated, and many are. It should renegotiate it because the sole justification of the protocol was to uphold the Belfast agreement, and the first article is that nothing in the protocol shall prejudice the Good Friday/Belfast agreement. As the former Solicitor-General, Sir Robert Buckland, said yesterday,

“that means ... that the ... agreement takes primacy over the protocol”,—[*Official Report*, Commons, 17/5/22; col. 554.]

so the British Government, as co-guarantor of the agreement, have a duty to renegotiate the elements of it which are undermining the Belfast agreement.

The main point I want to make in the five minutes that I have is that the EU must renegotiate the protocol. It must because, legally, the protocol is not a permanent arrangement: it must eventually be replaced or it will lapse. That is not my opinion or the Government's opinion; it was the whole basis on which the EU negotiated the withdrawal agreement: that, under Article 50, it did not have the competence to negotiate a permanent trade and co-operation agreement with a member state. Article 50 allowed it only to negotiate the divorce terms and temporary or transitional arrangements to smooth the departure of a member state. It said that a permanent trade relationship could be agreed under Article 218 only with a non-member state. That is why the EU refused Mrs May's request to negotiate the trade and co-operation agreement in parallel with the withdrawal agreement. The UK had first to leave the EU, agree to sign the withdrawal agreement and become a non-member state before negotiations on a permanent trade and co-operation agreement could even begin, so how come there was a trade and co-operation agreement covering Northern Ireland?

The Northern Ireland protocol could be agreed under Article 50 only because and so long as it was temporary; it was needed to smooth departure, not least because there was no certainty that a permanent trade and co-operation agreement between the UK and the EU would be in place by the time we left the EU. That should not be news to us because the former Attorney-General Geoffrey Cox explained to the House of Commons that,

“article 50 of the Treaty on European Union does not provide a legal basis in Union law for permanent future arrangements with non-member states”.—[*Official Report*, Commons, 3/12/18; col. 547.]

He went on to say that, if traders in future felt disadvantaged by the protocol, they should

“beat a path to the door of the Commission and the Court ... to say, ‘Didn't you say that article 50 is not a sound legal foundation for this arrangement?’ And I tell you frankly, Mr Speaker, they are likely to win.”—[*Official Report*, Commons, 3/12/18; col. 555.]

The original protocol itself spelled out that

“the Withdrawal Agreement, which is based on Article 50 TEU, does not aim at establishing a permanent future relationship between the Union and the United Kingdom”.

That is equally true of the protocol in the final withdrawal Act, since it, too, is based on Article 50. Paragraph 8 of Article 13 of the protocol itself specifically envisages

the replacement of all or parts of the protocol by a subsequent agreement. Nor does the provision in the final protocol for approval or rejection by the Northern Ireland Assembly alter the issue; even if the Assembly were to endorse the arrangements set down under the protocol, which was an agreement between the EU and the whole UK, not just Northern Ireland itself, that would not change its transitional nature.

The temporary nature of the protocol is a matter of EU law. I am puzzled that its author never remembers that nowadays. He and all the other spokesmen of the European Union in this House suffer from a selective memory and treat this protocol as if it is to be permanent and cannot and should not be changed, even if undermines the Belfast agreement, which was the very purpose of that protocol. Of course, I give way to the noble Lord, my former good friend.

Lord Kerr of Kinlochard (CB): It is just possible that the noble Lord is confusing two versions of the protocol—the one negotiated by the previous Prime Minister and the one negotiated by the present Prime Minister. The previous Prime Minister's protocol was, on the face of it, clear, straightforward and temporary. The present Prime Minister's protocol is permanent.

Lord Lilley (Con): The transitory nature of both protocols arises from Article 50, which the noble Lord himself wrote—and if he wishes to repudiate that and say that Article 50 does not mean what the European Union says that it means, that would be an interesting thing to do. If the European Union were now to change its view and say, “We were conning you and having you on when we said that we couldn't negotiate a permanent arrangement under Article 50”, it would show that the original treaty was based on negotiations in bad faith, and that would give us a basis to seek renegotiation.

More positively, we should look to the EU to negotiate and renegotiate with the same spirit and the same objective that it did the original protocol: to uphold the Belfast/Good Friday agreement in all its parts. I welcome the fact that the British Government are moving forward on that basis.

6.14 pm

Lord Mendelsohn (Lab): My Lords, the UK Government played an important role in the discussions with Iran which first led to the JCPOA and today are part of an important negotiation being led by the United States for a new treaty. There are many voices pressing caution. I draw particular attention to an article in March's edition of *Foreign Policy* by Hussein Agha, one of the most astute and brilliant commentators on the region and an active and widely respected peace negotiator. His article is a brutal assessment of where we could be heading. He writes, under the headline, “The United States' Clueless Diplomacy Won't Stop a Nuclear Iran”, that a deal could lead to the worst of both worlds. It will not derail the regime's nuclear ambitions and will strengthen the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

Today is not 2015, and the deal of 2015 was achieved through wider considerations, but its work was unfinished. Today Iran's capacity is very significantly advanced

[LORD MENDELSON]

and it is a lesson, if ever we needed it, that it is not just about signing agreements but about ensuring that provisions are implemented and the consequences properly managed. Many felt able to justify the 2015 accord as some totemic struggle for power in Iran between extremists and moderates, or between fundamentalists and reformers. However, as Agha notes, the real struggle has been between the revolutionary guard and the official state and its military.

The revolutionary guard was not present at the 2015 talks and did not like the deal. As Agha concludes, it is unequivocally in control now, which is why the issue about its proscription is so important—a position the US should not weaken and one in which other countries should join, including the UK. We have seen its role in creating parallel institutions around the region and supporting destabilisation, which has only gained pace since the Afghan withdrawal. It is not just about how it has increased popular mobilisation forces in Iraq, or various militias in Syria, and not just about Hezbollah in Lebanon, whose rule has destroyed and crippled the country and whose electoral setbacks still mean that it will exert much destructive influence. It is not just about its increased activity and support for Hamas and Islamic jihad in the Palestinian territories, setting loose terrorism in Israel to undermine the Palestinian Authority and push further away, as if it was not far away already, any opportunity to re-engage in any form of peace process. Its influence with the Houthis in Yemen continually undermines the fragile ceasefire.

Agreements work when the politics in which they are embedded is right. This was a flaw in 2015, and we must avoid it with any new agreement. Is it really possible today to say that the new agreement can be trusted when it is underpinned by Russia acting as guarantor and the custodian of billions of dollars for Iran's domestic nuclear development? May I seek the assurance of the Minister that the agreement ensures that our vital security and strategic interests and our work for stability in the wider region are properly reflected in what we are prepared to sign up to?

I applaud the Government's strong stance on Ukraine. The Russian invasion and brutal war on the Ukrainian people are not just appalling but will have huge implications for years to come. As the co-chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on War Crimes, I welcome the Government's pledge that those responsible for war crimes in Ukraine are held to account. I am pleased that we have provided support for such investigations. I would be very grateful if the Minister could kindly agree to keep the House updated on what our resource commitment is and what role we are playing in this matter. I appreciate that it is in the nature of these issues that responsibility is shared across the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice.

We have in this Parliament always taken seriously the matter of war criminals evading justice, whether here or abroad. However, recent experience raises concerns and the group has been very worried about what we are committed to and whether our deeds properly reflect our words. In looking at a number of the cases that have been raised in the UK, we can conclude that

we are at risk here of becoming a safe haven, and we do not have the capacity to play an important international role.

To illustrate the point, in the UK today there are five suspects believed to have taken part in the 1994 genocide against the Tutsis in Rwanda. In 2015 and 2017, a British district judge in the High Court ruled that, even though the evidence was compelling, none could be sent back to Rwanda because such action could breach their human rights on the grounds that the suspects would not receive a fair trial. We undertook to take on this responsibility. The resources allocated to Ukraine, even if it is one person, dwarf those allocated in pursuit of the Rwandan investigations, which in truth are no more than a percentage allocation of one member of a small wider team in the Metropolitan Police and the CPS. Many issues have been raised about the difficulties, but it has not stopped other countries, such as the US, Canada, France, Belgium, Germany and Sweden, helping, including during the pandemic. We in the group have faced an unwillingness to provide information, a lack of transparency and refusals to meet. We can conclude only that our investigative capacity is intentionally depleted, and that poor resourcing reflects poor commitment. If we are a country that takes war crimes seriously, as we have done in the past with Nazi war criminals and say we are doing in the Ukraine today, we need to put that right. I would be grateful if the Minister could confirm his willingness to take this matter back to his colleagues, assure us of a meeting and assure us that we will have the proper commitment and capacity to meet our commitments on this matter.

6.19 pm

Baroness Suttie (LD): My Lords, it is a pleasure to follow that powerful speech on war crimes from the noble Lord, Lord Mendelsohn.

Two days ago my friend Ostap headed east from Lviv in Ukraine, armed with his AK47, his helmet and his body armour. I worked with Ostap in Kyiv when he was the foreign affairs adviser to the speaker of the Verkhovna Rada, the Ukrainian Parliament. A few years ago, he studied here in this country at the Royal College of Defence Studies, and I was able to give him and his two little boys a tour of Parliament. Now he is in the east of Ukraine, trained as a military fireman. When we were in touch at the weekend, he was understandably extremely apprehensive yet proud to be serving his country.

My friend Olena's brave young son Nikolai has left his studies at Cambridge University to fight for his cultural homelands. Yuliya, a very dear friend who is now living in Toronto, is facing the dilemma of whether to move her elderly parents and mother-in-law over to Canada from Ukraine. These are the ordinary lives, shattered by this appalling war, of Ukrainian friends with very different backgrounds. The thing they all have in common is that they just want Ukraine to have the right to be a modern, democratic European country without interference from Moscow.

The response to the war in Ukraine has so far been powerful and united: from Ukrainian flags in our gardens, towns and villages to the amazing response of

people offering to open up their homes to Ukrainian families. The stance from the UK has been hugely appreciated in Ukraine, even if at times our Home Office has been tragically slow and bureaucratic in matching the response of the British people. The worry is that people will become tired of hearing about this war and move on with their lives but, for the sake of Ukraine, we must remain focused and keep up the pressure.

In the limited time left for me today, I would like to raise four political points. First, when I studied Russian in Voronezh University back in 1988—at the very tail-end of the Cold War—we had a great many Russia experts and Kremlinologists in this country. They were people who understood the language, political culture and psychology of Russia, a country where I worked and studied and still have a great many friends. I believe it would be a mistake to conflate Vladimir Putin and his delusional authoritarian entourage with the ordinary Russian people. Putin's views and plans about Ukraine were set out fairly clearly over a decade ago, but I fear we took our eye off the ball. Following the same kind of question asked by the noble Baroness, Lady Coussins, can the Minister give a commitment to encourage greater emphasis in the FCDO on studying the Russian language and Russian politics again? I believe that is going to be hugely important in the future.

Secondly, for sanctions to work it takes time. Friends in Moscow tell me that, as of yet, it is hard to feel their impacts. There should be no talk of lifting the sanctions until the Putin regime has gone.

My third point is about greatly strengthening our relations with other former Soviet states. In particular, I stress the importance of our bilateral relations with Moldova and Georgia. Strengthening bilateral relations is also of key importance in central Asia, in particular in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. I have been working regularly in central Asia for the last five years—I refer to my register of interests—and know that those countries are extremely keen for our relations to be strengthened at all levels, including in capacity-building and academic ties. If we do not do this, Moscow or Beijing will fill that void. I should add that soft-power initiatives through the British Council in the region would hugely benefit from increased funding in that regard. Can the Minister say whether there are plans to develop a new strategy for central Asia? It is an often neglected but strategically important region, perhaps especially now.

What the war in Ukraine has demonstrated all too clearly is the importance of working effectively with other countries and the strength and impact of multilateralism. When we work effectively with others, it enhances our reputation as a nation on the world stage. This is a lesson I believe this Government would do well to adopt in their approach to resolving the issues surrounding the Northern Ireland protocol.

6.24 pm

Lord Hannay of Chiswick (CB): My Lords, any contribution to this debate must surely begin with Ukraine because that crisis is transforming radically so many of the parameters which previously defined the international scene in which we lived and operated. I will make three points on Ukraine.

First, we outsiders should, I suggest, avoid two extremes—both now and when the warfare ceases and diplomacy and negotiations begin, as they must sooner or later. We must not bully Ukraine into agreeing to terms which they believe to be unacceptable. That was the mortal sin of the 1938 Munich agreement and of Yalta. The other is to bid up those terms from afar with talk of engagement with Russia having ended, and with sweeping definitions of the geographical scope of any settlement. Secondly, we need to realise that the strongest card the Euro-Atlantic community has in its hand is its unity. This is not a beauty contest between its members; we and Ukraine need to recognise that. Thirdly, we need to do better on admitting Ukrainians who are fleeing for their lives. The Government's response in that respect still falls well short; in particular, short of that of our continental neighbours.

If Ukraine has changed so much, how then does it affect our still excessively fraught relationship with the EU? It surely demonstrates the need for much closer and more structured co-operation on crisis management, economic sanctions and other aspects. This is not the time to drift into a confrontation over the implementation of the Northern Ireland protocol or to threaten to take unilateral action to set aside explicit provisions in the withdrawal agreement. That is the height of irresponsibility.

A better course would be to negotiate in good faith and with flexibility on both sides, with the aim of agreement on the protocol's implementation by the summer break but with any wider governance issues, such as the role of the European Court of Justice, to be reconsidered at the time of the 2024 review of the protocol—when it will be possible to do that on the basis of solid evidence about what, if any, changes need to be made. There are so many ways in which the UK-EU relationship could be improved that are currently being blocked, in some cases unjustifiably, by this frozen negotiation over the protocol.

The Ukraine conflict has accentuated and brought into sharper focus the existential challenge to the rules-based international order which has been under way for some time now. The Government, quite rightly in my view, regard the preservation and strengthening of that order as being in this country's fundamental national interest. But how much credibility does that policy position have in the outside world when legislation is brought forward and enacted which is inconsistent with our international obligations? That was the case with the internal market Bill, with the original version of the external operations Act, with the Nationality and Borders Act, and with our resiling from the UN target of 0.7% GNI for overseas aid, enshrined still in our domestic law but not being honoured. Now there is the threat unilaterally to set aside parts of the Northern Ireland protocol. I suggest there is very little credibility if we cannot close the gap between what we say and what we actually do.

Many aspects of last year's integrated review need careful consideration in the light of the Ukraine, Covid and climate crises. Is the balance unchanged between the weight we give to European security on our doorstep and the Indo-Pacific tilt which the review proclaimed? I doubt it. Are we paying enough attention to our relations with the countries of Africa, where

[LORD HANNAY OF CHISWICK]

this country really could make a difference with trade, investment, aid and peacekeeping support, or are we taking our eye off that ball? Are we allowing the main instruments of our soft power—the BBC World Service, the British Council and the worldwide contribution of our universities—to wither on the bough for lack of resources? Are we doing enough to prepare for the next global health pandemic that comes along, as it surely will? Are we shaping an energy policy which will both reduce Europe's dependence on Russian oil and gas and effectively combat climate change?

We are living now through a period when our foreign and security policy decisions really matter, in a way they perhaps have not to the same extent since the end of the Cold War some 30 years ago. I wish I was more confident that we were getting them right.

6.30 pm

Lord Anderson of Swansea (Lab): My Lords, I adopt all the wise words of the noble Lord, Lord Hannay.

Two weeks ago, Professor Frankopan wrote in the *Times* that we are now at a “turning point in history”. Is that justified? It cannot rest solely on the crisis in Ukraine. There are other factors, such as the sequelae of Covid, the closure of Chinese ports, extreme weather in India and so on, but surely the crisis in Ukraine is the main basis for that claim. The outcome is now uncertain but it is clear that Russia has failed in its major war aims.

I will make two reflections: first, on the errors of President Putin, and, secondly, on the possible geopolitical consequences of the crisis. Clearly, President Putin made a major miscalculation. Perhaps he misread the West's response to the debacle of Afghanistan and, earlier, Georgia, in 2008, and Crimea, in 2014. He assumed that it would be a similarly weak response, and he wished to indulge his fantasies and rebuild Russia's sphere of influence. In fact, he has been met with a united response from the West: the supply of arms to Ukraine, and I commend the role of the UK in this; the reversal of Germany's traditional policies; and the unity of the European Union—which surely argues the case for a closer relationship between us on the CFSP and CSDP—and NATO, as our key alliance. There is also the unintended consequence of Finland and Sweden seeking to join NATO; they will be contributors to the security of the alliance. Western unity was seen in the general imposition of sanctions against Russia and its oligarchs, from oil and gas to Eurovision and even McDonald's. The result is that the Russian economy is scheduled to shrink by 12% this year. In the longer term, one asks where Russia's main exports will come from, as dependence on oil and gas reduces and the failure of the military means that there will be less demand. Who now buys Russian consumer goods?

Russia is faced with international isolation and its military matériel faces the real test in war; a test of its leadership and of the quality of its arms. It chose inadequate preparation and stockpiles, made optimistic assumptions of taking Kyiv, and has had weapons failure—and perhaps here there is an opportunity for our own exporters. It failed to factor in the solidarity of Ukraine in its grand patriotic war, or the inspired

leadership of President Zelensky. Napoleon said that, in war, the mental element overreaches the physical by a factor of three to one. Incidentally, the way that the inexperienced Foreign Secretary here speaks of taking the whole of Ukraine is—just like her gung ho approach to Northern Ireland—of course wrong. We have seen Russia diminished, and this is likely to have a serious and long-lasting effect.

My second reflection is that there is a major geostrategic change in prospect. The broad principle is that democracy was in decline with the strongmen, but now there could be a boost for the democrats over the autocrats who see no checks and balances. There is a potential stark effect on developing countries, as the noble Lord, Lord King, said, with prices and energy costs rising, likely increased instability and, as the noble Lord, Lord Kerr, has said, increased migration. Russia has threatened a nuclear response and there would clearly be implications for the NPT. We could see a realignment of the major powers, particularly the relationship between Russia and China. Russia claims that China is now an equal. Clearly, with the decline of Russia, there will be a more lopsided relationship, with a greater dependence of Russia on China. Perhaps the Minister could comment on this.

Finally, we must ensure that Putin's reckless gamble does not succeed and we must strengthen our alliances. I concede that we now see through a glass darkly, but the global tectonic plates are shifting, and we may indeed be at a turning point in our history.

6.35 pm

Lord Bruce of Bennachie (LD): My Lords, I draw attention to my entry in the register of interests. I will focus on another European region conflict.

As a former Council of Europe rapporteur on political prisoners in Azerbaijan, I was invited last month to visit their Parliament, to mark the 30th anniversary of UK-Azerbaijan diplomatic relations, and to discuss peace and reconciliation following the recovery of most of Karabakh, previously occupied for 30 years by Armenia. The frozen conflict of Nagorno-Karabakh has been a running sore throughout that time. There are strong feelings on both sides, and 800,000 Azeris were displaced from the region.

Now, the scale of physical destruction of buildings and infrastructure has been revealed. The international community and the UN consistently recognised that the territory is part of Azerbaijan, yet nothing changed until the six-week war in 2020. Most of the disputed territory was recovered by Azerbaijan, with one enclave still controlled by Artsakh. Emotions and reason are not easily reconciled, yet it is clear that peace and reconciliation is in all the parties' interests. For those territories now firmly under Azeri control, there is a need for demining, reconstruction, restoration and resettlement. For the Armenian community within the territory of Azerbaijan, there is a need for reconciliation and confidence building, which clearly will not be easy and needs sensitive handling. The damaged and destroyed buildings of both communities need to be treated with equal respect.

Azerbaijan has a long history of tolerance, interfaith co-operation and mutual respect, which should now be the hallmark of building peace across this region.

Over time, this should allow key strategic links to be established, which is important for both countries. Armenians need to access their communities within Azerbaijan and Azerbaijan needs to connect to its detached region of Nakhchivan. Roads and railways are under construction and airports have been built.

Whatever the sensitivities, there must be a reaching out for peace and stability that recognises the integral territory of both countries. No one doubts the challenges that lie ahead, but can the Minister say what actions the UK is taking towards achieving a peace settlement that may offer stability? Do the Government support the initiatives undertaken by the European Union?

This week, the Government's international development strategy was published. As a former chair of the International Development Committee, I have been dismayed to watch the dismantling of the UK's world-leading international aid delivery. The merger of DfID and the FCO has been deeply disruptive to diplomatic capacity and development impact. There has been a loss of talent and a drop in morale. The new strategy is strong on rhetoric but appears mostly focused on how aid and development can further British interests in trade and investment. There are of course legitimate foreign policy interests in development assistance. However, the fact that our aid was untied and poverty-focused gave it an ethical dimension that enhanced our reputation around the globe and enabled the UK to provide real leadership.

I was proud to see UK programmes that were transformational in building capacity and lifting millions out of poverty, but the strategy is short on detail. The restoration of 0.7% is in the misty future, the commitment to women and girls is based on reduced funding, and it is not clear what the UK's objectives and outcomes might be. There is little mention of the sustainable development goals. Where is the commitment to end absolute poverty by 2030? What are the key UK development initiatives to leave no-one behind?

Ukraine needs humanitarian assistance and economic support, but that should not be at the expense of the poorest countries, not least because the impact of the pandemic, the fallout from the war in Ukraine—especially in food shortages—and the growing impact of climate change will hit these countries hardest. How will the focus on bilateral aid and country programmes affect our influence in international arenas? How will this decentralisation be achieved without a loss of coherence, value for money and strategic objectives? How will it be delivered, given the dismantling of DfID's previous expertise? Until this Government took office, the world looked to the UK for leadership in development. It now appears that we have left the room.

Briefly, I ask the Minister whether he can give some comment on the Caribbean policy, particularly in relation to Guyana, where there is massive development opportunity in which Canada and America are engaging. British business is interested and wants to engage. British International Investment has an increased role in the Caribbean. Can the Minister tell us what that will involve and how it will engage in ensuring the transformation of Guyana from a poor country to a sustainable country which can serve as a driver for the whole Caribbean region?

6.41 pm

Lord Craig of Radley (CB): My Lords, it is timely to make some assessment of what has been happening in Ukraine. Where may it lead?

The starkest aspect is the intensive and brutal scale of combat. Large numbers of bombs, missiles, rockets and other ammunitions have been used on both sides. Much equipment lies destroyed beyond recovery. Unless these rates much reduce, it will be possible for Ukraine to keep fighting strongly only if allies and defence industries can keep up and replenish stocks as quickly as they are used up.

The Minister stressed that the UK would keep up its supplies, so are steps necessary to put relevant defence industries on a war footing or extra shifts? More than fine promises are required. Our national defence needs must also not be neglected. What information is available to assess whether Russia will sustain its current efforts and, if so, for how long? It must keep enough to repel a NATO attack which it says it fears. Sadly, protracted conflict seems unavoidable.

In a recent debate on a Ukraine Statement, I asked whether the Government had made any assessment of the impact that economic and other sanctions might be having on the Russian war effort. This question applies even more to the effect of all these sanctions, both economically and politically, on Russia. Sanctions do not seem to have deterred or deflected Putin from combat, or from his determination to claim some substantial victory over Ukraine.

Germany and other European states still see it necessary to draw extensively on Russian oil and gas to keep their own economies going. Eliminating this dependency will take time. Russia also had \$600 billion of reserves to prosecute the war and overcome the effects of sanctions. The dollar/rouble exchange rate, which halved for a short while when Russia invaded, is now back to where it was before 24 February. The overall Russian position does not seem immediately perilous.

Putin was asserting only last week that sanctions were not working—well, he would, wouldn't he? But sanctions are not a zero-sum game, as Putin also pointed out. They will have detrimental effects on UK nationals and their businesses. Other sanctions impact on the wider public, with very unwelcome increases in the prices of fuel and electricity, maybe on inflation too.

There needs to be some form of strategic assessment of all these conflicting issues. Where does the balance of advantage lie? When there is some form of ceasefire, what easements of sanctions should be made or should seized assets be put into a great Ukrainian recovery fund? Would that be legal, or is new law required to do so? How soon could such law be enacted?

In all of this, it is vital to keep public support on side. Sanctions must be explained for their effectiveness; why, as necessary, they must be continued; and how they can help Ukraine after the conflict ends. Is this at the forefront of government thinking, their policy and pronouncements? I look for some reassurance that it is.

6.45 pm

Lord Lang of Monkton (Con): My Lords, it is a pleasure to follow the noble and gallant Lord, Lord Craig of Radley. I claim no expertise in defence matters, but I have a strong sense of commitment to the maintenance of the defence of the realm. I will focus mainly on the Army, where I believe there is another side to the impressive list of actions mentioned by my noble friend the Minister in opening the debate.

Last year's integrated defence review was underpinned by the assumption that, in the words of my right honourable friend the Prime Minister:

"We have to recognise that the old concepts of fighting big tank battles on the European landmass ... are over".

We all say things that we later come to regret. Far from Ukraine vindicating the review, as the Government have now been claiming, I venture to suggest the opposite and that recent events in Ukraine show that the basis of the review was fundamentally wrong and needs to be put right.

Thirty years ago, at the supposed end of the Cold War, 4% of our GDP was spent on each of defence and health. Now, over 7% of our GDP is spent on health and 2% on defence; that is not enough. Germany and Poland are doubling their expenditure and many neighbours are increasing theirs. We must raise ours too by as much as is necessary.

However, percentages and cash figures are not the right way to address this. It is not what we spend that matters most but what we need to defend ourselves and our allies. The integrated review feels more like a cost management report driven by cash limits and not defence needs. In the Army that is reflected, for example, in the false distinction it makes between equipment and manpower—between technology and boots on the ground. We need both. Of course, technology matters, as the heroic soldiers of Ukraine have shown with British weaponry, but manpower is essential and more fundamental. Technology can assist but not replace it. Soldiers on the ground are vital to turn defence into attack, take the fight to the enemy, change tactics quickly when required and to seize and hold recovered ground. Manpower matters and, for our warfighting ability, mass matters.

Overnight, the world has changed; we are back in the Cold War. Conventional war is not dead, as so many assumed, and we must react to that and not be driven by an accountant's ledger. The first and most obvious need is surely to cancel at once the 11% cut in our manpower that so demoralised our allies and cheered our adversaries, leaving us with the smallest Army for two centuries. Instead of the 73,000 figure, we should be aiming upwards towards 100,000, for that is the direction in which a proper assessment of our needs must surely drive us.

I am told that the Army's warfighting division now contains only two armoured brigades with only four infantry battalions between them, comprising just 29,000 fighting men. I further understand that out of over 200 tanks we have only 112 serviceable ones, of which fewer than 50 are ready for immediate use. These are frightening numbers; the Russians count their tanks in thousands. They have already lost many hundreds in Ukraine. What use would our contribution be in a

major NATO engagement or in fulfilling our new promises to Sweden and Finland? Tanks need support from armoured formations of infantry to hold terrain won. A lack of that is what has caused Russia to lose so many.

As the noble Lord, Lord Dannatt, mentioned, the Warrior armoured fighting vehicles which could support tanks have already been scrapped under the review. What a help some of them could have been in Ukraine. There is also said to be a serious shortage of long-range artillery support. So, we have at present a lack of weapons of all kinds, a lack of integration, a lack of co-ordination and backup on the battlefield, a capacity on the ground so small as to be of limited value, and a severe shortage of manpower with which to face what could be the greatest threat to our country and the rest of Europe.

I believe that we need to face up to the new reality and our present vulnerability. We should especially heed the recent statement of the present Chief of the General Staff, General Sir Mark Carleton-Smith, who has now said in the *Soldier* magazine that Ukraine has "highlighted the fact that mass and size are important."

He has also said:

"I'm not comfortable with an Army of just 73,000. It's too small."

Coming from him, this is a powerful message to the Government, and I urge them to heed it.

6.50 pm

Lord Campbell-Savours (Lab) [V]: My Lords, in the 1990s, Edwina Currie and I were invited to Moscow to undertake a series of talks in the Duma on democracy. During that visit, and on a later visits under different auspices, I gained two distinct impressions. First, our embassy staff were convinced that the embassy was bugged, with its staff under surveillance. Secondly, Russians I met seemed convinced to the point of paranoia that American-sponsored nuclear deployments encircling Russia were a constant threat to Russian security. The problem was that both accusations were essentially true.

That belief, set against a background of 26 million losses in the Second World War, stands at the heart of Russia's paranoia. This is why decent, innocent and patriotic Russian citizens, when additionally subject to propaganda on Ukraine's Nazification, believe that the West is conspiring to undermine the Russian state. It is that combination—the perceived Nazification of Ukraine, the 26 million losses and the nuclear threat—which underlines and reinforces Putin's grossly exaggerated case. He has been able to justify his actions and appalling brutality by drawing on the work of Lev Golinkin, a prominent Jewish writer with impeccable credentials, who, in his detailed 19-page report, "Neo-Nazis and the Far Right Are On the March in Ukraine", available through our Library, details concerns over what he describes as "dark nationalism". His case is endorsed by Human Rights Watch, Freedom House, the Simon Wiesenthal Center, the US-funded Radio Free Europe, Amnesty International and the World Jewish Congress. His report details the scale of alleged Nazification of Ukrainian institutions, the sponsorship of violence, the role of the Azov Battalion with its roots in extremism, the persecution of Jews, Roma

and LGBT groups, the treatment of the liberal media, attitudes to the Holocaust and the banning of the Russian language.

We cannot simply ignore the impact of such reporting on Russian public opinion. It is influencing events and attitudes to military intervention. Our democracies are identified with these reactionary movements and our response is ill-judged. We are set on a very dangerous course. For weeks, I have set out my reservations: the internal pressures that increasingly underly a volatile Russia—over which Putin, in truth, has limited control—invite danger. We need to rethink our current and post-Putin strategy. We do not need a humiliated Russia and a Versailles; there would be no real winners.

I have argued previously in this House the case in detail for a deal to avoid war. Macron, who has been appallingly treated by fellow Europeans, has promoted within the Normandy Format a

“desire to maintain the stability and territorial integrity of Ukraine”—but outside of NATO. He is being completely undermined as the West runs its proxy war. Equally, the deal proposed by Anatol Lieven of the Washington-based Quincy Institute has been blocked and rubbished. Unsettling the world in a prolonged proxy war can only unleash forces which extend far beyond the borders of a small European state. We need to talk. Lives are being lost in a fruitless conflict which is being used—as has been argued in the media—by some in government to consolidate their leadership. The war is provoking inflation and penalising the poor at home here in the UK. The only silver lining is that brutal Putin's days are numbered as the truth dawns on the innocent Russian people as to the scale of the brutality taking place in their name.

I believe—as I always have—that there was a deal to be done with Russia prior to this conflict and we failed to pursue it. Ukraine will end up worse off, and that is a real tragedy. The truth will come out in the end.

I congratulate the noble and gallant Lord, Lord Craig of Radley, on the brilliant speech he gave just a few moments ago.

6.55 pm

Lord Palmer of Childs Hill (LD): Following that rather unique opinion, I am very happy to take part in this debate on the gracious Speech and what it did and did not say. Contrary to common belief, it is trade that makes the world go round. Does the Minister accept that the Johnson oven-ready Brexit deal has not led to an increase in trade but to significant falls in UK imports and exports, leading to rising food prices and empty supermarket shelves? The supply chain in so many areas of activity which has existed on JIT—just in time—is finding that it no longer works; when reordering, it is now JTL, just too late. Can the Minister please comment on what the Government plan to do about threats to UK farming and industry, a very important part of our trade?

Since last year, headlines have reported widespread disruptions to supply chains, leading to delayed deliveries, higher prices, gaps on shop shelves and even petrol stations without fuel. This is the reality—not the situation described by the Minister. Greggs, IKEA, Tesco and BP have all reported on these issues. Can the Minister please update the House on the reports,

six months ago, of Coca-Cola reporting stock shortages and its battle to get enough cans to put its cola in? But it is not only soft drinks that have been affected—I am sure noble Lords will be pleased to hear. If your tippie is Johnnie Walker, Smirnoff, Captain Morgan or Guinness, prepare for a deprivation, as Diageo said that it was facing a “more challenging” environment. As for the gourmets: McDonald's and Nando's reported disruption to their supplies. Can the Minister please update the House on whether frozen food suppliers are, as they would have done in all previous years, laying down stock for Christmas? Some of them just cannot get any stock to lay down for Christmas.

It only gets worse. Unilaterally tearing up the Northern Ireland protocol is an egregious breach of international law which will plunge the UK into a trade war with our closest neighbours. The Conservatives must release the Attorney-General's legal advice on the protocol immediately, along with the economic impact assessment of scrapping it. If there is nothing to hide, there is nothing to fear.

Any responsible Government would be announcing an emergency VAT cut to combat soaring bills and food costs. Instead, Johnson's Conservatives put forward plans that will make it harder for the millions of families struggling to make ends meet. If the Tories go ahead with his plans laid out in the gracious Speech, they risk starting a trade war with our largest trading partner and turning a real cost of living crisis into a catastrophe. At a time when we should be working with our allies in the face of Russian aggression, despite what the previous speaker has just said, these measures which breach international law will ignite a diplomatic firestorm. This public posturing undermines our standing on the world stage and only makes matters worse. We need the UK and the EU to calmly work pragmatically to find solutions. I read in today's newspapers that the Foreign Secretary is talking very bullishly about tearing up aspects of the Northern Ireland protocol.

Historically, Britain has been one of the great trading nations of the world. I regret that, under this incompetent, cavalier and rule-breaking Administration, it can no longer be called so. I wait with bated breath to hear how the Minister is going to preserve and enhance our reputation as one of the greatest trading nations of the world.

6.59 pm

Lord Carlile of Berriew (CB): My Lords, there came a moment in this debate when I was, frankly, hoping—and so perhaps were others—for a short intermission, when suddenly there broke out a fascinating spat, to use a technical term, between the noble Lord, Lord Lilley, and my noble friend Lord Kerr. Being the intellectual heavyweights that they are, they squared up to one another, face to face for a moment—although I note that, since then, after a long, private conversation, they have gone out, presumably for a reconciliatory cup of tea.

A few minutes before that, we had heard the noble Lord, Lord Frost, being as clear as he ever is. With breathtaking boldness, he rejected the efficacy of a treaty provision that had been negotiated with great care—by the noble Lord, Lord Frost. Indeed, he did so without, it appeared, a grain of apology. Although

[LORD CARLILE OF BERRIEW]

those three noble Lords are not in their places at the moment, I hope to take your Lordships for a moment to Northern Ireland and the reality of the Good Friday agreement reached on that memorable day, 10 April 1998.

Your Lordships will recall that not only was that agreement reached but it was reached after 30 years of fighting in Northern Ireland—and it was reached between parties who distrusted each other to the core. Two of those parties, the noble Lord, Lord Trimble, and John Hume, from very different parts of the Northern Ireland political spectrum, won the Nobel Peace Prize for their work. Also, following the agreement, there were two referendums on the island of Ireland which supported it. As it happens, shortly afterwards I became the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation and, in the time since 2001, I have spent quite a lot of time in Northern Ireland, in places such as Stormont, the Bar Library, Queen's University Belfast and other pleasant places of resort in Belfast, discussing that agreement.

And what do we have? Those people who distrusted one another have tried to trust one another. Belfast is a remarkable, pleasant city now compared with what it was. The restaurants are open, the bars are open—you go to Boots and you find people from all communities working there. As one person said to me, "It's the real parable of Northern Ireland. Sometimes they marry each other and it's all over for them". In truth, the effect of the Good Friday agreement has been to change Northern Ireland and its polity out of all recognition.

In my view, it is absolutely inexcusable, when plainly there are other measures available, and when the Administrations in London, Belfast and Dublin could get together and solve these problems if only they stopped talking as they are to one another. This problem can be resolved, the Good Friday agreement can remain unaffected and an agreement can be reached. It should not be done with a threat to break a treaty. The breaking of that treaty by the United Kingdom—I think that I am with my noble friend Lord Kerr rather than the noble Lord, Lord Lilley, on this—is an unacceptable breach not just of the law but of the law of nations: and what is higher in law than the law of nations?

So, in focusing on this single subject which has real international repercussions, I ask the noble Lord, when he answers this debate—we all hold him in great regard in this House—to confirm that no Government should ever make a treaty that they know at the time of making it that they may be unable to keep, and that no Government should break a treaty made with friends once it has been made, because there is always another way.

7.04 pm

Lord Tyrie (Non-Affl): My Lords, I agree with just about everything that I have just heard but, instead of following up on that, I will confine my remarks to Ukraine and its implications.

We, the West, have probably done enough to enable Ukraine to avoid defeat, but not enough to enable it to win. So we have probably created the conditions for a long war, and certainly for the very substantial further

destruction of large parts of Ukraine. That policy is probably unsustainable domestically, and it is certainly unacceptable to leave the Ukrainians in such a position. Given what is at stake—the noble Lords, Lord King, Lord Ricketts and Lord Kerr, among many others, have set out what is at stake—there will therefore need to be a development of current policy and messaging in a number of important respects.

First, we need sharply to accelerate the rearmament of Ukraine, to the point that it can decisively repel the invasion, and as quickly as possible. This will mean abandoning most of the self-imposed restrictions currently deployed by many western countries and will also mean much more co-ordination between them in the supply of weaponry.

Secondly, we need to clarify the war aim. This is Ukraine's war, not ours, but it is already clear that a minimal war aim of the Ukrainians will be a return to the frontiers prior to 24 February. That means the expulsion of the Russians from the Donbass, including the territory occupied by them after 2014.

Thirdly, the West now needs to clarify that it will do whatever is required economically to impair Russia's war-fighting capability. This may, in turn, require crippling Russia's economy. To achieve that, some western countries will have to abandon the notion that they can somehow hurt the architects of this war and secure a change of policy in Russia without hurting the country at large, or can avoid significant costs to themselves. The West is funding both sides of this war on a grand scale, and to carry on with this indefinitely would be as absurd as it is unethical.

Oil and gas revenues are crucial, of course. Well over €50 billion has been paid by EU countries to Russia since the start of the war, and it is that money that is partly—even substantially—funding it. Germany, in particular, has made a major mistake by exposing itself to systemic energy dependency. The huge payments for fossil fuels have to be brought to an end more quickly than is currently planned. Of course, that will mean some economic pain. For Germany, in particular, it will mean eating some humble pie—the same humble pie, incidentally, that it served up a decade ago to countries in the eurozone's southern tier over their profligate fiscal policies.

Fourthly, leading western countries now need, in my view, collectively to underwrite the Ukrainian economy. They need publicly to clarify that, whatever it takes, the Ukrainian economy and banking system will continue to function. So far, the West's economic support, both bilateral and multilateral, has fallen well short of such a commitment.

I end with a broader observation about the origins of the war and its consequences. We are engaged in this proxy war because it is in our security interests. In doing so, we are reasserting the rule of law in international society—law based on a mutual recognition of the legitimacy of other states to exist and to secure their frontiers. Behind it lies a common-sense principle: do not invade my house and I will not invade yours.

Twenty years ago, great damage was done to international stability and the rule of law by the doctrine of regime change and its accompanying neoconservative rhetoric to justify the invasion of Iraq. The language

of regime change was always likely to be used by rogue states to justify interference and the invasion of their neighbours—and so it has proved this time. Since then, we have had, among many others, Georgia, Crimea and now the 24 February invasion. So we are all now paying a heavy price for past failures of foreign and defence policy—a point made, in different ways, by the noble Lords, Lord West and Lord Dobbs.

Now, however, we have an opportunity to repair some of the damage. If the West remains resolute in upholding international law, if these events trigger the reinvigoration of NATO and enlargement, and if we and our allies honour the increases in defence spending that some have already promised, some good can yet come out of this shocking war.

7.10 pm

Lord Jopling (Con): My Lords, I begin by making a point which the noble Lord, Lord Taverne, made a little earlier: if, following the referendum, we had opted to stay within the single market but at the same time to leave the European Union, we could have avoided the current, totally predictable problems of Northern Ireland. But I want to talk this evening about NATO. I recently asked to be dropped from the UK delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly after having been a member of it for 34 years, with a short break in the middle. In recent years, I have become increasingly concerned—especially over the last few years—that NATO has become much more sleepy than it was in its heyday.

Let me give some examples of what I mean. The first is the intolerable 16 years or so between deciding that it wanted to build a huge new headquarters across the road and beginning to occupy it. Next is the refusal of the Secretary-General—I am bound to say I am not an admirer of that person—to address questions from me and others about the serious criticisms made to NATO by the auditors. Also, I have become aware of late realisations of the problems of moving vital equipment between member states, in terms of both permits and access—issues which it should have been aware of decades ago. But more important is the cynical lack of action by some member states, such as Belgium, to implement the target of 2% of GDP that was entered into at the Welsh summit some years ago. Finally, there is the tolerant approach of some states, such as Turkey, to the continued emergence of Russian militarism. These are all examples of my reservations about NATO, and there are others.

So, I ask the Government whether they will encourage NATO in their discussions with it to jump up and build further on its reawakened enthusiasm post the Ukraine war as our principal safeguard for a peaceful world. One of the things I encourage the Government to press on NATO is a revisitation of that 2% spending target. So many Members of your Lordships' House have made the point, which I very much agree with, that 2% is outdated and we have to rethink it.

Next, I am sure there is more that NATO, and particularly some member states, could do to continue to give maximum support to Ukraine in its current valiant struggles. Also, I believe that NATO should be prepared to accommodate Sweden and Finland quickly, if that is their wish. The key thing is to get this done

quickly and to avoid mischief from Putin in the meantime. Next, NATO should be pressed to be prepared to deploy non-aggressive battlegroups in fellow NATO states if it becomes necessary, in the same admirable way that it has put these small, non-aggressive battlegroups into the Baltic countries and Poland over the last few years, which I have applauded very much. NATO should also be prepared to give equipment support to non-member states such as Georgia and Moldova where Russia already has a controversial military presence—for instance, in South Ossetia and Transnistria, both of which I have visited over the years and in both of which I have seen the Russian military presence for myself.

Finally, in my view, NATO—and all of us—should make it plain to Russia that we are happy to welcome it into the civilised world once it has totally renounced barbarism and international mischief.

7.16 pm

Lord Lee of Trafford (LD): My Lords, in a world of nuclear stockpiles and proliferation risks, our generation has been extraordinarily fortunate—but I worry for our children and grandchildren. Any regime which is prepared to see upwards of 20,000 of its troops killed and thousands injured, create 5 million-plus refugees and brutally devastate a country is quite capable of pressing the nuclear button, be it on the battlefield or strategic. Morality has long gone. Thus, it is only the threat of massive retaliation which holds it back—hence I welcome the very recent decision to press ahead with the £2 billion Dreadnought submarine programme, with four new submarines built in Barrow expected to go into service from the 2030s with a likely 30-year lifespan. We have no alternative. Let us hope that the programme is not beset by historic delays and cost overruns. Last week's PAC report is hardly encouraging, saying that the MoD's

“corporate culture is still too traditional and resistant to change or criticism, and it still does not have nearly enough people with the financial skills to effectively manage one of the government's most challenging portfolios.”

We can but hope.

In last week's *New Statesman*, Andrew Marr drew our attention to the first words on defence on the SNP website:

“The SNP has never and will never support the retention or renewal of Trident. We believe that nuclear weapons are immoral, ineffective and expensive.”

I cannot believe that the brave Scottish people will go along with this selfish position, relying on others to shoulder the nuclear risk, given current circumstances.

The coming together of NATO in common cause over Ukraine is obviously welcome—as is the intention of Finland and Sweden to apply to join, given their significant military capabilities. However, I do question the grandstanding of our Prime Minister in signing defence pacts seemingly without parliamentary debate or approval, particularly given our overstretched and under-resourced Armed Forces.

We must recognise the risk that a wounded, somewhat humiliated and increasingly beleaguered Russia might lash out in an unpredictable and very dangerous way. We must remain on maximum guard. Yes, post Ukraine

[LORD LEE OF TRAFFORD]

we will rightly have to try to reach some accommodation with Russia, however difficult this may be. But we have to face the possibility—perhaps the unthinkable possibility—of nuclear conflict, by design, by accident or by miscalculation, however horrific this would be. Nuclear terrorism, of course, is also always possible. Casualties in our crowded island would be appalling, but there would be millions of survivors, so I have four questions for the Minister who is replying, and perhaps he could get the appropriate department to write back to me.

First, are there any booklets or information on the Government's website advising the public in the event of a nuclear threat or attack? Secondly, the noble Lord, Lord True, said in this House in March that a mobile phone-based emergency alerting system would be launched in the summer. What is the latest update on this? Thirdly, do the Government have any policy at all, or give any advice, on the construction of underground bunkers or protective shelters? Fourthly, the 2020 national risk register says:

"The government maintains national stocks of medical treatments with arrangements in place for how these would be distributed in an emergency."

Could the Minister elaborate further on these stocks? I have to say that our early experience with Covid is hardly reassuring in this regard.

Finally, given a likely enlarged NATO, which has been referred to on many occasions during this debate, and certainly a more united one, will Her Majesty's Government take a lead in endeavouring to rationalise current wasteful allied duplicated defence procurement spend with greater interoperabilities? This would be a huge step forward.

7.20 pm

Lord Alton of Liverpool (CB): My Lords, 1 July will see the 25th anniversary of the handover of Hong Kong to the People's Republic of China. "One country, two systems"—which might have been a template for Taiwan—has been smashed to smithereens, as was graphically underlined by last week's arrests. I have a number of questions about how we respond to this and particularly about the place of trade with a country which crushes dissent and which stands accused by our own Foreign Secretary, Elizabeth Truss, of committing genocide against the Uighur people of Xinjiang. In doing so, I refer to my non-financial interests declared in the register.

Do the Government Front Bench think it is licit to promote trade with a country accused of genocide; a country which threatens Taiwan daily; a country which disregards—as the noble Lord, Lord Ahmad, said to me in response to a question recently—every single one of the 30 articles in the 1948 convention on human rights, not least in Hong Kong? Despite Project Defend, which was described to me and the noble Lord, Lord Blencathra, during a helpful meeting with the noble Lord, Lord Grimstone, the UK's trade deficit with China more than tripled last year. Our imports were valued at more than £40 billion more than our exports, while UK exports declined by 34%. We spent £10 billion on NHS procurements from China, which is the size of our entire diminished ODA budget. Some of the purchased products were defective

and some were produced fraudulently. Most could and should have been made by British manufacturers, but if competitors use slave labour, they will always be able to outcompete British interests. What difference has Project Defend made to that? What would the Government regard as its success?

In this context, when the noble Lord, Lord Ahmad, comes to reply, I would like to know if he is for or against the sale of Newport Wafer Fab to a Chinese company. Does he disbelieve or believe the CCP when it says its objective is to take control of semiconductor chip production and acquire intellectual property? Could he tell us how many UK businesses in the semiconductor supply chain are foreign owned? What assessment has been made of the value of Newport Wafer Fab's intellectual property and the sensitivity of any defence contracts it currently has? How does this fit with the objective of a digital markets Bill? Will he say what impact the proposed takeover will have on the UK's stated ambition in the integrated review to be a digital and data hub?

In 2019, the United States blacklisted China General Nuclear, accusing it of stealing nuclear secrets. Where does this leave the United Kingdom and, for instance, Hinkley Point? Where does it leave Sizewell? Surely allowing a company linked to the CCP to be involved in building a nuclear plant at Bradwell, just 50 miles from London, must cause the noble Lord some concern.

With human rights in free fall, I hope the noble Lord will tell us whether the Procurement Bill, mentioned in the gracious Speech, will follow the admirable lead of the Department of Health and its Secretary of State, Sajid Javid, who has banned Hikvision surveillance cameras in his department. A company linked with the Uighur surveillance state in Xinjiang has 1 million cameras in the United Kingdom. Some of our Five Eyes allies have banned and sanctioned Hikvision. Why have we not?

Given reports from our intelligence services of CCP agents at work in this very Parliament, can the Minister explain why the foreign agent registration scheme has been omitted from the National Security Bill? Some of these issues are addressed in the September 2021 report on China, trade and security from the International Relations and Defence Select Committee, subtitled *A Strategic Void*. When will the Government provide time for it to be debated?

I finish where I began, in Hong Kong, where in 2019 I witnessed, as an election monitor, 3 million people, equivalent to 71% of registered voters, voting for democracy. By contrast, a handful of cadres have just appointed John Lee, the enforcer of the national security law, as the new Chief Executive. While HSBC welcomed Lee's appointment, G7 Foreign Ministers and the European Union have spelt out their "grave concern" about the

"continued assault on political pluralism and fundamental freedoms."

UK trade and economic deals, such as JETCO, were suspended in response to the national security law under which last week's arrests were made. I hope that, when he comes to reply, the noble Lord will take the opportunity today to repudiate reports that these initiatives may be restarted and assert that, in the long term, we must strengthen our international alliances and be united in response to Chinese belligerence.

7.26 pm

Baroness Warsi (Con): My Lords, in 2002 young British men we had grown up with travelled from Batley, a small town in Yorkshire, to Gujarat in India for a holiday. Two brothers, their nephew and a friend were being driven back after a tour of the Taj Mahal when their car was attacked by an angry mob. Three were murdered, the driver was set alight and the nephew, despite his injuries, survived. These men became victims of a spate of violence now known as the Gujarat riots in which thousands lost their lives, women and girls were raped, beaten and burnt, and homes and businesses were set alight. The Chief Minister of the state of Gujarat at that time was one Narendra Modi.

A leaked report at the time by the British high commission in New Delhi specifically blamed the violence on Chief Minister Modi and his Government. It led to Narendra Modi being described as the “Butcher of Gujarat”, with travel bans imposed on him by many, including the United States, while we in Britain imposed a total boycott of Modi, refusing to engage with him for a decade. Our collective assessment of and response to Modi was right at the time.

Years later, Modi looked set to become Prime Minister of India, and the US, the UK and others found ourselves having to unban and re-engage, not because we agreed with him nor had any truck with his ideology, but because it was expedient to do so. Indeed, we said as much, making it clear that engagement was not endorsement. Let me say clearly: we are right to engage with the Prime Minister of India, whoever that may happen to be. India is a country of 1.4 billion people, a rising economy, an important trade partner and a secular and diverse nation with an important and valued diaspora in Britain. India is not Modi, but more importantly Modi is not what India was envisaged to be.

The father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi, preached non-violence and fought for a secular India. Indeed, it was this message that led to his early demise, tragically assassinated at the hands of a right-wing extremist, Nathuram Godse, a follower of a political ideology known as Hindutva. Hindutva is not Hinduism. The great faith of Hinduism, one of the oldest religions in the world, practised for thousands of years and rooted in spirituality, is one that has always co-existed with other beliefs. Hindutva, however, diminishes plural secular societies, is a political violent ideology from the late 1800s, underpins the far-right movement the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, or RSS, is influenced and inspired by the ideologies of Hitler and Mussolini, and was banned by Indian Prime Minister Nehru. This lays out the tension in today's India. On the one hand is a diverse, multifaith, secular India and on the other a country where the ideology of Hindutva underpins the politics of power, with the once-banned RSS now playing centre stage, engaged in politics through its political wing, the BJP, and in violence through its mass training camps, led by Prime Minister Modi, an ex-RSS pracharak—a senior propagator.

What we saw play out in Gujarat in 2002 under Chief Minister Modi, we are now, tragically, seeing play out across India under Prime Minister Modi. From lynchings to burnings of homes, lootings to rape, the ideology of Hindutva and its promoters has

attracted widespread criticism from Indian civil society, which is committed to a secular state as enshrined in the Indian constitution. Discrimination and harassment of Christian, Muslim, Sikh and Dalit communities, attacks on those in interfaith marriages, the passing of anti-conversion and citizenship amendment laws, targeted killings, burning and bulldozing of minority homes, desecrations of places of worship, boycotts of businesses based on religion and even citing Mother Teresa and her work as a “Christian conspiracy” are now mainstream.

For years, Indian civil society has been sounding the alarm bells. Women's groups in 2020 accused Modi of encouraging “communal hate and fear-mongering”, making

“women of all communities feel more insecure and threatened”.

Civil servants earlier this year took the unprecedented step of writing an open letter to Modi, accusing the state of being “fully complicit” in the

“frenzy of hate filled destruction”

targeting not just minorities but the constitution itself, criticising Modi's silence on the violence as “deafening” and arguing that the law, instead of being an instrument for maintaining peace and harmony, had become the means by which minorities were being kept in a state of perpetual fear. They urged Modi to

“call for an end to the politics of hate that governments under your party's control are so assiduously practising.”

At best, Modi and his senior Ministers never condemn the violence; at worst, their rhetoric, through words on the public record, instigates and feeds it.

I understand that we often have to hold our nose and trade with those with whom we would rather not, but as we move forward with our trade and co-operation agreement with India, let us not forget our fellow citizens who were murdered there and have been denied justice and even the dignity of a burial—Shakeel Dawood and Saeed Dawood, the boys from Batley whose remains have never been returned, and Mohammed Aswat. Twenty years on, I urge my noble friend to meet the Dawood family and ask for the return of their relatives' remains. It is time to bring them home.

7.32 pm

Lord Davies of Stamford (Lab): My Lords, I endorse the very powerful arguments produced by a number of colleagues, such as the noble Lord, Lord Lang, in favour of our spending more money on defence and taking defence requirements in this country rather more seriously than we have in the past.

I have been transfixed over the last few weeks, as I imagine many others have, by the extraordinary courage and selfless self-sacrifice of the Ukrainians, who found themselves victims of an attack by Russia. It is a real David and Goliath story, which, so far, has had the right ending. But we must make sure that it continues to have the right ending. It is very important that Ukraine retains its independence and existing borders—though innocent, it has been made to suffer by having territory taken away from it—and that it continues to be a major force in the western world. As soon as possible, if it wants to, it should be allowed to become a member of the European Union and NATO. I greatly look forward to that happening.

[LORD DAVIES OF STAMFORD]

I think the Ukrainians would take it very much amiss if there were any attempt on the part of their western allies to delay their entry into those organisations, which they thoroughly deserve to be part of after conducting themselves as they have in the last few weeks. I hope it will be fine, but I am still concerned that people are talking about making special concessions to the Russians—not upsetting them too much or humiliating them and so forth. If they are humiliated, it is entirely their fault. No one asked them to invade Ukraine, so we should not have too much sympathy with that.

This has been a very good debate. We have managed to make it clear that all is not well in the defence of peace in the world. It is very important that we keep these things under very close review and continue to keep the Government alert to the need to pay attention and contribute properly to the cost of defence. If you do not have any defence, you invite attack and its consequences, with which we are all too familiar.

7.35 pm

Lord Burnett (LD): My Lords, I draw attention to my interests in the register and declare that I had the honour to serve in the Royal Marines. The threat from Russia is real, and there are threats of aggressive action against our allies in the Middle and Far East. There is all-party support for the actions we are taking with NATO to assist the brave people of Ukraine. The costs are considerable and justified, but they should come out of the reserves, not the defence budget.

I also put on record, like many others, my support for an increase in defence spending to at least 3% of GDP. There were reports in the *Times* on 6 May of a significant increase in defence expenditure to be announced this autumn. Can the Minister of State confirm these reports?

The Government must urgently start the programme to rebuild our amphibious fleet. The orders for the escort vessels must be placed without any further delay. Our reserves of weapons, ammunition, equipment and other logistics must be replenished. This is vital for our war-fighting capability. The United States keeps impressive reserves of logistics and has the capacity to deliver them. The United Kingdom and other European NATO countries rely heavily on the United States for defence support. We and other European NATO countries spend far less on defence than the United States in actual terms and as a percentage of GDP. Although there are other factors to be taken into account, we should prepare not only for change in our national contributions to defence but for other changes within NATO as a consequence of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

I welcome the steps that the Governments of Finland and Sweden are taking to join NATO. I hope that this will be completed in the very near future. Both countries have much to offer NATO in terms of know-how, personnel, equipment and capability, not least in Arctic warfare. The Royal Marines are the United Kingdom's Arctic and high north warfare specialists. Within the Royal Marines, this expertise is largely concentrated in two outstanding units: our Mountain Leaders and 45 Commando, based in Arbroath, both of which are frequently deployed overseas. I draw noble Lords'

attention to an excellent series on BBC2, shown at 8 pm on Sundays, called "Commando: Britain's Ocean Warriors".

Of course, our Royal Marine capability includes that on land as well as at or from the sea. Noble Lords will see at first hand the highest standards of our Royal Marine Mountain Leaders and marines going through Arctic warfare training. The Government should authorise an increase in the personnel numbers the Royal Marines are permitted to recruit, with no dilution of the highest standards demanded, to combat the Russian threat and show solidarity with the Scandinavian countries with which we have built such strong links over so many decades.

7.39 pm

Baroness Cox (CB): My Lords, the gracious Speech affirmed the United Kingdom's commitment to uphold democracy and to champion security around the world. Time allows me to raise only two related issues.

First, in Nigeria, Islamist terrorist attacks continue in northern and central states, with almost daily reports of killings, rape, abductions, mass forced displacement and land-grabs. The human rights organisation Inter-society reports that 4,400 Christians were killed within a nine-month period in 2021, in addition to the tens of thousands killed since 2009. Many others have disappeared, assumed dead, or have been taken into slavery. Thousands of students have been abducted from school, while hundreds of churches have been destroyed and entire communities overrun by jihadists. Many Muslims have also been killed. It is within this context that my small NGO, Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust, seeks to provide life-saving assistance, especially in the Middle Belt, where millions are displaced but where, I am sorry to say, UK government resources have been very inadequate.

I have personally witnessed the ruin of homes, farmland, food stores, churches, pastors' homes and an orphanage, all attacked by Islamist Fulani militia in the past seven months. I stood at the grave of an 80 year-old woman called Sarah, who miraculously survived an Islamist attack on her village but was so traumatised by what she saw that she died of a heart attack. In a neighbouring village, a 98 year-old woman was burned alive by Islamist Fulani militia. Before being thrown into her burning home, she was mocked by her killers, who said, "You look cold, Grandma. Come this way." I also heard detailed accounts of the deliberate targeting and slaughter of children, and people being hacked to death with machetes as they ran from rapid gunfire. Just last week, a young student, Deborah Samuel, was killed—beaten and burned in Sokoto by a mob falsely accusing her of blasphemy. I plead with Her Majesty's Government to do more to apply pressure to prevent the murderous attacks on innocent civilians and to provide desperately needed aid.

I turn briefly to the tragic situations in Armenia and the historic Armenian land of Nagorno-Karabakh. It was invaded by Azerbaijan in 2020, and civilians suffered daily military offensives and widespread destruction of civilian targets, including schools, religious sites and the maternity hospital in Stepanakert—I saw the evidence of this. These are war crimes, horribly reminiscent of what is happening in Ukraine. I witnessed

a very different Azerbaijan from that described by the noble Lord, Lord Bruce. Azerbaijan has repeatedly failed to keep the peace agreement, which requires the release of all prisoners of war. Many Armenians remain in captivity—Armenia has released all its Azerbaijani prisoners—with evidence of humiliating torture by Azeri captors. For example, I wept with one mother who had received pictures of her son's dismembered and decapitated body.

There are continuing reports of Azeri military offensives in Armenia itself, against Armenian villages in Syunik province, which I visited just last month. By megaphones and loudspeakers, villagers are ordered to leave their homes, while Azeri forces continue to accumulate military equipment and manpower in the region.

Serious concerns also remain over the fate of hundreds of Armenian Christian monuments and ancient cultural heritage sites, which are now under Azeri control, some of which have already been destroyed during the war or since—another war crime under international law.

In Baku there is a gruesome, grotesque victory park where they have a corridor of the helmets of scores of Armenian soldiers, and there are also grotesque mannequins of Armenian soldiers.

The United Kingdom's consistent failure to call Azerbaijan to account could be seen as complicity. There must be no impunity for the most serious international crimes. Perpetrators of atrocities must be held to account. I hope very much that the Government will no longer turn what seems to be a deaf ear to the suffering of the Armenian people in Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia itself, and of the people of Nigeria.

7.43 pm

Lord Udney-Lister (Con): My Lords, I rise to support the Motion for an humble Address, and I welcome the Government's commitment to a bold legislative programme which will set us back on a track that will allow us to move forward to unlocking the full potential of this country.

Russia is now on the back foot in its completely unjustified and heinous attack on the sovereignty of Ukraine, and history will remember kindly the role that Her Majesty's Government have played and continue to play in taking the early initiatives and mobilising global support for our Ukrainian allies in their hour of need.

In acknowledging that the first duty of a Government is to protect and safeguard the lives of their citizens, I am pleased that through the National Security Bill the Government have committed themselves to a complete overhaul of the espionage law, with tougher measures to tackle state-backed sabotage and foreign interference. I welcome that, as part of that Bill, the illicit acquisition for or disclosure to a foreign power of sensitive trade, commercial or economic information will be made an offence. Similarly, I have high hopes that the Bill will strengthen our democracy by disrupting disinformation and preventing foreign attacks against our electoral process.

There is a geopolitical crisis at play. To the east, China continues with its zero-Covid lockdowns, and across the globe the legacy of Covid continues to wreak havoc with our financial markets, the logistics

of trade and even the stability of some states. The pandemic and the war in Ukraine are just two examples which demonstrate that the international order of old, and its institutions, are crying out for reform. Therefore, I hope that, in moving forward with the legislative agenda, the Government will be both enabled and emboldened to assert some influence on the world stage and cause the much-needed reform of the United Nations, the World Trade Organization and NATO to accelerate with speed. The importance of NATO cannot be stressed enough, and we must work harder to encourage other members of the alliance to honour their obligations to this organisation.

I look forward to supporting the Government as they bring forward the "super seven" Brexit Bills. If recent events such as the vaccine rollout have taught us anything, it is that Britain thrives and leads when red tape and bureaucracy are eliminated. Through these Brexit Bills the Government will have an unparalleled opportunity to take every part of the United Kingdom forward to better times, to strengthen our union and to protect our cause of freedom around the world. However, before these Bills are given consideration, the Government must face up to and address the situation in Northern Ireland, even if this means triggering Article 16 of the Northern Ireland protocol in its entirety.

The United Kingdom must continue to capitalise on its strengths as a global trading nation, forging ambitious trade agreements with like-minded regions and nations that value innovation, ease of doing business, investment in skills and technology, and entrepreneurship. In commenting on this, I draw attention to my declared position as co-chair of the UAE-UK Business Council. To give one example, nearly 13,000 British companies are currently exporting their goods and services to the United Arab Emirates. They are attracted not only by the strength of commercial opportunity there and the business-friendly environment, but because the country has free trade agreements in place with numerous other countries, most recently India and Israel. That means that the UAE can also be a gateway for British exporters to these other markets, and that is why it is essential that we start getting the same kind of free trade agreements in place.

Our reputation as an attractive place to do business has also encouraged large flows of investment into the UK, which has significant social benefit. Again with reference to the United Arab Emirates, Mubadala Investment Company last year invested £800 million in our national digital infrastructure, which will ensure that people in all parts of the UK will have access to fast and reliable internet services, ultimately creating 16,000 jobs down the supply chain.

There are many other parts of Her Majesty's gracious Speech that I would like to have addressed but I fear that time is against me, so I conclude by welcoming the programme with my full support.

7.49 pm

Lord Houghton of Richmond (CB): The gracious Speech indicated that the Government will "lead the way in championing security around the world ... work closely with international partners to maintain a united NATO and address the most pressing global security challenges"

[LORD HOUGHTON OF RICHMOND]

and continue to invest in our gallant Armed Forces. I would observe that even before the gracious Speech, this Government had already, in the context of Ukraine, rediscovered the wider utility of the military instrument of national power. Indeed, I would go so far as to say that defence and security have suddenly become the major currency of foreign policy. It seems of late, for example, that the dominant headline resulting from most international ministerial visits—to India, Norway, Japan, Australia and Sweden—is about the strengthening of defence and security relationships. Given the state of the world, this is all to be welcomed and we should take great pride in the quality and capability of our Armed Forces being a positive discriminator of our status as a nation on the global stage.

What about the future investment in our Armed Forces to meet and continue this policy ambition? The scale and nature of the Government's intentions in this respect are far less clear, so I offer some thoughts on this, and I do so in the context of the debates I have listened to in this Chamber over the past few years. It seems to me that in those debates there is always far too much focus on what you might call the input metrics of military capabilities: how many soldiers have we got, how many main battle tanks, how many fighter squadrons? Indeed, a concern over how many ships we have has almost become an institutionalised reflex of this House. I would never underestimate the importance of numbers and I share many of those concerns, but I would always put allies as a far more important factor in assessing military capability choices. Given the security challenges of the age, collective security is the only way to achieve global stability, and the only way to achieve the scale of the capability truly required. I would, in the design of our Armed Forces capability, always place a premium on those capabilities which help to secure allies and alliances.

In this respect, the United Kingdom, as it seeks to continue to enjoy the benefits of global influence, has some unique advantages. We are a nuclear power; we are the leading NATO nation in Europe; we pioneer smaller groupings of like-minded nations, such as the Joint Expeditionary Force; and we enjoy the intelligence benefits of the Five Eyes, the global security connections of AUKUS and FPDA and defence relationships throughout the Middle East. As has been demonstrated in no small part by Ukraine, we also know how to train and assist partner nations, and to do so in ways that are professional, respectful and not demeaning.

The qualities that bring about these defence relationships are not naturally gifted. They are the result of investment, but the investments are not primarily in exquisite platforms. Rather, they are in the human quality of our people, our training, our organisational competence, our command and control systems and our intelligence capability.

It is no accident that the quality of Ukraine's performance has been more to do with intelligence superiority, human motivation and professional competence than with numbers or firepower alone. But there is another lesson from the war in Ukraine, which relates to a different but equally critical alliance. It is the one that we as a nation must invest more in. It is the relationship that we have with our defence

industry and our defence supply chain. In the absence of conventional warfare over the past couple of decades, we have taken risks with weapon stockpiles, with obsolescence and with spare parts. We call this the hollowing out of defence capability and most nations indulge in it. It is one way of maintaining the illusion of capability without having to afford the reality. As Ukraine is proving, however, to an extent on all sides of the fight, conventional war involves stunning rates of consumption and reveals levels of peacetime stockpiles which simply cannot keep pace with demand. We desperately need to invest in what we call war-fighting resilience.

I hope that when we in this House come to debate our own national balance of investment in future defence capability—in the context of more money, I hope—we do not simply revert to an internal competition based on the input metrics of platform numbers, but rather something that understands alliances and properly weighs the investments needed in human quality, superior intelligence, command and control and the resilience and sustainability that rest on adequate stockpiles, robust supply chains and, let us face it, kit that works. If we get this right, we will continue to enjoy the respect and loyalty of allies and stand a far better chance of collectively delivering the stability that we all desire.

7.55 pm

Lord Hussain (LD): My Lords, as we speak, the people of Ukraine are facing one of the worst times in their history. The Russian invasion of this sovereign country is completely illegal, brutal and uncalled for. The indiscriminate bombardment of Ukrainian towns, cities and villages is causing mass destruction and the loss and injury of innocent people, forcing migration and displacement on a large scale. The people of Ukraine deserve every bit of assistance they can get, and we will continue to support the Government as they give them all possible humanitarian and diplomatic support as well as military equipment and training.

I have some understanding of the suffering, pain and physical and mental trauma that the people of Ukraine are going through, as someone born in a conflict zone called Kashmir, a state divided between India and Pakistan, which is waiting for a UN-promised plebiscite to determine its destiny. Over the years, its people have witnessed the loss of more than 100,000 lives, the continued violation of human rights, divided families, three full-scale wars and sporadic border skirmishes. Most of the human rights abuses recorded are in Indian-administered Kashmir. According to reputable human rights organisations such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the UN Commission for Human Rights, the Indian army is involved in raids and crackdowns in residential homes, illegal arrests and detentions, torture, rape and murder, with complete impunity under the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act. Thousands of young people have been partially or completely blinded by targeted pellet gunfire from the Indian armed forces. Thousands of women are known as "half widows" because their husbands have gone missing and, to add to their agony, 3,000 unmarked mass graves have been discovered. Only an independent investigation can tell whether any of their husbands or relatives are among those buried in these

mass graves. Prominent political leaders such as Shabir Shah, Asiya Andrabi and Yasin Malik have been incarcerated for a very long time. Their families fear for their lives.

Affiliated to the United Nations, the Jammu and Kashmir Council of Human Rights regularly reports to the UN about ongoing human suffering in Kashmir. Genocide Watch has declared that there is a genocide in the making in India, including in Kashmir. In recent years, the Indian Government have taken even more draconian steps to oppress the Kashmiri people, by withdrawing Articles 370 and 35A of the Indian constitution, dismissing the regional government, declaring the state a union territory, arresting tens of thousands of people and cutting off all communication links, including the internet service. Although some of these extraordinary measures have been partly restored, it is far from being a free, open and democratic region.

What I have described is the tip of the iceberg. The UN Commission for Human Rights has made repeated requests for free access to investigate these reports of human rights abuses, but those requests have never been respected by the Indian Government. This is not the first time I have raised the plight of the Kashmiri people. I am sure the Minister is aware of the situation. Will the Minister to address the following points individually in his response? I understand he may not have time to answer them all in detail today, but I will be equally happy if he writes to me with full answers and places a copy in the Library.

First, does the Minister consider that the human rights of the Kashmiri people are equal to the rights of Ukrainians and other countries' communities? Secondly, if yes, why is India missing from the FCDO's annual list of countries giving rise to human rights concerns? Thirdly, the UK is a permanent member of the UN Security Council, so what are the British Government proposing to do to persuade the UN to investigate the human rights abuses, particularly the unmarked mass graves, in Kashmir? Fourthly, I understand that the Minister is visiting India in the near future. Will he discuss these matters with his counterpart and provide feedback to Parliament? Finally, if India continues to violate international human rights laws, will the Government consider trade sanctions against that country?

8 pm

Lord Trees (CB): My Lords, I want to make some points about defence, international trade and international development. The defence I shall speak about is the defence against pathogens and the challenges to biosecurity inherent in international trade and globalisation. Biosecurity is something we have too often taken for granted, probably because of our island status, but no man is an island in the age of globalisation, nor, indeed, is any animal or plant, and it is animal and plant health security I shall refer to particularly.

The latest and most potent challenge to our livestock health is African swine fever, which has killed millions of pigs in China, is spreading remorselessly west through continental Europe and now commonly occurs in Romania and Poland. Yet, very recently, Her Majesty's Government have for the fourth time delayed introducing important border checks on animal products from the EU after Brexit, checks which strengthen our biosecurity

safeguards against diseases such as African swine fever. Will the Minister confirm when such checks will be introduced?

What about plants and trees? Although I am a vet, your Lordships may not be surprised to learn that I am also interested in the health of trees. We have huge targets for tree planting to mitigate climate change. The Climate Change Committee advocates planting 90 million to 120 million trees a year until 2050. That is an excellent but very challenging aspiration; but where, I ask, are the saplings coming from? Over the past 30 years, more than 20 imported tree pathogens and pests have devastated the UK's native woodland, particularly our ash and oak trees. It is estimated that Ash dieback alone will cost the UK £15 billion in consequential effects.

All our efforts to reforest could fail in the face of disease unless we can completely avoid the import of tree pathogens. The best way to do that, I suggest, is to grow our own saplings. The Minister may not be able to answer this, but do we have the nursery capacity in the UK to provide all the saplings we need, and what are the Government doing to ensure that? Biosecurity is like insurance: it has a recurrent cost, and the benefits are not immediately noticeable until a catastrophic event occurs. Let us be wise before the event, not after it.

On trade and animal welfare, we must guard against importing products produced to lower animal welfare standards. That is not simply protectionism against what would be an unfair playing field but is about maintaining and applying our ethical standards globally. We will have time, I hope, to consider that elsewhere when we debate the Australia deal under CRaG. Suffice it to say that there are some concerns with the Australia deal, particularly if it is a template for many other subsequent deals.

Concern about welfare also extends to environmental standards. As your Lordships will be aware, the metric of net zero does not include emissions from imported products. It would be easy for us to try to meet net zero by exporting emissions. Take beef, for example. In the UK, we produce it on largely grass-based systems, on land ill-suited for crops, yet our greenhouse gas emissions per kilogram of beef are half the global average. However, we risk destroying that industry at a time when, whether you like it or not, global demand for meat is set to rise.

The Government's recently published international development strategy has considerable implications for the control of tropical diseases. Time forbids me discussing this further, but I note that the Government remain committed to a return to spending 0.7% of GNI on official development assistance. When will the Government next review this situation? The UK has a proud history of research into and collaborative support for the control of tropical diseases. Apart from the fact that supporting health improvement in the most disadvantaged countries in the world is a humane thing to do, data show that it is one of the most cost-effective forms of aid. At a time when mass migration and global pandemics are two of the most serious global challenges, it is surely in our own interests to address global health inequalities, which are a major impediment to social and economic development in low and middle-income countries.

8.06 pm

The Earl of Dundee (Con): My Lords, on foreign affairs and how we might now best meet new challenges, a common theme runs through three issues: a well-focused yet adjusted defence strategy; a robust encouragement of improved educational opportunities worldwide; and a proactive international policy to achieve the better treatment of refugees and migrants.

Regarding a common factor between these issues and aspirations, I am glad that this debate will be replied to by my noble friend Lord Ahmad, for he is the Minister responsible for the United Kingdom's continuing membership of the 46-state human rights affiliation of the Council of Europe, in which institution and in whose efficacy I, along with a great many of your Lordships, share a great deal of respect and confidence. I also count myself fortunate to be a member of its Parliament and the current chairman of its Committee on Culture and Education.

On how we may see fit to adjust our defence strategy, not least since Russia's recent attack on Ukraine, no doubt there are two elements that might otherwise appear to be inconsistent with one another, yet, by co-existing together at the moment, are instead particularly relevant. The first is the hard power of strengthening our own capability—to which need my noble friend Lord Lang, among others, ably referred—and strengthening the capability of NATO. Here, the Prime Minister should be much commended for his present efforts.

Secondly, as the noble Baroness, Lady Suttie, emphasised, there is the soft power of ways and means to assist democratic civil society in Russia, as well as in certain other states where their people are subjected to despotic rule. Since its formation in 1949, the Council of Europe has demonstrated much expertise in this context, successfully promoting civic involvement, local democracy, the rule of law and human rights.

Last week, in Strasbourg, President Macron called for an increase in multilateral co-operation among the free nations of Europe beyond the EU—or among those 19 nations additional to the 27 of the EU. That means strengthening the Council of Europe, to which these additional non-EU states also belong. Does my noble friend the Minister agree that now is the time to take action through the Council of Europe to support democratic civil society in Russia and in other parts of Europe? If so, is he as well in favour of joining our other 45 colleague states in contributing our own national funds in order to compensate for those that have been lost, now that Russia is no longer in the Council of Europe?

During the United Kingdom's recent G7 presidency, our Government correctly stressed the importance of enhancing education opportunities for building more stable and prosperous societies worldwide, including by using digital technology and developing online learning structures. What plans do the Government have to follow up this global education initiative that the United Kingdom has launched, and within what timetable? To what extent will the Government make use of existing successful Council of Europe interactive online education programmes such as OCEAN? Immediately now, how far can the design of such programmes also facilitate our present task of providing education here for Ukrainian refugee children?

Like many other countries in Europe, the UK has shown outstanding humanitarian support for people fleeing the Russian war in Ukraine. For his current work, I know your Lordships will follow me in paying tribute to my noble friend Lord Harrington, the recently appointed Minister for Refugees. Positive developments include the integration of Ukrainians into our UK labour market, where workforce shortages exist.

At the same time, the UK is criticised for having concluded an agreement with Rwanda to cope with the significant increase in boat arrivals across the Channel. Will the Minister consider that greater mutual benefit could arise from organising and supporting UK employers, commerce and industry to recruit, in a targeted manner, foreign migrants and refugees before they embark on irregular routes to the UK in the first place? Does he also concur that European political co-operation should be strengthened between the UK and other member states of the Council of Europe in migration matters to compensate for the non-applicability of the EU Dublin regulation to the UK—for instance, by concluding return and readmission agreements with France and other Council of Europe member states?

In summary, in the areas of defence, education and migration policy, both working in its own right and as a prominent member of the Council of Europe, the UK, as already outlined, is in a position to make an enormous contribution towards balance and well-being within the international community. We must now act accordingly.

8.11 pm

Lord McCrea of Magherafelt and Cookstown (DUP): My Lords, I shall base my remarks on the issue of trade and investment, with specific reference to Northern Ireland.

In the executive summary accompanying the gracious Speech, Her Majesty's Government set out their intention to grow the economy and address the cost of living, and in the present circumstances that will be very challenging. The summary states:

“We are using our Brexit freedoms to deliver an independent trade policy and strengthen our links with the world's largest and fastest-growing economies”,

but in relation to Northern Ireland trade I wonder what Brexit freedoms the Government are talking about. The summary continues:

“The Government recognises that this is ... a worrying time for businesses given the global situation. Energy prices have increased globally, while businesses are navigating supply chain issues as the world economy recovers from the pandemic and adapts to the shock of war in Ukraine.”

While businesses in other regions of the UK endeavour to strengthen links with the world's largest and fastest-growing economies, we in Northern Ireland are grappling with a protocol that is destroying business links between Great Britain and Northern Ireland. This is happening in spite of the Government's pledge to protect and strengthen the UK internal market as part of the *New Decade, New Approach* agreement, which states:

“The Government is absolutely committed to ensuring that Northern Ireland remains an integral part of the UK internal market ... we will legislate to guarantee unfettered access for Northern Ireland's businesses to the whole of the UK internal market”.

However, the protocol conflicts with the articles of union. Article 6 places citizens in all regions on an equal footing in terms of trade and prohibits barriers to trade within the United Kingdom. A single unified internal market is therefore a key block in the constitutional foundation of the UK, yet the High Court has found that the protocol has subjugated Article 6 of the articles of union, and the constitutional position of Northern Ireland and the essential state functions of the UK have been altered without the express will of the people of Northern Ireland, in clear violation of the Belfast and St Andrews agreements. We were assured that the principles of consent and mutual respect were at the heart of the Belfast agreement, but we know that under the protocol these principles have been binned. I welcome the Government having belatedly acknowledged that the protocol has been built on sinking sand, and that not one unionist party or representative supports its enforced implementation.

No one can deny that the protocol is harming the health, wealth and prosperity of our people. The fact remains that most of the trade in Northern Ireland is to and from our largest market—namely, Great Britain. Products coming into the Province have to be inspected at EU border posts. Many firms in GB will no longer supply to Northern Ireland, which reduces choice for our people, adds unnecessary costs to industry and increases prices to a community that has the lowest disposable income across the UK, thereby increasing poverty and deprivation at a time when the cost of living is significantly rising.

Indeed, some major trading companies claim that a lorry load of goods going into stores in Northern Ireland takes 20 people eight hours to load, because of the paperwork involved. Had that same lorry gone directly to the Republic of Ireland from Great Britain, it could have been loaded in 20% of the time. While only 0.2% of goods going into the European Union flow through Northern Ireland ports, these account for 20% of the total number of EU border checks. This is an absolute disgrace. The protocol itself provides for unilateral action, yet its application leads to serious economic, societal and environmental difficulties or the diversion of trade. No reasonable person can deny that this is happening.

Members of those parties that support the continuation of this situation ought to hang their heads in shame. Some take their stance because of their undying loyalty and allegiance to the European Union, irrespective of the democratic vote across the United Kingdom to leave it, while others do so because of an anti-unionist stance promoting an all-Ireland economy to the detriment of the prosperity of the people and aimed at creating a united Ireland by stealth. The protocol has been the vehicle to energise a significant displacement of trade from GB to the Republic of Ireland, thereby gaining the Republic a competitive advantage in its protocol operation. That is not by chance, but by design.

Our Province deserves better. My party is determined to ensure that, if devolution is to be restored and is to function for all, it must be on the basis of mutual respect and consent. In the past, unionist concerns have been ignored. Northern Ireland deserves to be a respected and worthy part of this United Kingdom, enjoying the prosperity enjoyed by all other regions of that union.

8.17 pm

Baroness Fall (Con): My Lords, we gather today against the bleak backdrop of a horrifying war in Europe—a war that has already claimed the lives and livelihoods of so many Ukrainians, shown us the extraordinary dignity and fight of their people, and reminded us of the values we hold dear yet often take for granted and of the astonishing futility and cruelty of war.

Only a year ago, the focus of this debate would have been elsewhere—on China, Covid, climate and Afghanistan. The decision to withdraw from Afghanistan and the way in which it was done, with little care for or loyalty to the people who put their trust in us over 20 years, was both shaming and strategically ill advised. The message it sent—that the West was weak, divided and not worthy of trust—has been disastrous. We are paying that price now in Ukraine. If ever there was a lesson on the importance of setting an example by our actions, this was one. If we wish to stand for western values, those values must be upheld by us, including in standing by our international obligations.

I commend the Government's leadership, commitment and compassion during the war in Ukraine. Although, at times, our good intentions have not met with the reality on the ground, the generosity of the British people and commitment of our country have never wavered.

What of our response? For the most part, we in the West have had to meet Russian military might with economic warfare in the form of sanctions, regulation and presiding over a defiant private sector, which has voted with its feet. This has weaponised our economies, politicised our businesses and created a mismatch in timeframes.

On timing, we have the immediate, kinetic war: we watch from the sidelines but we help with equipment and humanitarian aid. Then the sanctions piece takes time to bite. Our hope is that, as it does, we draw Putin away from the battlefield to the negotiating table. The unity and determination of the West in this endeavour should give us great hope and pride. I hope it lasts.

In the longer term, the broader geopolitical landscape looks altered. The emergence or strengthening of the Russia-China axis is unsettling and a reminder that there was a far from unified global response of outrage and condemnation on Ukraine, outside Europe and the USA.

Then there is the role of the private sector. Its swift divestment from Russia is important and added heft to our government-controlled sanctions. In the longer term, we must think about business, its role in foreign policy and how it could be a partnership for good. Then there is the question of who pays for all this. We know the answer: the people of our country are paying the price for peace, especially the poorest in our society whose sacrifices are sure to bite as winter comes. We should brace ourselves and support them in this important joint endeavour. This war does not feel as if it is going to end any time soon. There is a hardening of positions by all the major players and uncertainty as we look ahead. Nuclear threats have become an uncomfortable reality, and any Government would be foolish not to be mindful that a cornered and failing Putin is also eyeing up his vast arsenal.

[BARONESS FALL]

While our focus is on Ukraine, there is much else at stake. The growing mistrust between China, the US and the West has become one of the defining features of the 21st century. We have to face complex issues in how we respond to a global power which we wish to trade with while being mindful of national security, sovereignty and human rights concerns. We imagine, wrongly, that Covid is behind us, but the undeveloped world remains largely unvaccinated, making us all vulnerable to further mutations and lockdowns. We seem unable to put together the global political will to solve a problem that will surely rebound, and all this against a global economic outlook which is bleak and faltering under the weight of the cost of living crisis exacerbated by the energy crisis and rising inflation. We should also be mindful about the biggest problem on which we need to focus at this time, which is the climate. So let us not forget those who take up the challenge of this difficult time, especially the poorest among us, and let us also remember that as we fly the flag for western democracies we must maintain the highest standards of those values in our own country.

8.22 pm

Viscount Stansgate (Lab): My Lords, this is my first Queen's Speech debate. The whole House was sorry, as was the Monarch herself, that she was not able to deliver it in person, so I attended a state occasion made possible for the first time by the Regency Act 1937—and I do not suppose it will be the last. I pay tribute to my predecessor, the noble Baroness, Lady Fall. She is a person of great experience at the highest levels of government and there were many interesting points in her speech.

However, before I begin properly, I want to declare an interest in the 22nd century. I hope the House will forgive me for saying this, but yesterday I became a grandfather for the first time.

Noble Lords: Hear, hear!

Viscount Stansgate (Lab): And, like any grandparent, I find myself immediately looking ahead at the lifetime of someone born yesterday—literally—who will expect to live into the 22nd century, and I hope very much that he will grow up to live in a stable and secure world, although that is far from certain.

We all know that there is one essential difference between the debate today and the debate that was held last year, and that is the invasion by Russia of Ukraine, which is the President of Russia's biggest strategic mistake. The war that has followed decisively changes the nature of today's debate and the way in which we need to rethink our foreign, defence and national security policy to ensure this country's safety as well as that of western Europe.

In the few minutes at my disposal, I want to emphasise one key consequence of this shift in the kaleidoscope. We must examine as a priority the nature of the relationship between the United Kingdom's science and technology needs on the one hand, and foreign and national security policy on the other. We are entering an era where the needs of science and technology and of our economy are increasingly going to determine the strategic outlines of our foreign policy. I am not

talking about one obvious facet of the current war, which is that it is being fought with increasingly sophisticated weapons made possible by science and technology. Nor am I talking about the equally obvious use and counteruse of cyberwarfare, which is clearly vital to success on today's battlefield. I want to draw the House's attention to a different way of looking at our strategic national security.

We need to have regard to how we secure and safeguard the strategically important resources we need, without which we cannot function as an economy or as a society. This key consideration needs to lie at the heart of our international aims. When I say "strategically important resources", I am thinking of things such as the strategic metals, including the so-called rare earth metals, on which we now rely for so much. The climate change debate reminds us that we all live on a finite planet, but the resources at our disposal are also finite. One real problem is that some of the resources we need for our security and economy are not by any means under our control. Access to strategic materials must be a major consideration in our foreign and security strategy and policy. Our international relationships and alliances need to have regard to that fact.

More than a decade ago, the Science and Technology Committee in another place produced a well-researched report which highlighted strategically important metals to the UK. It also emphasised the need for a stable supply of these metals, as well as nonmetals such as helium, as we move to a low-carbon economy. I believe that the Government would do well to revisit that report, because it has a lot in it that we still need to learn. The increasing global demand for strategic metals from the West, from China and from emerging economies will not just be a factor in their price; it will be a crucial factor in their availability. Future Governments will need to be alive to the need for sufficient supplies and stockpiling is an expensive option.

We must also consider the effects of conflict and war on access to these materials. After all, we are living through a war which has had a profound effect on access to grain. In the United States, the Dodd-Frank Act requires companies to produce a detailed report on conflict materials that they use; perhaps the Government should introduce similar legislation here.

As part of our national security strategy, we are also going to have to pay more attention to the recycling of strategic materials. Everyone in this Chamber has got a phone—heaven knows, we hear them go off often enough—and in these phones, as your Lordships may know, rare earth metals are used to produce the colours on our screens. Indium tin oxide is used in the transparent film to enable us to use them as touchscreens—and these are things that we are going to need in the future.

Last year, the House voted to set up ARIA, which is a symbol of our science ambition, and we are strengthening the UK Space Agency. But, like it or not, we need to hugely expand our R&D capacity and the current target of 2.4% is not enough. Our science budget will prove as important a basis of our future national security as money spent on military hardware. Arguments that people might have thought were overtaken by a globalised world in the last 30 years or more

now need to be completely rethought and reframed. Understanding and adapting to the new landscape must be a critical role for the Executive and the legislature in this new Session, bearing in mind that the balance is, I hope, tilted towards the legislature.

8.28 pm

Viscount Eccles (Con): My Lords, I want to make a short expedition into the Commonwealth, not much mentioned in these debates, and in particular into three of its late joiners, all of them sub-Saharan nations. That connects me with the speech of the noble Viscount, Lord Stansgate, because a lot of those important minerals are to be found in sub-Saharan Africa.

I sometimes wonder how serious the Government's interest in sub-Saharan Africa is. When DfID was brought back under the Foreign Office, I thought that we might hear some quite exciting new ideas about how to proceed, but I fear that the recent announcement, which is pretty opaque, does not make the blood run. As an old employee of CDC, I much regret the throwing of an excellent brand name into the wastepaper basket for an anonymous kind of name, which misrepresents what CDC has always done. It invested not in British interests but primarily in the interests of the country where it was working, and it always tried to make that investment work in such a way that it became locally owned as soon as possible.

In sub-Saharan Africa, on the three late entrants that I would like to talk about briefly—Rwanda, Cameroon and Mozambique—the challenges are very complicated. If there was ever a place looking for some form of levelling up, it must be those three countries. They are all poor, they all need economic development and, particularly Cameroon and Mozambique, they have a lot of violence going on within their borders. They all need institutions that can deal with the problems that arise in a nation state, and none of them has reached a level of income and public expenditure to enable it to create those institutions.

Rwanda has a population of 13 million, with a tangled German and Belgian colonial background. It is living on subsistence agriculture, with a median age of 20 and a GDP about equal to that of Brighton and Hove. Cameroon became a member of the Commonwealth in 1995, also with a tangled German, French and English background. The French/English background has not worked; there is a stand-off between the culture and languages of France and England. There is a secessionist movement, which will not work, and there are all sorts of problems. However, like Rwanda, it is a member of the Commonwealth.

Mozambique also became a member in 1995. It has a Portuguese background, and 20% of the population speak Portuguese, which is the official language of Mozambique. However, Portuguese colonialism was very much centred on the coast, and the rest of Mozambique has 20 indigenous languages. The problems in the north, in Cabo Delgado, where there is an Islamic majority, are extremely severe.

My plea is to ask the Government whether they intend to have declared policies towards these three members of the Commonwealth which we can understand, or do they think that things are really too

difficult and that the British public are not sufficiently interested for the Government to become interested themselves?

8.33 pm

Lord Marlesford (Con): My Lords, I declare an interest as the co-chair of the APPG for Egypt. I shall focus on two of the greatest threats to the world's peace and security: Putin's Russia and political Islam. Putin has hijacked Russia and her church. Political Islam, spearheaded by the Islamic State, has hijacked the noble religion of Islam. The link is that both of them reflect the politics of fascism: authoritarian rule with violence, military aggression against nation states, ethnic cleansing and even genocide, and ultranationalism. Both use the techniques of that poisonous creed.

I refer briefly to Putin only to suggest that he could share the fate of three of his most notorious predecessors as head of the Russian secret police. All three were feared, all of them were shot: Yagoda in March 1938, Yezhov in February 1940 and Beria in December 1953. They were Soviet communists, as was Putin. Now I can see that little man wearing a red armband with a black Z on a white circle. Ukrainian courage and world opinion will contain Putin. I have only one suggestion: NATO should make it clear that nuclear weapons, whether tactical or strategic, flourished by Putin are out of bounds. First use would bring a terminal response.

I turn to IS. After the setback in Syria and Iraq, IS is now making strides in Africa, as we heard from my friend, the noble Baroness, Lady Cox, in chilling terms. Paradoxically, IS is battling the Taliban in Afghanistan. The Taliban is basically a nationalist belief, mainly Pashtun. IS does not accept or recognise national boundaries; it wants a world caliphate. Perhaps there is an analogy with Stalin and Trotsky: socialism in one country versus world revolution.

Last year I suggested that one approach to the threat of political Islam is to recognise that the role of religious leaders is to guide but not to rule. I quoted Dr Shawki Allam, the Grand Mufti of Egypt, who had declared that terrorism was

"in complete violation of Islamic law and norms, and the perpetrators are no way representative of the Muslim people or the religion of Islam."—[*Official Report*, 19/5/21; col. 638.]

Dr Allam is now the secretary-general of Fatwa Authorities Worldwide, a group of 136 grand muftis who collectively represent the world of Sunni Islam. Dr Allam is here this week visiting Britain at the invitation of the APPG run by my honourable friend Jonathan Lord, the Member for Woking. The Grand Mufti spoke at a meeting of Members of both Houses on Monday, when he warned us that terrorism and extremism are a scourge that is destroying the world. Yesterday, he met my noble friend the Minister who is going to answer this debate. Tomorrow, he is due to debate in the Oxford Union. He was due to visit Birmingham today, but that is a seat of power of the Muslim Brotherhood and a political front for Islamist action. I was appalled to learn that, on the insistence of the Egyptian embassy, this visit was cancelled as being too dangerous.

I end by saying that I really wonder whether the time has not come to have a grand mufti for Britain, who would be able to represent the decent and moderate—

Baroness Bloomfield of Hinton Waldrist (Con): I am sorry, my Lords, but there is an advisory speaking time of five minutes and the noble Lord, Lord Marlesford, is well over.

8.39 pm

Lord German (LD): My Lords, I shall address my remarks to the issue of the development assistance programme. Earlier, my noble friend Lady Northover talked about taking the long view. Taking the long view is important, because then you can reach your objectives. I want to make the case for targeting resource at education and raising the official development budget allocation for education to 15%.

As we wait for the restoration of the 0.7% of GNI for official development assistance, we have to recognise that the budget is being squeezed even more than just the reduction to 0.5%, as our GNI shrinks in real terms. This will make setting priorities difficult. Globally, even before the pandemic, 258 million children received no schooling at all, and hundreds of millions more were in school but experiencing conditions that prevented their learning. Education is every child's right. Education has the power to protect and transform lives, and it is the foundation for sustainable development.

Last year, as G7 president, the UK hosted the replenishment of the Global Partnership for Education and made improving access in low and middle-income countries a priority, but as we emerge from the global pandemic, this laudable priority is under threat because of the huge shortage of qualified teachers. Globally, there are too few qualified teachers, and this is one of the greatest barriers to education in poor countries. UNESCO estimates that 69 million new qualified teachers must be recruited by 2030 to enable all children to have a decent education. In countries such as Djibouti, Malawi, Namibia, Senegal, South Sudan, Togo and Zimbabwe, 95% or more of the national education budget is spent on teachers' salaries—yet teacher pay is low, and often below the poverty line.

In Zimbabwe, for example, teachers' salaries are about \$335 per month—less than the amount needed to buy food and other items to support a family of five. One deeply concerned teacher from Zimbabwe said:

"teachers feel as if they have become beggars. Morale is at its lowest. ... We go to work in tattered clothes, and we are living in squalid conditions."

Recruiting more teachers at these pay levels is going to be a very difficult task indeed.

Some 38% of primary school teachers and 55% of secondary school teachers in sub-Saharan Africa are untrained, and many are teaching classes of 70 and more pupils. I have seen two classes of 70 sitting back to back, with a teacher facing them and then moving round to the other side of the room to continue teaching the other half of a class of well over 140 children. If you believe that education is the way out of poverty and the foundation for sustainable development, providing qualified teachers must be a top priority. We have to help build a better future, and that starts with education delivered by a qualified teacher.

I would be grateful if the Minister in replying could tell the House what assessment the Government have made of the global teacher shortage, so that the global

targets they set in 2021 as president of the G7 will be met. One of these targets is to get 40 million more girls into education—and that alone would mean recruiting and training 1.8 million more teachers. Do the Government recognise that teachers are one of the greatest levers in delivering global education ambitions? If so, does the Minister agree that to help tackle the teacher shortage, there is a need for an overarching UK government policy on recruiting more teachers globally? Improving and providing decent education is the route out of poverty and the pathway to prosperity.

8.44 pm

Lord Sentamu (CB): My Lords, my contribution to this debate on the Queen's Speech is on foreign affairs and defence. I declare an interest as chair of Christian Aid. Why am I speaking about foreign affairs to begin with? Given Her Majesty's Government's policy paper, published on Monday, on their strategy and new approach to international development, which I welcome, I could not but comment on what is close to my heart.

The House of Commons International Development Select Committee published a report earlier this year on Pakistan which showed that:

"Between 2015 and 2019 Pakistan was the largest single recipient of direct UK government-to-government bilateral aid. However, since then, overall UK aid has been cut ... and aid to Pakistan has been reduced dramatically. After experiencing the largest cut in UK aid of any single country, Pakistan fell to seventh in the table of UK recipients, with an annual budget of just less than £200 million."

The committee's report presses the Government to focus their spending in Pakistan on supporting

"marginalised groups, including women & girls"—

one of the priority areas of the new international development strategy—

"and religious minorities",

and to

"prioritise delivering programmes with local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) ... because aid programmes are more effective when they are 'owned' by the local population".

This is the experience of Christian Aid.

On the broader foreign policy agenda, I ask whether the conflicts in Ukraine will see the Government revisit the integrated defence and security review that came out last year, which signalled a pivot to the Indo-Pacific? The absence in that strategy of any framework for defence and security co-operation with Europe now looks short-sighted given the actual developments in Ukraine.

On the wider defence agenda, I welcome the moves the Government are taking to reassure Baltic countries, but this begs the question of whether, long-term, the Government will be looking to station large numbers of troops on eastern fronts or whether they intend to have a token presence they can strengthen at short notice. This decision could have long-term implications for members of the Armed Forces and their families.

Another thorny reality which Her Majesty's Government must take seriously is the UK campaign Stop Killer Robots, which is a technology-concerned working group. The life cycle of lethal autonomous weapon systems raises outstanding technological concerns. Nearly 70 nations have joined a call for a combination

of both prohibition and regulation in the form of a legally binding instrument. Will Her Majesty's Government engage in working towards the establishment of a legally binding international treaty which could ensure that meaningful human control is retained over the use of such systems and prohibit the development, production, transfer and use of lethal autonomous weapon systems—LAWS—or, as they are also called, “killer robots”? The call for regulation is meant to safeguard the use of scientific knowledge, rather than limit scientific advancement in this area. The Government, in a 2020 paper, *UK Commentary on the Operationalisation of the Laws Guiding Principles*, reiterated their earlier 2018 submission in which the life cycle of lethal weapon systems was set out, concluding that human control is paramount.

Lethal autonomous weapons threaten to become the third revolution in warfare. Once developed, they will permit armed conflicts to be fought at a scale greater than ever and, at times, faster than humans can comprehend. These can be weapons of terror, weapons that despots and terrorists can use against innocent populations, and weapons hacked to be harnessed in undesirable ways. Once this Pandora's box is opened, it will be hard to close.

I found the article by Yusef of the Stop Killer Robots Coalition illuminatingly disturbing. Will the UK Government please engage with that coalition and, for all our sakes, and for the children yet unborn, come to Parliament and restore what the locusts have devoured from the international aid budget? To err is human, to forgive divine.

8.50 pm

Lord Hannan of Kingsclere (Con): My Lords, what a pleasure it is to follow the noble and right reverend Lord, Lord Sentamu, and his extraordinary combination of passion and knowledge.

I have so far not raised the subject of the European Union in this place. You know how it is: we get typecast, do we not, and pigeonholed? You make 12 speeches on something else and then the one time you mention the B word, everyone says, “Oh, he's on his hobby-horse; he only ever talks about one thing.” This is my 81st spoken contribution and I have not yet mentioned the B word. I say “the B word”—I think that I have spoken about broadcasting, Botox and the BBC, but I am, for the first time this evening, going to mention Brexit, in the context of how the debate was introduced by my noble friend Lord Grimstone and then picked up by the noble Lord, Lord Ricketts, and others; that context being the necessity of unity in the face of international aggression.

I agree very much that we need a united West at the moment, but perhaps not in the way that several dozen other noble Lords who have raised this point intend. It is certainly the case that we need a united front. The West has shown itself to be very geographically limited. The Governments who have imposed any kind of sanctions on Putin's regime represent perhaps 20%, if that, of the world's population. A lot of countries that you would have thought would have self-identified as democracies and taken that seriously—India, Israel, Indonesia—have tended rather to sit this out.

However, I have to say that, when we come to the issue that is supposedly dividing the West—the response to unilateral action over the Northern Ireland protocol—I detect a real asymmetry and imbalance in how British Ministers speak and how their counterparts in the European Union address the issue. Wherever you stand on the protocol—and I accept that there are lots of noble Lords on all sides who think *pacta sunt servanda*, we have given our word and all the rest of it—one thing on which I hope we can all agree is that the proposed reforms are not animated by bellicosity. They are not intended to be harmful. Even the European Union and all the parties in Northern Ireland acknowledge that there are genuine grievances that need remedying. I do not think that anyone is denying that. Therefore, whether it is the proposal for the green channel or the proposal for local democratic control over taxation, it is plainly intended to remedy an identified harm rather than to do harm to a neighbour.

The same is not true of the rhetoric that we get in the other direction. European Union officials speak quite openly about punitive measures and retaliation. It is not just their words; if we look at other aspects of the UK-EU relationship that have been held up because they have been tied to this issue, we see time and again that the European Union is prepared to act in a way that is costly to all sides and that inflicts damage on itself, because the essential spirit is vindictive.

We discussed at great length the other day the UK's exclusion from the Horizon programme; I am not particularly fussed one way or another about the Horizon programme, but nobody could argue that this is just the EU advancing its own interests. It was deliberately intended, and sold internally, as being about hurting Britain. It was the same with the energy trading schemes in the North Sea, which were supposed to have been ratified last month. Their non-ratification retards the development of renewables and increases our dependence on Russian hydrocarbons. It was the same for equivalence in financial services and so on. These are all examples of where all sides are being damaged to make a point.

I put it to noble Lords that the real threat to western unity is not a proportionate attempt to remedy these grievances in Northern Ireland in a way that is expressly designed not to do any harm to our neighbour and would ensure no more leakage than now. Even if we take seriously the idea that a pork pie crossing into County Donegal would wreck the single market, there is nothing in the Government's proposals that would make that a more likely scenario than it is today. The real threat is rather this lamentable tendency in Brussels still to think of the United Kingdom as a renegade province that needs to be brought to heel rather than as a strategic ally.

I am very proud of this country's contribution to the defence of Ukraine. We started earlier and have been at it longer than others. We did so, let us remember, not because we were directly threatened—there was no scenario in which Russian troops were about to cross into Kent—but because, as in 1914 and 1939, we wanted to come to the aid of a friendly country because we believe in European freedom and security. We are good Europeans. I wonder whether the same is true of the European Commission.

8.55 pm

Lord Risby (Con): My Lords, there are clear lessons to learn from the Covid pandemic and the brutal war against Ukraine. While globalisation has brought many benefits, not least to this country, we have learned how all of us have become dependent on unreliable providers of essential products. The terrible war has further underlined the new reality threatening economic and political stability, for which all of us are paying a price.

Last year I spoke in praise of the assistance we have quietly given to Ukraine through Operation Orbital over the last six years. The British Army has trained Ukrainian forces, our Royal Navy vessels have regularly visited Black Sea ports, and we have persuaded NATO that its south-eastern quadrant was potentially as vulnerable as the Baltic states. Having been chairman of the British Ukrainian Society for many years, and as a recipient of a huge number of messages from Ukraine, I can confirm that the intense feeling of gratitude towards us is truly and deeply felt.

Global supplies of many key crops, including wheat and seed oils, have been devastated by this assault on Ukraine, causing a collapse in exports to the Middle East and north Africa and resulting in food riots and even starvation in some directly affected countries. Lebanon, which is already fragile and to which I am the Prime Minister's trade envoy, has been importing up to 64% of its wheat from Ukraine alone. The blockade by Russia in the Black Sea to prevent grain exports from Odessa remains a horrendous problem as Ukraine valiantly seeks to find new export and safe routes elsewhere. Russians are flouting the freedom of the seas and maritime law, which are so fundamental to us as a maritime power. The interlocking supply chain crisis relating to Covid-19 and now food and energy distribution has a common cause: the actions of authoritarian regimes, in consequence disrupting international supply chains on which we, like so many others, have come to depend.

But we must now look to the future. The horrors of the war against Ukraine have prompted renewed unity among the democratic powers. NATO, once again a demonstrably more powerful defence alliance, has seen its purpose revitalised. It is perfectly true that, in the next 10 years, 90% of world economic growth will likely happen in the Indo-Pacific region, but the Ukraine crisis has shown that collective European values have reasserted themselves. I hope that we can use this opportunity to recalibrate our European relationships on the basis of mutual respect. Britain is clearly the premier European military power, as acknowledged by our European neighbours, and we have shown no lack of willingness to deploy our military and intelligence resources. In assisting Ukraine and pushing back Russian aggression, Britain has received praise across the entire Euro-Atlantic area.

The engagement of the United States has been welcome and profound, but we must inevitably face the dependence of the continent of Europe on that country's wholly disproportionate financial and military contribution to our security and way of life. This country and others like it across the world need to be ready to pay the financial cost of freedom by investing more in our Armed Forces and diplomatic reach. The

remorseless underfunding of our diplomatic service is wholly misplaced. As one very supportive ambassador recently said to me while in London, this seems beyond perplexing for the concept of global Britain. Last year's integrated review is not just about tilting towards the Indo-Pacific and building new multilateral structures to uphold an international order. It is about strengthening the democracies of the Euro-Atlantic and ensuring they remain relevant and engaged in a period of major geopolitical change.

9 pm

Lord Whitty (Lab): My Lords, at this stage of the debate, I begin to feel a bit sorry for the noble Lord, Lord Ahmad, who has to reply to all these points. I have often said that, in these debates, there will be at least a couple of former Foreign Secretaries attacking you and a rather larger number of Members who always thought they should have been Foreign Secretary. The same has been true tonight.

I will try to confine myself to broad points—first, climate change. The noble Baroness, Lady Blackstone, has already spelled out the need for an acceleration in the machinery to deliver what was agreed in Glasgow. The Glasgow agreement was a qualified success, but a success for British diplomacy and for the right honourable Alok Sharma. It now needs to be turned into reality. It hardly features in the gracious Speech or the legislative programme.

Instead, we have a situation where, faced with blackmail from one autocratic regime, in the supply of gas and oil, we have taken the option to go to another autocratic regime that has been bombing and devastating its neighbour for seven years—Saudi Arabia—to try to restore that oil and gas. We ought to take this opportunity to move the world and the economics of energy away from fossil fuels. That requires international effort. I hope that we carry forward the progress we made in Glasgow over the next period.

Secondly and more generally, we will need to review the structure of international organisations over the coming years. It is clear, for example, that the United Nations cannot act when a member of its Security Council is a perpetrator of an offence to international order. It is also true that the World Trade Organization does not guarantee effective trade in a way that increases the diversity and equality of income among the countries of the world and, in some cases, allows a restriction of access to key materials, such as those just referred to by my noble friend Lord Stansgate. That can inhibit us from attaining our objectives on climate change and free trade.

Thirdly, on the humanitarian and human rights front, we will need to establish better international mechanisms, arising from Ukraine, for the prosecution of perpetrators, including those in the Russian Government, responsible for the undoubted war crimes taking place in Ukraine, against Ukrainian civilians, with rape being used as a weapon of war and the torture and killings of prisoners. The present structure and process to bring those people to justice does not exist.

While Ukraine and the Ukrainian people are our immediate concern, we need to think ahead. At some point, this conflict will end. It may end unsatisfactorily for the people of Ukraine, but it will end and we

believe it will end with, effectively, the defeat of Russia. We will then need a major international project for the reconstruction of Ukraine—the equivalent of a Marshall plan. Once Ukraine attains some sort of victory and peace, the reality is that not only we will need to rebuild that country's economy and society, there will be a demoralised and impoverished Russia, as a result partly of sanctions and partly of war. Hence it will be an unpredictable Russia, in which some elements of the country will still have access to nuclear and chemical weapons, and to its cyber capability.

This may seem strange to say at this point, but we will need politicians and statesmen who understand Russia, which includes understanding Russian exceptionalism, Russian paranoia about encirclement and Russian defensiveness. These are features not simply of the Putin regime or of the Soviet inheritance; they are deep-wired and, in some cases, understandable. They have to be appreciated by those who deal with Russia, whatever it looks like once this crisis is over. I believe this country can take a lead on that, but it is important that we act together with others and in particular with our colleagues and allies in Europe. The noble Lord, Lord Hannan, will not be surprised to hear that I disagree with him on the Brexit situation. That has made it more difficult but, unless Britain acts with the EU on these issues, we will not again succeed in bringing peace to Europe.

Viscount Trenchard (Con): My Lords—[*Interruption.*] Oh, I am sorry. It is not my turn.

9.05 pm

Lord Sharkey (LD): Thank you. My Lords, for the next five minutes, I want to move the focus from eastern Europe—and the noble Viscount, Lord Trenchard—to the eastern Mediterranean and the divided island of Cyprus. I declare an interest as a vice-chair of the APPG for the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.

The island of Cyprus has been divided for over half a century. In that time, there have been many attempts at reunification, all of which have failed. These failures have prolonged the isolation and impoverishment of the north. Through no fault of their own, the people of northern Cyprus have suffered and continue to suffer exclusion from the international community and embargoes on their trade.

Despite this record of failure, and after another unsuccessful round of talks in Geneva 13 months ago, the UN Secretary-General said:

“I do not give up. My agenda is strictly to fight for the security and wellbeing of the Cypriots—of the Greek-Cypriots and the Turkish-Cypriots—that deserve to live in peace and prosperity”.

However, by the end of last year, the Secretary-General was markedly more pessimistic. He reported that

“confidence in the possibility of securing a negotiated settlement continued to fall on the island from an already low level. Public debate focused on the divergent positions of the sides regarding the basis of the talks”.

Calling the positions “divergent” is putting it mildly. The Greek Cypriots propose variations on the bizonal, bicomunal federation model. The Turkish Cypriots now reject this model entirely and propose a two-state solution. Indeed, the Turkish-Cypriot north has a President, Ersin Tatar, who was elected on exactly that platform.

The two sides appear to be further apart than ever. The south remains prosperous, while the north becomes poorer, under embargo and isolated. In the south, GDP per head is around \$30,000. In the north, it is around \$15,000. The north's economy depends largely on subventions from Turkey. The recent steep decline in the value of the Turkish lira has had a disastrous effect on the economy in the north. Inflation in Turkey now stands at 70%, with the prospect of further damaging falls in the value of the lira and the value of the subventions to northern Cyprus.

The Secretary-General ends his most recent report by calling on the Cyprus

“guarantor powers to do their utmost to support efforts to ultimately bring the Cyprus issue to a settlement and bring peace and prosperity to all Cypriots.”

We are one of those guarantor powers, of course, and we have a long and honourable record of working for a settlement. From September, we will also have a new high commissioner, Mr Irfan Siddiq. I wish Mr Siddiq well and look forward to meeting him in the near future. I urge him and the Government to increase efforts to bring the two sides together and work on facilitating confidence-building measures. We know that the two sides can work together effectively when there is a common interest; this was demonstrated clearly during the pandemic.

In the meantime, we could help the economically vital tourism from the UK to the north by addressing a problem at Ercan Airport. We could remove the requirement that all passengers travelling from the UK to Ercan in northern Cyprus must deplane with all their baggage to undergo security checks in Turkey. The UK imposed that restriction; we could lift it ourselves if we chose. I know from conversations with President Tatar that his Administration would comply with any conditions that HMG might have. This would not solve the Cyprus problem, of course, but it would bring some economic relief to the north and demonstrate our willingness to provide practical help. I commend it to the Minister and hand over to the noble Viscount, Lord Trenchard.

9.09 pm

Viscount Trenchard (Con): My Lords, I apologise to the noble Lord, Lord Sharkey, for rudely jumping the gun and attempting to speak in front of him. The gracious Speech confirmed that the Government will continue to support Ukraine and play a leading role in defending democracy and freedom across the world. The noble Baroness, Lady Smith of Newnham, may not have noticed, but without Brexit we would not have been able to move so quickly to provide military and humanitarian aid to Ukraine. I believe that our early action forced the EU to follow suit and several member states have now reassessed their security and defence policies. I agree with noble Lords who advocate increased defence spending, which is of course necessary if the Government are to work closely with international partners to maintain a united NATO and address the most pressing global security challenges.

Among our most important international partners is Japan, whose Prime Minister, Fumio Kishida, visited London earlier this month and, together with my right honourable friend the Prime Minister, signed a reciprocal

[VISCOUNT TRENCHARD]

access agreement, a defence co-operation pact which will enable faster deployment of troops and greater engagement in joint training and operations. This is seen by some as a second Anglo-Japanese alliance, returning the countries' defence relationship to what it had been during the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902 to 1923.

Our relationship with Japan in other fields such as trade and cultural exchange also continues to develop apace. As a former long-term resident of Japan and a former chairman of the Japan Society, I am happy that it is now clear that the hiatus in our good relationship, which lasted for several years in the mid-20th century, is now well behind us and we have resumed the collaborative and close relationship between two ancient island constitutional monarchies. We have recently entered into a new free trade agreement and our accession negotiations to join the CPTPP, in which Japan is the largest economy, are advanced.

The Japanese remember better than we do that this year is also the 150th anniversary of the visit to Britain by the Iwakura Mission, which spent 122 days in this country studying how we arranged our political, economic and education structures. The Japanese Government were well pleased with the work of the mission and, the same year, 1872, granted us a perpetual lease on an extensive estate just across the moat from the Imperial Palace in central Tokyo as a diplomatic mission. It is, in terms of both style and scale, by far the most impressive embassy in Tokyo of any country, including the United States. It is without doubt an act of unbelievable short-sighted folly for the FCDO now to seek to sell for development around three acres of the seven acres that we own today. In terms of the value and support our diplomatic presence gives and can continue to give to every British business operating in Japan, the net proceeds of perhaps as much as £700 million are a drop in the ocean. In the words of one very senior Japanese associate of mine,

"the premises and the buildings are the symbol of the historic bilateral relations; they are the source of the special and unique status that the British Embassy and the British Government have in the Japanese society."

We have a fantastic asset which defines the positive perception of this country in the minds of the Japanese people. If we proceed with the plan, we will inflict permanent damage on our standing in Japan. If a large apartment building is built, sandwiched between our shrunken embassy estate and the public park which once also formed a part of it, it will be seen as a permanent reminder of our opportunistic sale of what had been a gift and a substantial net disinvestment of our assets in Japan. I ask the Minister to confirm that the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary will stand up to the Chancellor and stop the sale. The Treasury has supported business to the tune of some £400 billion during the pandemic but grants the Foreign Office no money at all to invest in its built estate. The proposed sale is completely inconsistent with the Government's global Britain strategy and would make my noble friend Lord Grimstone's words in his introductory speech about "deepening our alliances" around the world and

"stepping up on the international stage"

seem hollow indeed to the ears of our Japanese friends.

9.14 pm

Lord McDonald of Salford (CB): My Lords, despite the Cypriot and Japanese interlude, Ukraine has dominated this debate, and it will dominate the United Kingdom's foreign policy for the period addressed in the gracious Speech.

The three months since Russia's unprovoked invasion have been extraordinary. How and when the war will end is not yet clear, but some things are. Measured by its original objectives, Russia has already lost. Ukraine will never be a submissive and compliant province of Russia, and Ukrainians will never be willing or docile subjects of Moscow. Measured by any standards, Russia is losing.

Earlier today, with the noble Lord, Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, I saw the British ambassador to Ukraine. She reported that Ukraine's performance to date is a virtuous circle, with success inspiring Ukrainians to strive for further success. She was confident that, with external help, the loss of Mariupol would not interrupt this positive cycle. I hope that, when replying later, the Minister will join me in congratulating Melinda Simmons and her team for their outstanding work in Kyiv.

Putin's problems now also encompass Russia's traditional international partners. On Monday this week, he entertained the five other heads of state and government of the Collective Security Treaty Organization. They were celebrating its 30th anniversary, but the atmosphere was not festive: only Belarus supported the war. Despite that, Secretary-General Stanislav Zas optimistically predicted that other states would soon join the CSTO. Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg, on the other hand, can more plausibly be confident about the future, having received this morning the formal applications of Finland and Sweden to join NATO.

Putin is reacting to reverses on the battlefield and the international stage by lashing out. Despite the fact that Russia joined other nuclear weapon states as recently as January this year in reaffirming that a nuclear war could never be won and should never be started, he muses in public about using nuclear weapons. The UK must be part of a concerted effort to get the whole international community, including China, India and others sitting on the diplomatic fence, to remind Moscow of the absolute unacceptability of first use of nuclear weapons.

For the rest, the UK should continue and ramp up existing policies but also prepare for the future, as suggested by the noble Lord, Lord Whitty. UK-supplied weapons helped Ukraine at the beginning; ramped up supply can help it win. UK sanctions are sweeping but not yet comprehensive. We must move from merely freezing assets of the sanctioned to seizing assets for redistribution to the Russian people, as almost floated by the noble and gallant Lord, Lord Craig of Radley.

We should also begin preparing now for reconstruction, work that can nestle within the international development strategy announced two days ago. Ukraine faced fundamental challenges even before 24 February. Businesspeople in your Lordships' House have long classified Ukraine as among the most corrupt countries in Europe. How reconstruction aid is disbursed, as well as the projects to be supported, needs attention.

I finish with two other points about the new strategy. In the absence of the noble Lord, Lord Howell of Guildford, I note that the Commonwealth has hardly featured in today's debate, as it hardly features in the strategy, where it appears briefly as a potential partner but not really as a priority aid recipient. Within Africa and the Indo-Pacific, I hope the Government will prioritise eligible Commonwealth countries. Secondly, a strategy needs resources to match its ambition. Her Majesty's Government's ambition will require at least 0.7% of GNI, so I urge the Government to speed up their timetable and restore the 0.7% spend now.

9.20 pm

Lord Selkirk of Douglas (Con): My Lords, I congratulate my noble friend on his constructive speech. I shall not follow him down those tracks, because I have something else to mention. The Government's legislative plans announced last week did not contain proposals to increase spending on defence; nor have Ministers given any indication that they are averse to the proposed reduction by 9,000 in the target level for our Armed Forces to a total of just 73,000 full-time troops by 2025. Of course, our forces have to be equipped with the latest technologically advanced equipment and be able to respond swiftly when required, but, at a time when the United Kingdom, under the leadership of the Prime Minister, is taking such a prominent global role in helping Ukraine withstand totally unjustified aggression by Vladimir Putin, we have to question why we are continuing to engage in scaling back our armed services to levels not seen for 200 years. If I remember correctly, my noble friend Lady Davidson mentioned this, as did the noble Lord, Lord West of Spithead.

At the same time as the troop cutbacks, the number of tanks and armoured fighting vehicles is being reduced. Hercules transport planes are being retired and there is to be a further scaling back of the Navy and the Royal Air Force. Even before Ukraine was attacked, our senior military leaders and those at Westminster who take a special interest in these matters warned that more of the UK's finances need to be allocated to future defence spending and that the planned cutbacks in troop numbers are too severe. "Mass still matters", said the noble and gallant Lord, Lord Richards, a former Chief of the Defence Staff. At the beginning of this year, referring to the 2021 integrated defence and security review, Tobias Elwood MP, who chairs the Defence Committee in the other place, claimed that the necessary funding had not been committed

"to ensure that our defence powers are suitably upgraded for the looming threats we face."

The percentage for defence has been falling over the decades. The United Kingdom has remained within the 2% of GPD NATO spending pledge, unlike some other European nations.

Returning to troop numbers, this month General Sir Mark Carleton-Smith, who is soon to step down after four years as Chief of the General Staff, told *Soldier Magazine*—my noble friend Lord Lang of Monkton mentioned this—

"I am not comfortable with an army of just 73,000. It's too small."

He said the plan to limit the number to that total had come as "quite a surprise". Further concern over the direction of government policy was expressed in the recently published report of the Back-Bench 1922 Defence Committee, set up by the Prime Minister in February, which stressed that the plan to cut Army numbers was based on the assumption of peace, not war, and must be halted immediately.

There is a famous quotation often attributed to the economist John Maynard Keynes, although there are other possible authors, including Winston Churchill, which states, "When the facts change, I change my mind." That seems very appropriate in the circumstances which the Government now face over defence. The Prime Minister recently signed security pacts with Finland and Sweden to offer assistance should they be attacked before they can come under the defence shield of NATO. Meanwhile, that 73 year-old organisation has been recalled to active life by Putin's appalling actions. I recall that in 2019 President Macron said we were experiencing the "brain death" of NATO. Well, all I can say is that NATO has certainly woken up. Its members, including the United Kingdom, are being called to give renewed service to reinforce the security of its eastern European flank, along with the territories of the Baltic states.

The facts have indeed changed dramatically in so many ways, and in these new and dangerous circumstances our armed services should not be expected to do more and more with less and less. I hope Her Majesty's Government will consider a reappraisal of spending on defence and at least some aspects of future strategy. I hope that Ministers will be able to adjust their minds, where necessary, to help the United Kingdom, alongside its allies, to meet the formidable challenges that undoubtedly lie ahead.

9.25 pm

Lord Morrow (DUP): My Lords, I am glad that at long last the Government have recognised that the protocol is unworkable, but I remain very unclear on what exactly they are going to do about it. It has caused serious problems with the flow of trade in the UK, with the Northern Ireland economy losing some £1 billion to date.

The central constitutional difficulty with the protocol is that it subjects Northern Ireland to laws made by a polity of which it is not part and in which it has no representation at all. Noble Lords will be familiar with the great icon of British constitutional history John Hampden, the Member of Parliament for Buckinghamshire, who famously refused to pay the tax that Charles I had imposed without the approval of Parliament—ship money. Of course, four years later Charles sought to arrest Hampden and four other MPs in another place—an act that ultimately led to the greatest period of political tumult ever witnessed on these islands, but which established as sacrosanct the principle that we are a constitutional monarchy in which Parliament, the representative body of the nation, has the final authority when it comes to making law.

The difficulty with the protocol is that it commits an offence that is like that of Charles, because it gives the responsibility for making laws for part of the UK

[LORD MORROW]

in some 300 areas to a body in which neither Parliament nor the people of the UK are represented. The difficulty presented by the protocol goes further, though; rather than involving the UK Executive making the legislation for us without Parliament, like Charles, this legislation is actually made by another polity entirely.

We are left with a sub-committee of the European Affairs Committee on the protocol asking whether Northern Ireland could not be given some kind of compensating voice in the EU. It kindly involved us in consultation exercises on its proposed legislation. If, however, it is suggested that this solution is acceptable, it must be acceptable in general, and we must be able to dispense with Parliament and govern the United Kingdom through government departments and consultation exercises. To submit to such an arrangement would be to agree to the political disinheritance of the United Kingdom and would be utterly unthinkable. Ironically, that arrangement is even contrary to the terms of Article 2 of the protocol, which states:

“The United Kingdom shall ensure that no diminution of rights, safeguards or equality of opportunity, as set out in that part of the 1998 Agreement entitled Rights, Safeguards and Equality of Opportunity results from its withdrawal from the Union”.

The relevant part of the Good Friday agreement meanwhile states:

“The parties affirm their commitment to the mutual respect, the civil rights and the religious liberties of everyone in the community.”

Thus, any proposals that undermine the civil rights of people in Northern Ireland, including their hard-won right to vote, are contrary to the Good Friday agreement. The fight for adult male and female suffrage in Northern Ireland was a long, hard battle for our civil rights. Can the Minister assure the House that the Government's proposed legislation will, at a minimum, ensure that the civil rights of the people of Northern Ireland are restored such that they are as well represented in making the laws that apply to them as people living in the rest of the United Kingdom?

Some may ask why, given its affront to democracy, Sinn Féin and the SDLP are so enthusiastic about the protocol. It is because it helps achieve their goal of breaking up the United Kingdom economy between Great Britain and Northern Ireland and creating an all-Ireland economy, which they realise would greatly assist them in their political cause: the formal break-up of the United Kingdom and the creation of a united Ireland. Moreover, many of them, quite properly under the terms of the Good Friday agreement, are citizens of the Irish Republic, and in that sense are not without representation in the EU.

9.30 pm

Lord Sterling of Plaistow (Con): My Lords, I have been actively involved in the defence of the realm since the Falklands War. When I re-read the speech that I made following Her Majesty's gracious Speech in 2014, I also re-read a research work that I commissioned from King's College London, which categorically demonstrated the economic benefit of military capital and research spend being made in the United Kingdom.

I very much appreciate my tireless noble friend Lord Ahmad, on whom the Government are putting huge emphasis to deliver on their principles. I reiterate that such moneys spent at home unquestionably create major benefits for the domestic sector of our economy and enhance our way of life. Having said that, unfortunately, large sums of money are still wasted on the wrong capital projects, as mentioned by many others before me. The time that it takes from concept to delivery within price is, in many cases, totally unacceptable.

Our present chief of staff is determined to achieve transformation and innovation in these areas. The unprovoked attacks by Russia on Ukraine have clearly demonstrated major mistakes by its military leadership, particularly in logistics and a lack of trained soldiers proud to serve their country. Russia and China's build capability is, to a great extent, due to their being dictatorships and is much faster than that of the major democracies. The delivery capability of the Russian submarine programme, particularly its present one, is a major strength. Our latest submarine programme is crucial and needs all involved, particularly those companies in the private sector, to greatly increase the drumbeat for delivery with a major emphasis on value for money. The drumbeat of increased flows of money from the Treasury is of fundamental importance.

My view, mentioned by many here and in the other place, is that there must be a sizeable increase in the spend. It should be at least 3.5% because we must take into account that this so-called 2% is not a net percentage. It is probably not even 1.7% in real terms. Also, the major spend which we are now going into in a big way will not be completed by 2040. Can anybody truly believe that inflation will remain static for that whole period?

The United States is our closest and most trusted ally and we enjoy an excellent relationship with its military leadership. The Russian war on Ukraine has given us all a great deal to think about and has created extraordinary problems worldwide, but although NATO is dominated by the United States, which also picks up most of the cost, we have not seen the way we work together—and how NATO works together—since the Cold War.

On foreign affairs, I have often said that in following an agreed long-term foreign policy post Brexit, it is of national importance that we have the finest foreign service. Through the centuries, its role has been critical in having ambassadors and staff with persuasive abilities and a key collective intelligence. We have today many capable young ambassadors who are more than ready to rebuild this vital service. The major cuts in their budgets are frankly dangerous. Recently, several Peers have mentioned a deep concern about the possible selling of many of our splendid embassies. My noble friend Lord Trenchard gave a very good example. I totally agree; this would surely be a very short-sighted and bad message to the rest of the world.

Finally, to truly achieve the long-term security of the United Kingdom, it is vital that we have an excellent economy, thereby achieving a very strong balance sheet. It is well worth remembering that the Soviet Union collapsed by going broke. It was like piercing a balloon without a whimper. I cannot finish without

stating—many others would obviously feel exactly the same—that some of our finest young men and women serve in our armed services and are prepared to put their lives on the line. In particular, they have a great pride and ethos in serving this country. I hope my noble friend the Minister shares these views.

9.36 pm

Lord Skidelsky (CB): My Lords, I find myself in profound disagreement with the Government's war strategy in Ukraine and, in fact, with almost everything that has been said about Ukraine in this debate. I will try to explain why.

British policy aims for a Russian military defeat, which it will help to bring about by economic sanctions and supplying Ukraine with the necessary means of war. Liz Truss said on 27 April:

"We will keep going further and faster to push Russia out of the whole of Ukraine".

Simon Jenkins has commented:

"She is clearly revelling in her imagined proxy war on the Russian bear and no one in Whitehall appears able to restrain her."

I wish her proxy war was only imagined but it is actually happening.

It is an open secret that both France and Germany regard our hawkishness as driving up the price of peace and thus making a ceasefire more elusive. So what is the price of peace? For those whose history lessons begin and end with the Munich agreement of 1938, it is obvious; the price of peace is shameful surrender to the limitless ambitions of an evil and possibly mad dictator. I take a different view. I believe that Putin's war aims, unlike Hitler's, are limited and therefore that the fashionable domino theory—that if you give way here, then one after another will fall—is wrong.

I want the war to end before the war aims of our Government are achieved, for two reasons. The first is because the prolongation of the war threatens economic catastrophe. One aspect of that, mass starvation, was mentioned by the noble Lord, Lord King, earlier in the debate.

Secondly, there is the consequence of a military disaster. If it happened that Russian conventional forces were actually pushed to defeat, as the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary want, Russia might well counter with tactical nuclear weapons. These have never been deployed; they abolish the distinction between conventional and nuclear war and thus remove a crucial barrier to uncontrolled escalation. To avoid these huge risks, the military position on the ground has to be such—I know this is an uncomfortable thing to say—that both sides can claim some military success. That means that our Government should take a very hard and accurate look at the scale and type of military help we give to Ukraine.

The peace terms discussed in Ankara in late March called for Ukraine's neutrality, backed by security guarantees and a timeline to address issues such as the status of Donbass and Crimea. The Ukrainians withdrew from them after reports of the massacre at Bucha surfaced on 1 April. This was a horrible war crime, but it does not follow that because a country's war methods are brutal its ambitions are genocidal or limitless.

Our Government should be urging a resumption of the Ankara process. I believe that a negotiated peace would be possible along lines which safeguard the independence of Ukraine and satisfy some Russian demands. There are three elements. The first is Ukraine's neutrality for 20 years in return for international, including Russian, guarantees of Ukraine's territorial borders before the Russian invasion of 24 February. That is, Russia would need to withdraw its troops from the territories that it has conquered after 24 February. Second is UN-supervised elections to determine the future of Donetsk and Luhansk. Third is acceptance of the transfer of Crimea to Russia in return for compensation. No conceivable independent Russian Government will voluntarily give up Ukraine, but Russia must be made to pay for this.

To prepare the ground for this, our Government need to drop talk of bringing the Putin regime to trial as war criminals, and should promise to de-escalate economic sanctions by stages as the peace accord is implemented. As Liddell Hart wisely said:

"Inflict the least possible permanent injury, for the enemy of to-day is ... the ally of the future."

9.41 pm

Lord Owen (Ind SD): My Lords, there is a very clear need throughout the allied world for unity, and I shall therefore deal very quickly with the Irish protocol. I believe that there is no way that this country will accept abandoning a treaty by an Act of law without first a serious attempt at arbitration. That is why we have the Vienna conventions, and it is in my view inconceivable that this legislation should be presented to this House without a very serious attempt at achieving international arbitration.

Now to the main issue, which is the Falklands—sorry, not the Falklands, but that is perhaps in a way rather an interesting lapse. It is rather nice in this country to come back to a situation where you can say that the British Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Defence have acted throughout intelligently and with courage, and we should be grateful for that. The issue of Ukraine has not been at all easy. We can all praise the President of Ukraine, who has shown remarkable courage and intense skill. I still believe that his biggest moment is yet to come, when he decides to open negotiations with the Russians for a peace settlement.

A peace settlement will have to end this but, frankly, it will not come from suggestions in this House or anywhere else, and nor should it. It should come from that country that was very nearly, on the second invasion, eradicated. It has the right to be supported by us, and we have quite correctly supported it within the limitations of NATO being a defensive alliance. We have not crossed that border, and we should not cross it. As for this loose talk about nuclear weapons and tactical use of weapons, of course that hangs and lurks as an ever-present danger. But that issue is primarily between two people: the President of the United States and the President of the Russian Federation. If President Putin feels that he wants to cross that threshold, he will endanger his whole country—but it is not an issue for NATO; nor, frankly, one that is helped by being discussed in this House either.

[LORD OWEN]

What we have to do now, as a number of noble Lords have made clear, is to strengthen our contribution. That means strengthening our contribution in weaponry, as we are entitled to do as a defensive organisation, and strengthening our economic sanctions, which are all the time being reduced. The good things that have come out of this dreadful war are few and far between. However, one fact is that we have seen the strength of NATO and the wisdom of Truman when he insisted that the boys could not come home in 1945 as he had promised them; in 1946 they were to stay.

We have heard a lot of trash and nonsense talked about European Union defence. A defence organisation has to have an inbuilt authority—a command structure. We have in NATO a proven command structure. We have the capacity to use the strength of the greatest military power still in the world, the United States, and to do so with discussion, democratic debate and, finally, military decision-making. I hope that President Macron has learned that it is not brain-dead and I hope that France stops trying to eradicate or even undermine NATO. That is the fundamental issue and we have seen it in this example.

For the future, it is extremely important that the Russian people believe that we are not antagonistic to them and that we do not want to humiliate them. They have a lot of economic and deep-seated military problems. Some of us—myself included—thought that their defence capacities and their armed forces were a lot stronger than they have proven to be. We must achieve a negotiated settlement that must come from Ukraine, but in the process of getting that settlement we must understand the Russian people and not permanently alienate them. That is a hard task but it is the task in front of us.

9.47 pm

Lord Purvis of Tweed (LD): My Lords, it is a pleasure to follow the noble Lord, who neatly summed up how we have ahead of us complexities and difficult decisions, not only for President Zelensky and the Ukrainian people but for the wider international community in coming to terms with the long-term implications of the horror that we have seen inflicted upon the people of Ukraine.

The German Chancellor, in his speech in February, used the significant term *Zeitenwende*—a watershed moment or sea change. As the Germans and others come to terms with how they are equipped to respond and reframe their foreign policy formed over many years, in this debate today we have been discussing how the UK is equipped to respond, not just to the immediate needs of Ukraine and others, but whether we are a trusted partner for many who will be addressing the very significant secondary and tertiary impacts around the world, especially with those countries least equipped to deal with humanitarian and food security issues themselves.

I am the 14th Liberal Democrat speaker in this debate, which was opened so ably by my noble friend Lady Smith on defence, followed by my noble friends Lord Lee and Lord Burnett, who also commented on elements of defence policy. That demonstrates that we on these Benches are a liberal movement open to the

world, internationalist in spirit and belief, founded on principles of foreign policy outlined in terms that have been consistently held since Gladstone outlined them 140 years ago. Half of that period has been in the reign of this sovereign—a remarkable feat for Her Majesty, looking at the sweep of her reign.

However, in many respects we have heard in today's debate that the future can move backwards, with war in Europe, a development strategy from the Government that harks back to the 1980s, trade barriers re-erected, global hunger and poverty increasing rather than decreasing, UK defence expenditure now back to 2010 levels, development spending back to 2013 levels, and Armed Forces levels back many generations.

In this gracious Speech, there was considerably less on international issues than in previous years and no mention at all of development, which is breathtaking given the consequences of war in Europe. The highlight of the trade element, as introduced by the noble Lord, Lord Grimstone, was a Bill we are expecting on the Australia and New Zealand trade agreement, from which the Government's own mid-estimate is that we are likely to yield an increase in UK GDP of between 0.00% and 0.08% over 15 years. However, I am glad to hear from the noble Lord that all parts of the UK will benefit from this bounty.

We have seen regression on free trade from this Government, with extra barriers, burdens and bureaucracy, as my noble friend Lord Palmer highlighted. For the first time in trading history, the UK has waged a trade war on itself. According to the latest ONS data, the UK is the only G7 country to contract in trade in 2021 and, as my noble friend Lord Taverne indicated on the decline in trade with our nearest neighbours, the latest OECD data shows a four-year average to this point of a 2.3% increase in total trade for the EU market, compared to an anaemic 0.7% average growth for the UK over the same period. We shall need to reconsider reconnecting and revisiting a UK-EU security and defence arrangement, energy and climate arrangements and reconnections on trade and practical movement of people—reconnecting, not cancelling, EU connections, as my noble friend Lady Ludford highlighted.

Many aspects of today's debate have ranged broadly, as they should, from the climate emergency to the continuing impacts of the Covid pandemic, war in Europe and the energy supply crisis. Some are directly linked, some are causal and some were already sending the world on a problematic trajectory before the Ukraine war. Many of them in isolation would be too difficult for many countries to tackle themselves. They therefore require a commensurate shift in scale from the UK—a UK sea-change, in many respects.

Ukraine was the very solemn backcloth to this debate. My noble friend Lady Suttie highlighted very eloquently the challenges and pressures that exist, so I need not go into more detail as she summed it up perfectly. She highlighted a human and parliamentary element: she mentioned her contact Ostap, a clerk in the Verkhovna Rada. When I visited the Verkhovna Rada in 2014, when the buildings were still charred from the aggression of the Euromaidan, Ostap gave me a tour of the Parliament. He said—this is humbling for me—that a staff member of a democratic Parliament

is called up to take arms to protect a democratic people and Parliament. That brings into context exactly what we are debating today.

However, the debate goes wider. What is the platform on which we in the UK respond to the much wider secondary impacts? On Monday, the development strategy was released—without Statement or debate—paragraph 30 of which says:

“Our approach to international development will be as a patient partner that champions openness, predictability and the rule of law.”

On the very next day, the Conservative chair of the Northern Ireland Select Committee asked the same Foreign Secretary who launched that strategy:

“Respect for the rule of law runs deep in our Tory veins, and I find it extraordinary that a Tory Government need to be reminded of that. Could my right hon. Friend assure me that support for, and honouring of, the rule of law is what she and the Government are committed to?”—[*Official Report, Commons, 17/5/22; col. 550.*]

That jarring juxtaposition was highlighted by my noble friend Lord Campbell. If we are going to be responding to the increasing level of autocrats in the world, the growth in the number of fragile states—which receive only passing reference in the development strategy, and where we are now again seeing evidence of the growth in the recruitment of Daesh—and the growth in mercenary activity, then the UK needs to be a trusted partner.

On the long-term reconstruction of Ukraine, with the United States committing \$40 billion, the EU over €30 billion, and the UK's support—which we have supported on these Benches—we should not be blind, as has been raised in the debate, to the massive impact of food insecurity and the humanitarian consequences. The Biden Administration have made the correct calculation that, for many people who live in countries that are still considered non-aligned, who do not always believe our narrative in the UK and the West on the war in Ukraine and who are now seeing chronic food insecurity and risk, they are balancing the question as to whether they will blame Putin or the sanctions. The American Administration have therefore allocated £5 billion for immediate support for development relief and food support.

I congratulate the noble Viscount, Lord Stansgate, on the birth of his grandchild yesterday. Yesterday in the world 385,000 children were born; 39,000 of them will have been born in absolute hunger and poverty. My noble friend Lord German highlighted that those children will be denied educational opportunities. The UK response, instead of extra support, has been cutting support on development for those least able to support themselves. Not only that, in the development strategy we are undermining the very multilateral bodies we should be leading and helping shape. I ask the Minister: how much of the £1.3 billion committed to Ukraine—of which we are supportive—will be ODA and will we be lifting the 0.5% cap, or will that be offset by cuts elsewhere?

Lord Chidgey last year referenced the slashing bilateral aid cuts to African countries. He is greatly missed in debates in this House. UK aid statistics published last month show a 26% decrease in bilateral ODA. Now we are told this will be U-turned, but with no extra resources. The aid statistics published last week show

the highest share of multilateral spend from the UK since 2014, at the same time as the Government are saying that this is the wrong thing to do. There is utter incoherence.

We all know that the Government have reneged on the legal commitment to 0.7% support. The foreword to the 2015 strategy—when Liberals were in government working with Conservatives and with consensus on development from the Labour Party—started with the second sentence on the first page reading:

“We firmly believe that spending 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) on international development ... means our country walking taller in the world.”

However, respect for this legal requirement finds itself on the last page in the last paragraphs of this development strategy.

My noble friends Lady Northover, Lord Hussain, Lord Bruce and Lord Sharkey highlighted other conflict areas or protracted disputes; I will close with another. Winding his speech from these Benches in the first debate on the humble Address in Her Majesty's reign in 1952 was Viscount Samuel. I will close with his words from *Hansard*.

“For five years I had the great honour, as representative of the British Crown and under the supervision of the League of Nations, to preside over the Administration which laid the foundations of the modern State in Palestine. That task was accomplished and all went well for some years afterwards, but of late there have been conflict and war. Although the war is over, there is still no peace, and grave suffering has been caused, particularly to the Arab refugees. I most earnestly hope that the United Nations now will take active steps to bring about a settlement. ... I end by quoting famous words, in their literal sense as well as in the symbolic, mystical sense in which they are familiar in the Churches throughout the world: ‘Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee.’”—[*Official Report, 6/11/1952; cols. 103-04.*]

We will see, even if war is over, that there may still be no peace and there may be grave suffering. We should strive to ensure that the future does not go further back but goes forward.

10 pm

Lord Coaker (Lab): My Lords, in winding up, I start by saying how great it is that we can stand in this Chamber and debate these issues. Even if we fundamentally disagree, we can do that in the democracy in which we live. In talking about foreign policy, defence and development, there are many people who we seek to help who cannot do that. There have been one or two opinions expressed with which I fundamentally disagree, but noble Lords' right to express them in this Chamber and for me to disagree is something that we should all recognise, as we remind ourselves that this country is an example to the rest of the world and seek to ensure that everyone has those same rights.

As I say often in these debates, it is significant that so many people with so much experience and knowledge can contribute. I start my remarks by reminding noble Lords of some of the principles on which we base our democracy and will focus on them. This Chamber is watched all over the world. It may be 10.01 pm, and those of us who have spent a few hours here may think that only a few people are watching, but these remarks are watched, read, distributed and pored over by countries across the world. As such, the remarks that are made

[LORD COAKER]

in here, on all sorts of issues, resonate across the world in all sorts of ways. That huge responsibility lies on us and is something on which we should reflect.

I thank all noble Lords for their contributions. I will not be able to mention everyone and, if I start to, like the famous wedding I will miss somebody out; I apologise in advance, but there has been a huge number of contributions. I start by thanking my noble friend Lord Collins for the remarks in his excellent opening speech, which referenced the huge number of themes being considered. The noble Lord, Lord King, gave me his apologies, as he did the noble Lord, Lord Ahmad, but he was right to start the debate by pointing out that we are at a cross-roads as a country, a continent and a world. There are hugely significant issues and which way we go and which side wins, if you like, is to be determined by the decisions we take.

I say to the noble Lord, Lord Ahmad, that never has there been a time when we needed more a Queen's Speech that was dynamic, visionary and inspiring. The warm words in certain sentences of the gracious Speech need to be turned into that vision and a sense of excitement and dynamism to inspire our own country, and those across the world, to bring about change. But in many of the areas outlined, as we have discussed over the previous few days, those visionary ideas are yet to be set out.

Let me spell it out, because, as I have said, this Chamber is heard across the country and the world—especially on Ukraine. Our country, Britain, has a proud history of combating evil in Europe and across the world. We will never be found wanting when it comes to meeting those needs, wherever they are. Every country, organisation and people should know this, and our country will stand shoulder to shoulder with those fighting for a fairer, more equal and more just world. We will always be on the side of democracy, as we are in Ukraine. Large numbers of noble Lords have pointed out the importance and significance of Ukraine and how it marks a turning point. It is a wake-up call for the continent and for the world. Battles that we thought had been won on democracy and human rights have been challenged by what has happened in Ukraine. We need to ensure that we are not cowed by what happens there and will stand up against that evil, so that we can show that example to the rest of the world. Many noble Lords have spoken about the importance of that.

In every area of trade, defence and foreign policy we are, as I have said, at a cross-roads and we should seize the moment. Too often as a country—I say again to the noble Lord, Lord Ahmad, that this needed to be addressed in the gracious Speech—we lack the confidence to say some of the things that I am saying at this Dispatch Box. Too often, we fear the consequences of that. We should be proud of our heritage, proud of where we stand as a country and proud to stand up for that and take it forward, not only on defence but on climate change, technology and all the various issues that many other noble Lords have raised. Those were important statements to be made in my opening remarks.

There is clearly a need for the defence strategy paper to be reviewed. That is not out of the ordinary; it is something that the Permanent Secretary said at

our meeting: in the light of what has happened in Ukraine, there will be a need to review the defence review that took place. There is nothing wrong in that. I do not understand why the Government cannot say that, in the light of what has happened, we should review whether we got it right. The stupid thing to do is not to review it and to dogmatically refuse to review it in the light of what has happened. No doubt that is what the Permanent Secretary was saying.

The noble Baroness, Lady Davidson, talked about the Army. Who said that the Army was too small? It was not some left-wing socialist like me standing at the side; it was the head of the Army who said that it was too small—not some catastrophic idiot who does not know what they are talking about. The Government's own outgoing head said that the Army is too small. What is the Government's response to that? They cannot just dismiss these sorts of things; it is idiotic.

I hope that the noble Lord agrees with his boss, who contacted the Government to say that there needed to be an increase in defence spending. I think we would all like to hear whether the noble Lord agrees with his boss that there should be an increase in defence spending. I wish that the noble Baroness, Lady Goldie, was still in her place. It was even worse for her boss, because he wrote to the Prime Minister on 11 March saying that there should be an increase in defence spending. The Prime Minister's response to that was not to say to the Defence Secretary, "Quite right, it is a very serious matter that you have pointed out that we will not meet our 2% spending on NATO in 2025 unless there is an increase in defence spending"; instead, the Prime Minister told him to withdraw the letter. Noble Lord after noble Lord has said in this debate that there is a need to review defence spending. In his response, we could do with the Minister explaining whether he agrees that there is a need to review the level of defence spending.

I want to deal with one aspect of this, which was raised by the noble Baroness, Lady Fall. It is something that I have said in my own remarks previously, and it is extremely important: namely the need to explain to the British public, and persuade them, that there is a need for an increase in defence spending, rather than for us to say that it is all right to do that. It is really important and needs to be done for the defence of democracy and for the freedom of our country. That needs to be explained and argued for. As the noble Baroness, Lady Fall, quite rightly pointed out, the impact of much of this will be on the poorest people in the country. Who are the people who are facing the biggest squeeze on their living standards at this most difficult of times and a cost of living crisis? It is the poorest people in the country. Yet we are saying to them that, while we may be able to increase spending on benefits, and on this or on that, rather than do that, some of the public spending that may have gone to them will need to be spent on defence. That needs to be explained, argued for and debated with people. Too often—I have said this in remarks that I have made in other debates—we make statements about what should happen, rather than seeking to explain to the public why we think it should happen.

On trade, which has been raised by many noble Lords, I shall say just this—I am going to wind up in a couple of minutes. The issue for the Government and

this country is not whether we want trade deals. Of course we want trade deals. The vision for the future is what sort of trade deals we have. I think the country is demanding, and the world is looking for a new chapter which seeks, a greater ethical position with respect to our trade deals. The noble Earl, Lord Dundee, and the noble Lord, Lord Alton, talked about it: are we going to continue to trade with countries with, to say the least, questionable human rights policies, with no impact on climate change, where they repress minorities within their countries? Do we want our Government to continue to negotiate and make trade deals with any country in the world, irrespective of where it stands as a country on all these issues? That is the question. It is not whether we have trade deals; it is what sort of trade deals we want. That is the question as we move forward.

There are all the issues around soft power and the fact that the Government reduced aid from 0.7% to 0.5%—a disastrous policy. My noble friend Lady Blackstone talked about the importance of climate change and other noble Lords talked about the importance of linguists—the soft power importance of all of these things. It is not glib statements that people want, it is policies that underpin a fresh, new approach. The world is crying out for change, for a different sort of social order, and it is up to us as the UK to try to once again put ourselves at the forefront of that, to be the leader of that, to be the visionary for that in a reformed NATO, a reformed United Nations and a reformed Council of Europe. All those organisations need reform and change, and we should be the country that provides the dynamism and enthusiasm to do that.

10.12 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon) (Con): My Lords, as ever, it is a great honour to address your Lordships' House on behalf of the Government and to close this incredibly informed debate on foreign affairs, defence, trade and development. It has been a debate in which we have had varying contributions covering many countries and many issues. As my noble friend Lord Grimstone said in his opening remarks, these are very challenging and testing times—a point articulated by the noble Lord, Lord Coaker, in his remarks just now. A point made by all noble Lords is that it is important to stress again the importance of alliances, partnerships and working together and, yes, to renew that vision, the vision we share, for a fairer world based, as the noble Lord, Lord Coaker, reminded us, on the tenet of the strength of democracy, openness and freedom—the ability to disagree with each other, but doing so within and respecting the rule of law, whether that is domestically or internationally.

I start by conveying congratulations on behalf of these Benches to the noble Viscount, Lord Stansgate, on becoming a grandfather. When he was talking, I was reflecting. I still have a very young family myself. It is about opportunities. When you look towards your children, grandchildren and generations to come, sometimes you sit back and ask yourself: what is happening in the world? It is a point of reflection for all of us that, in our own way, we have a role to play.

We want to be able to look at ourselves and say, on reflection, that we have played a part by trying to do our best in whatever roles we have.

The 67 speakers we have had in this debate, whatever perspective they have expressed, again demonstrated depth, quality, expertise and insight on the important issues we have discussed. I would say to the noble Lord, Lord Kerr, who spoke about the tone of engagement when it comes to international affairs, that I assure him that when not just our best diplomats but our Ministers engage, there is a softness to our tone, but a firmness in the message we wish to convey. I think that reflects the best of British diplomacy, and long may that continue.

The noble Lord, Lord McDonald, and my noble friend Lord Sterling talked of our diplomatic network. Our diplomats are the best of the best. Yesterday, I had the pleasure of addressing the heads of missions who are convened here in London. As the noble Lord, Lord McDonald, reminded us, it was also a great pleasure to sit down today with Melinda Simmons, our ambassador to Ukraine, to get her insights but also to recognise her courage, dedication and devotion—not just in representing the United Kingdom's interests in Ukraine but in reflecting the best of our diplomats as they represent our interests and strengthen our relationships with countries across the world.

The noble Baroness, Lady Northover, talked about Brexit and declining influences. It will not surprise her that I will respond to that by saying simple things about our place in the world. I have seen directly over the last five years or so, as a Minister of State at the Foreign Office, as a joint Minister and now at the FCDO, the deep respect that the United Kingdom has among nations. That is reflected when you look at elections, for example within the ITU. Very relevant to the debate today was the election success we had within the ICC, with Joanna Korner being elected as a judge and Karim Khan as a prosecutor. I add that Karim actually stood against a number of European countries and won quite decisively. I think that reflects the deep regard and respect many countries have for the United Kingdom's place in the world. Again, that is something we will continue to strengthen in our relationships.

As we look toward the world today, my noble friend Lord Grimstone spoke earlier about the warnings made back in 2021. But, to be completely honest, I was there for the wind-up in the debate on the Queen's Speech, and none of us would have expected—and certainly did not hope—that those warnings would come true. Sadly and tragically, they have. Territorial expansionism and atrocities that we hoped had been consigned to the history books expose the very weaknesses of the post-war security architecture and require us to find new ways to stand up to aggression. Indeed, the whole world order, including that of the United Nations, has really been tested. The noble Lord, Lord Whitty, reminded us that when you have a P5 member acting as the aggressor, it totally changes the whole dynamic of how we respond.

But in the darkness we have seen great courage, great resilience and a deep generosity, across the world and in our country, in response to the challenges we

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face, particularly those in Ukraine. We have witnessed the power of a drive for freedom, democracy and self-determination. That has inspired us and united us with our friends around the world. Issues of security and trade are important. While there are lessons for the West to learn together from Mr Putin's war in Ukraine, I believe that our alliances with our partners in Europe, NATO and the G7 have been strengthened, with a new unity of purpose. It has been tested—absolutely—but we see it emerging in the world today in a very positive fashion in terms of ensuring that we act, and act together.

We must embrace the challenge of setting out a vision for international co-operation, as the noble Lord, Lord Coaker, pointed out in his closing remarks. As ever, the noble Lord talked in his customary style about coming together and working together. Irrespective of our differences, it is important that I reiterate once again—I know I speak for all my colleagues on the Government Front Benches—our deep appreciation for the insights that we gain through direct engagement with your Lordships' House. That will certainly be reflected in what we do across the areas of foreign policy, defence, trade and development.

But equally, as my noble friends Lord Frost and Lord Udny-Lister both indicated, our experience also tells us that issues of democracy, free trade and open markets are what very much define our country. These are the kinds of values we need to stress and engage with as we face aggression around the world. They are very powerful diplomatic tools. Indeed, when we look around the world, it is important that our diplomatic networks also extend the importance of trade as an enabler—trade empowers.

I agreed with the noble Lord, Lord German, when he spoke about the power of education being fundamental to how we go about ensuring that the world really is empowered. That is why our Prime Minister has repeatedly articulated his absolute commitment to 12 years of quality education for girls. But I accept the premise of what the noble Lord, Lord German, said: to educate people, you need teachers. As we found through the challenges in Afghanistan, a conflict can really put a country back in terms of its achievements in that respect. We need to invest more in education to ensure that every child has an opportunity to realise their ambition.

Isolationism, on the other hand, offers little in terms of economic security, health security or, indeed, cybersecurity. I agree totally with the noble Baronesses, Lady Suttie and Lady Coussins, in terms of how we need to invest more in languages. I pay particular tribute to the noble Baroness, Lady Coussins, who is a constant advocate for the importance of investing in our Diplomatic Academy but also for the importance of learning languages. Her continued lobbying ensures that we as a Government retain a focus on these important issues.

I will come on to Ukraine in a moment, but let me touch on a few specific issues. My noble friend Lord Eccles talked about the Commonwealth, as did the noble Lord, Lord McDonald. While it does not perhaps figure in the Queen's Speech with the strength that certain

noble Lords said it did, it is a very proud part of my title, and I am looking forward to further strengthening the work of the 54 member states as we hand over the chair-in-office mantle to Rwanda. Indeed, the Rwandan Foreign Minister has been visiting London as he goes on to Geneva, and we are looking forward to being in Kigali. We will be looking to progress a number of priorities at CHOGM, including those on trade and investment, women and girls, climate and the environment, democracy, peace and security. I look forward to updating your Lordships' House in this respect.

The noble Baronesses, Lady Suttie and Lady Cox, also talked about various situations around the world. First, with reference to central Asia, I say to the noble Baroness, Lady Suttie, that I would very much value engaging with her directly. It was mentioned earlier about an ever-expanding portfolio, but I am, among other things, the Minister for Central Asia. I have seen quite directly with the situation in Afghanistan—not just in Ukraine—the real challenge on the ground that these countries have had to face. And yes, while some of them abstained in the votes at the General Assembly, I think we have to quantify and qualify that abstention. If you are one of those near-neighbouring countries from central Asia, facing Russia, with Russian minorities within your own borders, there is a genuine fear, and we have to ensure that we build those relationships. I look forward to engaging with the noble Baroness in that respect.

The noble Baroness, Lady Cox, also talked about the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh, in terms of the territorial sovereignty, and the issue featured in others' contributions. The UK position when it comes to Azerbaijan and Armenia is that there must be respect for the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. We also support the ongoing efforts to bring Azerbaijan and Armenia together, in order to resolve all outstanding issues. We support the peace deal that has been reached, and the protection of cultural heritage. That is vital, and we work not just directly with those countries but also through agencies such as UNESCO, whose primary purpose is the protection of heritage sites.

The noble Baroness, Lady Cox, also raised the issue of the situation in Nigeria. My colleague Vicky Ford, the Minister for Africa, regularly discusses security with the Nigerian Government, and I am acutely aware of the issues through discussions I have had with the noble Baroness, and of how attacking particular religious minorities is part and parcel of those who seek to bring further discord and disruption to Nigeria.

The noble Baroness, Lady Blackstone, and the noble Lords, Lord Trees and Lord Whitty, all talked, and rightly so, about climate change. Again, there is more to be said than in the time I have and I will write in terms of our focus, but for example I visited Egypt recently, and part of my engagement with Foreign Minister Shoukry, who is going to be the next COP president, is ensuring there is a continuity to what was achieved in Glasgow. My good friend and colleague, Minister Alok Sharma, was there as well to discuss these particular issues. It would be wrong for me not to admit that the conflict in Ukraine has distracted, but it is important that we do not forget and lose focus on the importance of climate change, and the UK

Government remain committed to our five-year pledge on the £11.6 billion of spending on international climate finance.

On the issues of soft power, the noble Lord, Lord Hannay, reminded us of the importance of the BBC World Service. He also met earlier with Melinda Simmons, and the FCDO is providing the World Service with over £90 million per year, and an additional £1.44 million in 2022-23 to counter disinformation, specifically in Russia and Ukraine.

The noble Lord, Lord Collins, asked about Colombia and human rights concerns. I recently met the Colombian President at the UN. We remain concerned about the continuing worrying rates of murder and threats, of course, but I would highlight that, although Colombia remains an FCDO human rights priority country, we have seen progress on issues such as justice and accountability. This includes holding perpetrators of sexual violence to account, which continues to be an area of focus for us; indeed, not so long ago, I had a virtual visit to Colombia in which that was a focus for my area of engagement.

I will briefly turn to other areas. The noble Lord, Lord Hussain, talked about the situation in Kashmir and human rights in India more broadly. I assure him that, in any engagement I have with India and on my visits there, human rights issues are raised. On the human rights report itself, it is not necessary that every country where we may have human rights concerns should be featured in it; various criteria are applied on that.

The noble Lord also mentioned sanctions. I cannot speculate on that issue, but I remind him that we work closely with India, which, through its own constitutional protections, has at its heart the issue of protecting all communities. That is something on which we engage very constructively with India.

My noble friend Lady Warsi highlighted a particular case. I will of course follow up with her on it. In the time we have, perhaps we can engage on the issues she raised to ensure that, where we can make progress on particular issues, we look at how best to move that forward.

My noble friend Lord Dundee talked about Ukraine in the context of praising the work of the Council of Europe. Through the expulsion of Russia from the CoE, we have seen how other partners in Europe are standing together to ensure that a clear message is sent to Russia.

Turning quickly to Russia and Ukraine, I do not agree with the assessments of the noble Lords, Lord Skidelsky and Lord Campbell-Savours, but many noble Lords—the noble Lords, Lord Ricketts, Lord Triesman and Lord Dannatt, the noble and gallant Lord, Lord Stirrup, and my noble friend Lord Dobbs—talked powerfully and passionately about the importance of our role in Ukraine. I am genuinely grateful for the strong support we have received from across the House for the Government's approach.

Equally, the noble Lord, Lord Hannay, and others reminded us that it is also important to focus on what happens in this particular crisis not just through the humanitarian response but by building an economic response to the situation in Ukraine. I assure the noble

Lord, Lord Purvis, that we will work constructively and engage with your Lordships' House on whatever the next steps are. The Government have already allocated more than £400 million, including £220 million in humanitarian support, and a further £1.3 billion for defence and military support. I am sure noble Lords would acknowledge the positive response we have had from President Zelensky. Like others, including my right honourable friend the Foreign Secretary, I am in close contact with the Foreign Minister as part of our relationship.

We are also working closely with the ICC. The noble Lord, Lord Triesman, mentioned war crimes. We are working closely with Karim Khan and his team on both formal technical and financial support and support on the ground, linking to the Ukrainian Government directly.

The noble Lords, Lord Burnett, Lord Ricketts and Lord Dannatt, the noble and gallant Lord, Lord Stirrup, and my noble friend Lord Cormack talked about NATO expansion. This is an ironic situation. I am sure that the Russians will reflect on the fact that one unintended consequence of their direct intervention has been to speed up the process. When you go to Finland, in particular, you see the vulnerability. I visited Estonia, where I saw directly the importance of our presence and the role of NATO, which has strengthened; we have seen real resilience being built. I agree with the assessment made so ably by the noble Lord, Lord Owen: we have seen that NATO is very much the bedrock of European security. It is important that the United Kingdom plays its part.

The whole issue of defence is very key, and I will move on that in a moment. The noble and gallant Lord, Lord Craig, talked about sanctions, and that has become a very effective tool.

The noble Lord, Lord Collins, is reminding me that time is nearly up—

Lord Collins of Highbury (Lab): It is time to take my tablets.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon (Con): Far be it from me to stop the noble Lord from taking his tablets.

It is important to remember that the sanctions work when we work with our partners. Many questions have been asked about how we are working in a co-ordinated fashion: we are doing so because we are working together with our key partners when it comes to sanctions policy as well.

I turn now to a couple of other situations that the noble Lord, Lord Mendelsohn, talked about in relation to Iran. We are very much aware of the situation and, while we back the deal, now it is really for Iran to ensure that it stands up to the obligations it has under the deal. Issues of trade relating to China were raised by the noble and gallant Lord, Lord Stirrup, and the noble Lords, Lord Alton and Lord Anderson, among others. The noble Lord, Lord Alton, will know my strong views on issues of human rights and the situation in Xinjiang. I also assure him that we are looking at further issues around the supply chain to ensure that operating companies can be further tightened, beyond what has already been done, so that there is responsibility

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within the supply chain, when it comes to these issues, through existing trade deals and trade relationships. The noble Lord, Lord Alton, specifically mentioned Project Defend, looking at the Newport Wafer Fab. There are specific measures within that and, in the interests of time and not wanting to detain the House, I will write to the noble Lord in this respect.

My noble friend Lord Cormack rightly raised the security pact between the Solomon Islands and China. We have engaged directly with our Australian friends and, as we set out in the integrated review, the UK is committed to strategically focusing on the issues of the Indo-Pacific. Our recent deployment of a UK emergency medical team to the Solomon Islands demonstrated our continued commitment. It is an area we are watching very closely.

The noble Baroness, Lady Smith, asked about defence expenditure, as did my noble friends Lady Davidson and Lord Lang, the noble and gallant Lords, Lord Stirrup and Lord Houghton of Richmond, and the noble Lord, Lord Dannatt, among others. They drew real focus to the issue of Army figures and our current resourcing. The noble Lord, Lord Coaker, tried to get me into trouble by asking me who I do and do not agree with. Of course, I agree with all my bosses—that is important. At the same time, it is important to hear. I have listened to the strong sentiments that have been so clearly expressed. When you look around and see former Chiefs of the Defence Staff and senior figures from the military, as well as the likes of the noble Lords, Lord Ricketts and Lord McDonald, and others who are highlighting these important issues, it is important that the Government listen. A Government who do not listen need to also act. The next name I have written down is that of the noble Lord, Lord West, and, after listening to him, I had a whole series of statistics on figures and frigates in preparation to respond.

I assure noble Lords that, whether it is on land, by sea or in the air, we are looking very firmly at this. I pay great tribute to my right honourable friend the Defence Secretary who has been at the forefront, and I have seen his commitment to our defence capabilities directly. I have also worked very closely with him in the field, in the areas of both Afghanistan and Ukraine, together with James Heappey, and seen the importance of these issues first-hand. I assure my noble friends Lord Jopling, Lord Udny-Lister and Lord Selkirk, and the noble Lord, Lord West, among others, that we are very much ensuring that we not only sustain our own 2% guidelines when it comes to NATO spending but that we continue to encourage our allies to do exactly the same. Collective security is a joint endeavour, and our partners need to be responsive to those particular issues.

I will write on the details of the various frigates that we are supporting and investing in. There are also the Type 45 destroyers—HMS “Dauntless” has recently completed its harbour integration trials—and the Type 26 programme. We have three of the Type 26 ships: HMS “Glasgow”, HMS “Cardiff” and HMS “Belfast” are under construction on the Clyde. I hope that gives at least a taster to the noble Lord, Lord West, among others, and shows that the Government are investing and looking at this. I say to the noble Lord, Lord Lee,

that submarines are not forgotten. Barrow, which he mentioned, will remain a proud hub of our submarine building programmes for years to come.

The noble Lord, Lord Campbell, talked of the F35 Lightning, which is the fifth-generation fighter aircraft that is providing our Armed Forces with enhanced combat air capabilities. To date, 27 of these F35s have been delivered and further tranches of delivery are to follow.

The noble Baroness, Lady Smith, asked about the Ministry of Defence and the Procurement Bill. Delivering the Defence and Security Industrial Strategy, published in 2021, and learning from experience since 2014, means reforms are needed. We will continue to deliver and look at these issues to ensure value for money when it comes to defence.

The noble Lord, Lord Dannatt, asked about Northern Ireland legacy investigations. I assure him that the Government are unstinting in our admiration for the role of our Armed Forces. I know that admiration is shared by all noble Lords. In ensuring that Northern Ireland's future will be decided only by democracy and consent, the Government's Bill seeks to fulfil the manifesto commitment we gave to address the legacy of Northern Ireland's past by giving veterans the protections they deserve and focusing on information.

I assure the noble Lord, Lord Browne, that our AI strategy will be published before the Summer Recess, so I am sure we will be able to update him appropriately.

I have run well over time, but I will briefly touch on trade and recognise the progress that has been made. We have now agreed trade deals with 70 countries, plus the EU. That accounts for about £808 billion of UK bilateral trade in 2021. The US free trade agreement is progressing well, as is the agreement with India; we are on stage four of our negotiations with India. I am sure that noble Lords followed the Prime Ministers of the two countries declaring that we hope to have that concluded by Diwali.

There were many contributions and many differing opinions on the Northern Ireland protocol. I particularly recognise the value of the support from my noble friend Lord Lilley, who articulated that the protocol was never intended to be set in stone. I assure my noble friend Lord Cormack that we are publishing the Government's legal position. We are driven by the fact that the primacy of the Belfast/Good Friday agreement must be sustained. The noble Lords, Lord McCrae and Lord Morrow, both reminded us from a Northern Ireland perspective that we must ensure that the protocol works for the people of Northern Ireland. It needs to ensure that the peace that was reached through the Belfast agreement is sustained and strengthened.

I assure the noble Lord, Lord Carlile, that we are very conscious of our obligations when it comes to our standing in regard to international law. My noble friend Lord Hannan summed up very neatly when he said that the Government are seeking to act in the best interests of ensuring co-operation—and the tone we are using is one of co-operation. As I said yesterday, the door is not closed. We continue to engage. My right honourable friend the Foreign Secretary is engaging extensively with our friends at the European Commission. Of course, a negotiated settlement would be the best

option, but we must be true to our obligations as a sovereign power in Northern Ireland and ensure that we do not lose sight of our obligations to the people of Northern Ireland.

There are issues around farming industries that the noble Lord, Lord Palmer, asked about, on which I will respond. The Horizon project was raised by the noble Baroness, Lady Northover, and the noble Lord, Lord King, rightly raised the issue of food security, as did the noble Lord, Lord Kerr. My noble friend Lord Risby rightly talked of the wider impact of the Ukrainian crisis and the impact in north Africa. I visited Egypt recently; Egypt and Morocco have been highlighted. Some 400 million people were fed through Ukraine, the food basket of Europe and the world, and that no longer happens, so we need to focus on that.

On development, very briefly, the noble Lord, Lord Collins, asked about our commitment to the Global Fund. The UK has invested £4.1 billion in the Global Fund to date, and we recently published our position papers on health systems strengthening and ending preventable deaths. We are currently reviewing the Global Fund's investment case for the seventh replenishment and I will update him accordingly.

I am coming to my grand finale and my Whip is telling me, "Tariq, that's enough"—this is where I ignore the Whip. In all seriousness, on international development, I hear the passion and the universal message to the Government to return to 0.7% in fulfilling our obligations to the people most in need. I am sure we will have further debates on the Government's international development strategy, but I say to the noble Lord, Lord Collins, that it matches the ambitions we stated in the integrated review.

On nutrition, about which I know the noble Lord, Lord Collins, feels very strongly, the UK pledged £1.5 billion between 2022 and 2030 and will continue to address the nutrition of mothers, babies and children.

I am extremely grateful to all noble Lords for their contributions to an extensive debate which reflected the immense expertise possessed by your Lordships' House. This Government made a commitment last year to be more proactive and adaptable. My noble friend Lady Fall reminded us of the importance of reflecting to the world and reacting to it as it is today. Our diplomatic network, development experts, military, parliamentarians and diplomats are part and parcel of the picture of global Britain. We will be able to showcase many of these issues as we host the ForB ministerial conference in July and the PSVI conference in November.

We are working in a changing global dynamic and an increasingly unstable world. Challenges have come thick and fast, whether Covid, the situation in and exit from Afghanistan, or Ukraine. As the noble Lord, Lord Coaker, said, our country—our United Kingdom—has always been a dynamic country and we have always been quick on our feet. It has been a country full of innovation and a place for free thinkers. The United Kingdom of 2022 remains an agile, energetic, assertive country that is prepared to stand up. With Ukraine, we have shown that when it comes to the crunch we stand up for our friends and partners and for democracy, free speech and liberty, and work together with our partners against tyrants, autocrats and dictators. We work for peace, we work for security and we work for prosperity. I thank noble Lords for their indulgence.

Motion agreed nemine dissentiente, and the Lord Chamberlain was ordered to present the Address to Her Majesty.

House adjourned at 10.43 pm.

